

Groton Daily Independent

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Saturday, April 16

Birthdays: Amy Briggs, Charles Raap, Clark Gibbs, Connor Smith, Cooper Smith, Jeff Larson, Kristi Peterson, Leslie Dohman, Marvin Bonn, Rodney Boehmer, Tom Tietz
4:30pm: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church Mass
7:00pm: GHS Prom Grand March

Sunday, April 17

Birthdays: Bernice Fliehs, Dan Felkey, Morghan Waage, Aaron Delzer
9:00am: Emmanuel Lutheran School
9:00am: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church Mass
9:00am: St. John's Lutheran Worship with Communion
9:30am: Emmanuel Lutheran fellowship
10:00am: St. John's Lutheran School
10:15am: Emmanuel Lutheran worship with Communion
11:00am: HBM Kumla Dinner at Groton Community Center
11:00am: United Methodist Church Worship
3:30pm: Emmanuel Lutheran fellowship at Golden Living Center (Confirmands serve)

Monday, April 18

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

School Lunch: Chicken nuggets, mashed potatoes, lettuce, fruit.

Senior Menu: Goulash, green beans, apple crisp, whole wheat bread.

Birthdays: Dylan Vogel, Emily Sippel, Merrie Atherton, Tammie Hanson

6:30am: Emmanuel Lutheran Bible Study

3:45pm: 7th/8th grade track at Milbank

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

The cardboard/paper

recycling trailer at the school is **Closed**

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Groton Lions Club

Justin Olson, first vice president, led the short business session for the April monthly Groton Lions Club meeting. Lee Schinkel gave the scholarship committee report. Nine high school students will each receive a \$500 college scholarship from the Groton Lions Club this year. Pastor Elizabeth Johnson, Larry Wheeting, Troy Lindberg and Justin Kerstan were other members of the committee. Larry announced that one of our winners, Lily Cutler, also received the International Kiwanis Scholarship this year. Larry and Lee are also members of the Groton Kiwanis Club.

Topper Tastad announced the car show will be held June 12 at the Terry Thompson farm.

Troy Lindberg was elected as first vice president for the next year.

Lee Schinkel and Justin Kerstan gave their preliminary report on the 80 and over ice cream social planned for this spring.

In the absence of the chairman, Michelle Muilenburg and Justin Olson told of plans for the annual spring rummage sale set for May 7.

Justin Hammel served cookies, a donation from the Groton Subway. He also announced a special donation at Subway next Monday.

The club voted to pick up highway trash next Thursday at 6 p.m.

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.

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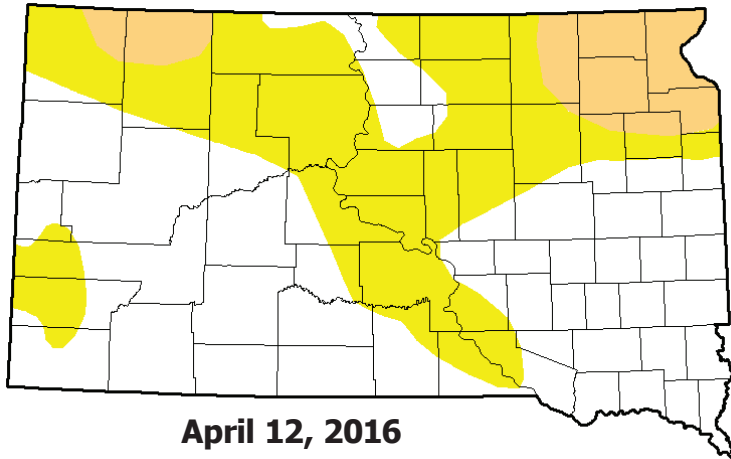
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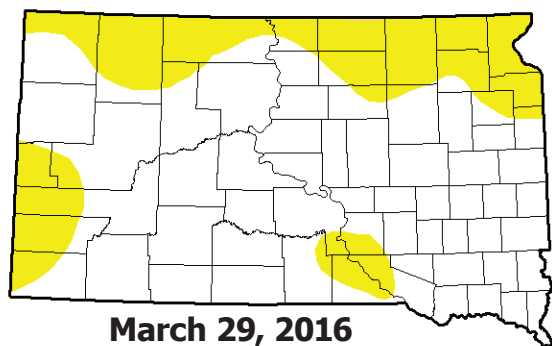
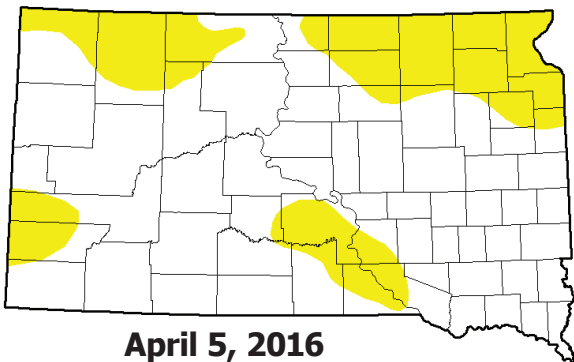
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Current National Drought Summary

This week was generally uneventful in those parts of the country experiencing abnormal dryness and drought, with only a few patchy areas received 1 to 3 inches of precipitation. As a result, dryness and drought either remained unchanged or deteriorated where it existed.



In central and southern parts of the Plains, between 1 and 3 inches of precipitation fell on southern Oklahoma, and in a narrow swath from southwestern Oklahoma northeastward through southeastern Kansas and into central and southwestern Missouri; however, D0 was removed from only a few small spots where the largest amounts fell. A few patches in other parts of southern Kansas and central Texas reported about an inch, but light precipitation at best was observed elsewhere. D2 (severe drought) was introduced in parts of northwestern Oklahoma, and moderate drought expanded to cover west-central Kansas and an area from east-central Kansas into northwestern Missouri. Some locales from central Kansas southwestward across northwestern Oklahoma, the Texas Panhandle, and adjacent New Mexico reported less than 25 percent of normal precipitation for the last 90 days, and amounts totaled 4 to 8 inches below normal in parts of central and eastern Oklahoma, southeastern Kansas, southern and western Missouri, and northwestern Arkansas.

Farther north, only a few tenths of an inch of precipitation, if any, fell across the northern Plains, causing expansion of the areas experiencing abnormal dryness and moderate drought. Deterioration to D1 was noted in northeastern South Dakota and adjacent sections of North Dakota and Minnesota, as well as a smaller area in northwestern South Dakota. Farther south, abnormal dryness was introduced throughout the remaining northern tier of South Dakota, and in a band extending through south-central parts of the state. Over the last 30 days, 0.5 to 1.5 inches of precipitation fell on most locations, with little or none observed in western North Dakota, eastern Montana, and the parts of South Dakota and adjacent areas where deterioration occurred on the Drought Monitor.

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Junior High Track Meet

April 14 in Sisseton

The junior high track meet went to Sisseton on April 14 and brought home several first place ribbons. The winners were Johnny DeLoera in the 200m hurdles, Teagen Jost in the discus, the 7th grade boys 4x100m Relay team, Jonathon Doeden in the 110m and 200m hurdles, the 8th grade boys 4x200m relay team and Eliza Wanner in the 100m dash and 200m dash.

7th Grade Boys

1600m Run: 3, Isaac Smith, 6:12.22

110m Hurdles Prelims: 2, Johnny DeLoera, 22.04; 4, Paxton Bonn, 22.70.

200m Hurdles: 1, Johnny DeLoera, 32.50.

200m Dash: 5, Johnny DeLoera, 28.59.

800m Run: 4, Isaac Smith, 2:52.41.

4x100m Relay: 1, Groton (Trevor Harry, Paxton Bonn, Chandler Larson, Kaden Carda), 58.54.

Long Jump: 7, Paxton Bonn, 13-6 1/2.

Discus: 1, Teagen Jost, 61-8.

Shot Put: 2, Kaden Carda, 27-0; 4, Teagen Jost, 25-8.

8th Grade Boys

110m Hurdles Prelims: 1, Johnathon Doeden, 17.78; 4, Garrett Schroeder, 21.79.

200m Hurdles: 1, Johnathon Doeden, 30.21.

400m Dash: 2, Austin Jones, 1:02.8; 3, Thomas Cranford, 1:03.22.

4x100m Relay: 2, Groton (Darien Shabazz, Thomas Cranford, Austin Jones, Johnathon Doeden), 52.67.

4x200m Relay: 1, Groton (), 1:48.62.

7th Grade Girls

200m Dash: 2, Kenzie McInerney, 31.53.

800m Run: 4, Tessa Erdmann, 3:11.18.

4x100m Relay: 3, Groton (Grace Wambach, Caitlynn Barse, Tessa Erdmann, Kenzie McInerney), 1:05.54.

4x200m Relay: 3, Groton (Grace Wambach, Caitlynn Barse, Tessa Erdmann, Kenzie McInerney), 2:16.23.

Long Jump: 5, Tessa Erdmann, 11-5 1/2.

Shot Put: 5, Alexis Hanten, 22-11.

Discus: 4, Chloe Crosby, 48-8.

8th Grade Girls

100m Dash Prelims: 1, Eliza Wanner, 14.56.

200m Dash: 1, Eliza Wanner, 29.61; 5, Kaylin Kucker, 32.51.

4x100m Relay: 2, Groton (Kaylin Kucker, Tadyn Glover, MaKayla Jones, Eliza Wanner), 59.49.

4x200m Relay: 2, Groton (Kaylin Kucker, Tadyn Glover, MaKayla Jones, Eliza Wanner), 2:06.85.

Shot Put: 2, Kaycie Hawkins, 30-5.

Discus: 4, Kaycie Hawkins, 60-6.

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How Habitat Pays

The Besler family has been in the ranching business for five generations. On their ranch near Bison, the Beslers run red Angus cows on native pasture land that has plenty of good natural shelter. "It's just good ranch country," says Brad Besler.

The father, son and grandfather who currently run the operation have been working with Game, Fish and Parks and other entities to improve their lands. They have built dams, installed cross fences, converted cropland back to grassland and implemented rotational livestock grazing practices. As a result, according to Brad, the Beslers have seen the quantity and quality of their habitat improve. This, he says, is benefiting their cattle and the wildlife.

I believe many South Dakotans are like the Beslers. As a people tied to the land, we're conservationists at heart. With more than 115,000 South Dakotans working in agriculture, many of us grew up on farms or ranches or have family or friends with ag operations. Because agriculture is a part of our heritage, an understanding of the value of conservation has been passed on from generation to generation.

South Dakotans want to be good stewards of their land but sometimes aren't aware of their options. We want to use best practices, but sometimes we're not sure what is best. That's why the state departments of Agriculture and Game, Fish and Parks recently launched the Habitat Pays initiative.

Through this program, we are helping landowners navigate conservation opportunities. Habitat Pays showcases the tools available to help landowners determine how best to utilize their acres. The Habitat Pays website, habitat.sd.gov, serves as a one-stop-shop for finding state, federal and non-governmental programs that provide cost-share or technical assistance to producers.

Also under Habitat Pays, habitat advisors are available to meet with landowners. Habitat advisors learn about a landowner's operation and conservation goals, and then offer advice on the potential benefits of utilizing different programs or practices. Habitat advisors recognize that every operation is different, so there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to agriculture and conservation. On the website you can hear stories from farmers and ranchers like the Beslers, who have worked with a habitat advisor and adopted conservation practices themselves.

Habitat conservation is important. By balancing agricultural production with targeted conservation goals, landowners can improve soil and water quality for a variety of species. These efforts enhance our wildlife population, preserve our outdoor traditions, and benefit farmers and ranchers. As Mike Jaspers, a row-crop producer near Bridgewater, puts it, "If you take care of the land, the land will take care of you."



Managing the Missouri

As the snow melts away and spring sets in throughout South Dakota, the Missouri River is beginning to swell. For some, this brings back memories of the catastrophic 2011 flood which forced more than 4,000 families out of their homes, resulted in five deaths and caused more than \$2 billion in damage to infrastructure, businesses and fertile ag land. Entire communities were devastated by the flood and largely left to fend for themselves.

Recovery took months, and citizens are still paying for damages caused by the flood. While numerous studies and reports have analyzed the flood and looked for ways to prevent a similar catastrophe in the future, I question whether we are truly better prepared to deal with such an event today.

As Chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Subcommittee on Superfund, Waste Management, and Oversight, part of my job includes conducting oversight of agencies within the EPW Committee's jurisdiction, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which is responsible for managing the Missouri River. I recently held a hearing in North Sioux City entitled, Five Years from the Flood: Oversight of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Management of the Missouri River and Suggestions for Improvement.

During the hearing, we heard from various stakeholders, including a state official, conservationist, tribal representative, district official and an Army Corps representative, to learn about the improvements and changes that have been made regarding the Army Corps' management of the river. Unfortunately, what we found is that despite numerous studies that recommended changes in how the Corps' manages the river, they have done little to address these changes.

Part of Congress' job is to give federal agencies direction that helps them make better decisions for the American people. In 2014, just before I took office, Congress passed a water resources reform bill, which directed the Army Corps to conduct studies and make improvements to its soil moisture and snowpack monitoring system. Yet, as we learned at the hearing, little has been done in the two years since the bill was signed into law. The Army Corps has signaled it does not have proper funding to take such action, but to receive funding it must make an appropriations request to Congress, which it has not done. For two years, the Corps has failed to act on putting together a plan to better monitor the Missouri River. This is unacceptable.

In the five years since the flood, South Dakotans living and working along the Missouri River have largely recovered from the months-long disaster that flooded the region and threatened the livelihood of communities along the river. The 2011 flood was an unprecedented event – it was a perfect storm of record snow melt, torrential rainfall in the spring and already-saturated soil. While some flooding and damage was likely inevitable, the Army Corps failed to mitigate its effects or provide citizens with proper notice, which led to preventable and unnecessary destruction. As revealed at the field hearing, there is room for improvement within the Army Corps to make certain they manage the Missouri River in an appropriate and responsible manner.

I will continue to monitor the Corps' actions and hold them accountable, and will work to make sure they take steps to protect the river's many users. This begins with proper tools to monitor the water levels, soil moisture and snow pack. It also includes a well-founded understanding of the needs of all stakeholders: state and local governments, landowners, ag producers and recreational users, all of whom rely upon proper management of the river.



Kumla

\$10

Dinner

Sunday, April 17th

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

Groton Community Center

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

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Today in Weather History

April 16, 1967: Severe thunderstorms moved through areas of central and eastern South Dakota, producing large hail, damaging winds, and even a few tornadoes. The event began in the mid-afternoon hours and lasted into the evening. One of the tornadoes, an F1, formed over Lake Poinsette in Hamlin County. From there it moved from southwest to northeast, toward the northern shore, then made a loop and traveled toward the southeast. Two trailer houses and a few small buildings were damaged. 11 people were injured when a trailer house was turned over onto one side, and then turned over on the other side. In Brown County, the storms produced hail 1.75 inches in diameter and 61mph winds.

April 16, 1976: A deepening low-pressure system moved northward out of Nebraska and across western South Dakota. Winds of 60 to 80 mph were reported across the area with gusts over 90 mph in southwest Minnesota. Some recorded wind speeds included 62 mph at Sioux Falls, 70 mph at Brookings, and 82 mph at Watertown. Many buildings were damaged, and many roofs were blown off and at Sioux Falls and Huron airports planes were overturned. Across southwest Minnesota, many trees were uprooted, and several trucks were blown off of the highway. Across the area, many, barns, outbuildings, sheds, and older structures were demolished.

April 16, 2000: Heavy snow of 6 to 9 inches fell across parts of central and northeast South Dakota during the morning hours. The heavy snow caused many roads to become slushy and difficult to travel. The heavy snow also downed some tree branches. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Ferney, Miller, and Webster; 7 inches at Agar, Mellette, and Twin Brooks; 8 inches at Gettysburg, and 9 inches at Faulkton.

1851 - The famous "Lighthouse Storm" raged near Boston Harbor. Whole gales and gigantic waves destroyed Minot Light with its two keepers still inside. The storm resulted in great shipping losses and coastal erosion. (David Ludlum)

1880 - A tornado near Marshall, MO, carried the heavy timbers of an entire home a distance of twelve miles. (The Weather Channel)

1933 - Franklin Lake, NH, was buried under 35 inches of snow. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1960 - A wind gust of 70 mph was measured at the Stapleton International Airport in Denver CO, their highest wind gust of record. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A slow moving storm system produced heavy rain over North Carolina and the Middle Atlantic Coast States. More than six inches of rain drenched parts of Virginia, and flooding in Virginia claimed three lives. Floodwaters along the James River inundated parts of Richmond VA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A storm in the northeastern U.S. produced a foot of snow at Pittsburg VT. Severe thunderstorms produced baseball size hail and spawned five tornadoes in the Southern High Plains Region. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A cold front, ushering sharply colder air into the north central U.S., brought snow to parts of Montana and North Dakota. At midday the temperature at Cutbank MT was just 22 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
60%	70%	50%	40%	50%	60%	40%
Showers Likely	Showers Likely	Chance Showers	Chance Showers	Chance Showers	Showers Likely	Chance Showers
High: 64 °F	Low: 42 °F	High: 55 °F	Low: 40 °F	High: 61 °F	Low: 47 °F	High: 64 °F



Contrasting Weather Today

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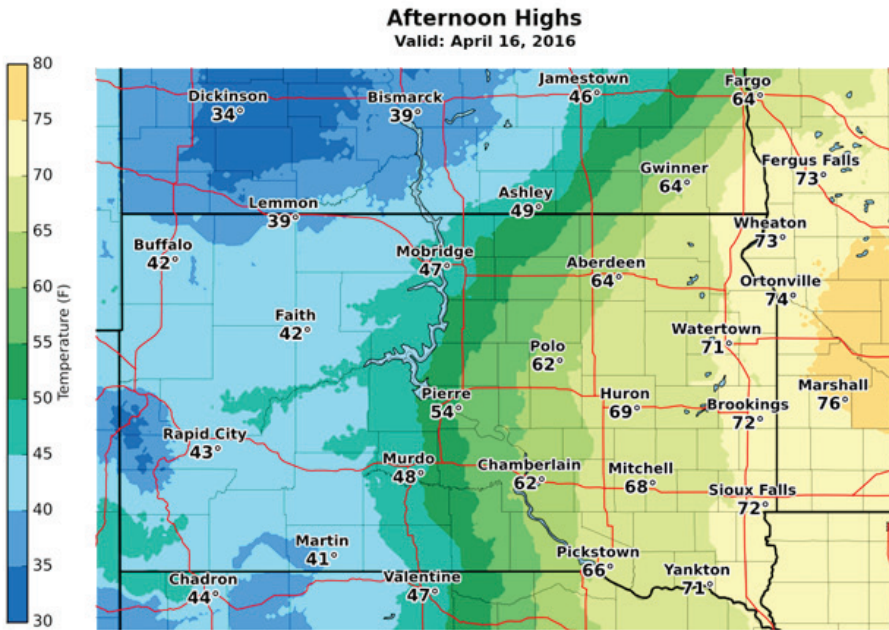
weather.gov/Aberdeen



National Weather Service Aberdeen



@NWSAberdeen



Western SD

Cloudy and Cool,
Northwest Wind,
With Showers

Eastern SD

Cloudy but Warmer,
Southeasterly
Winds,
Slight chance to
Chance of Showers



National Weather Service
Aberdeen SD
04/16/2016 05:08 AM CDT

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Published on: 04/16/2016 at 5:35AM

An area of low pressure over the region will bring contrasting weather conditions today. Western South Dakota will see cloudy skies, cool temperatures, northwesterly winds, and showers through most of the day. Eastern South Dakota will also see cloudy skies, but warmer temperatures thanks to southeasterly winds. Far eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota should see mostly dry conditions today.

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Yesterday's Weather

High: 64.4 at 12:02 AM

Low: 51.3 at 9:26 AM

High Gust: 43 at 7:55 AM

Precip: 0.04

Today's Info

Record High: 92° in 1913

Record Low: 14 in 1953

Average High: 58°F

Average Low: 32°F

Average Precip in April.: 0.80

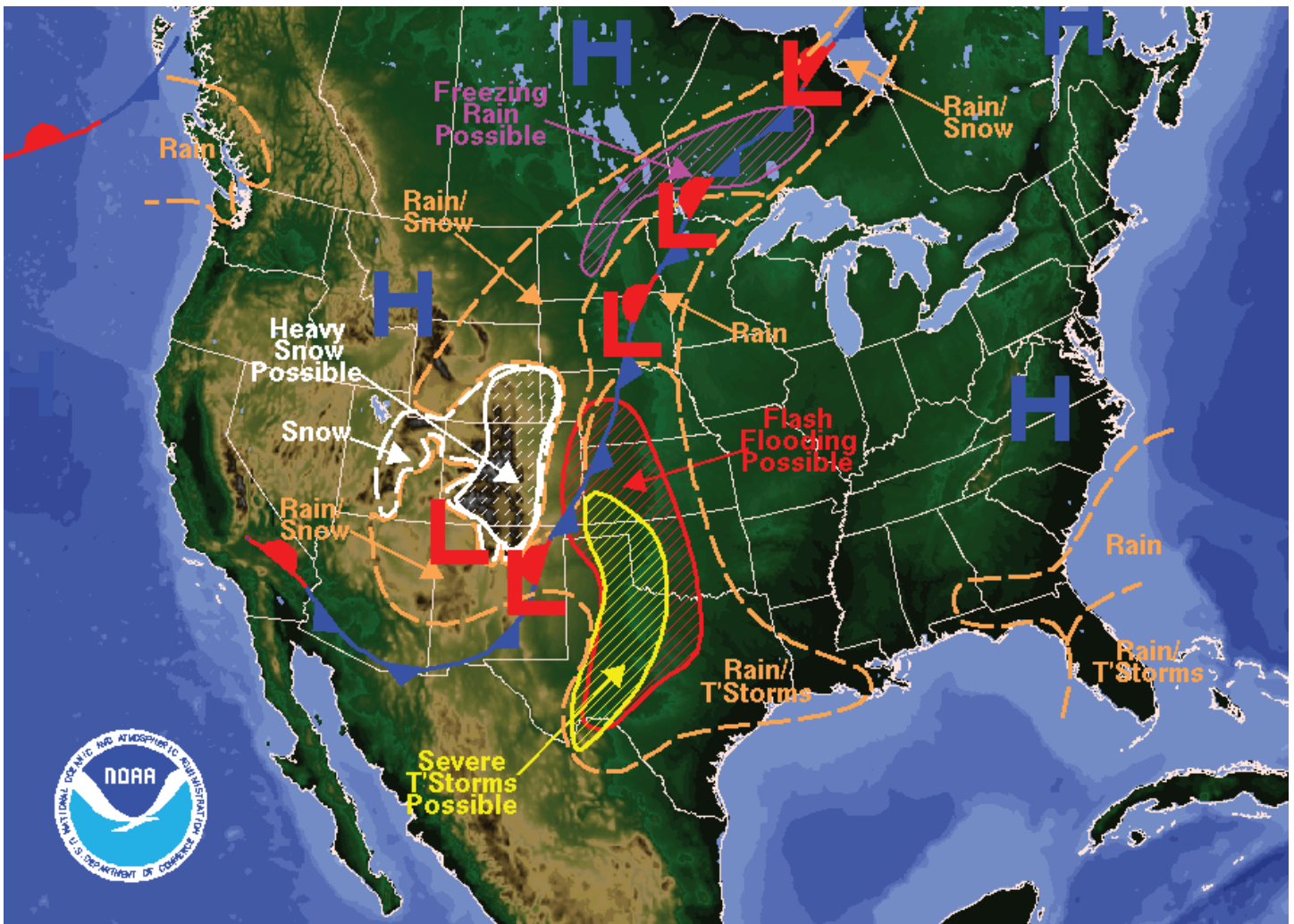
Precip to date in April.: 0.12

Average Precip to date: 2.98

Precip Year to Date: 1.07

Sunset Tonight: 8:21 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:43 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Sat, Apr 16, 2016, issued 5:00 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Santorelli based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

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HAVE A GOOD TIME

Charles Darwin was known to be a chronic complainer. He seemed to enjoy life more when he could find things to gripe about.

One evening he and his wife attended a banquet. He found the food distasteful and the speech dull, the guests boring and the chairs uncomfortable. He found nothing to enjoy and no one could meet his expectations.

As he and Mrs. Darwin were leaving the gathering, the hostess said apologetically, "I noticed that your husband was upset. We really wanted him to have a good time."

"Oh my," said Mrs. Darwin, "he had a wonderful time. He was able to find fault with everything."

In his letter to the Philippians Paul wrote, "In everything you do, stay away from complaining and arguing." Good advice!

Complaining and arguing are the behaviors of individuals who are self-centered and self-consumed. It is the exact opposite of how Christians are to live.

It is the responsibility of Christians to advance the Kingdom of God, not their personal goals and desires. Those who know and love Christ are always filled with a sense of their own inadequacy and willingly recognize their need for His mercy and grace.

The fact that we are in Christ should keep us humble and thankful as we recognize all that He has done for us. The more we recognize His greatness and our unworthiness, the less we will find to complain about in others and in things around us. We must be careful, at all times, to guard against being self-centered and self-consumed. It will not only destroy others but us as well.

Prayer: We pray, Lord, for eyes that can see the needs of others, minds that recognize ways we might help others and hearts that are filled with compassion to reach out to help them. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Philippians 2:14 Do everything without grumbling or arguing,

News from the Associated Press

9 bands entering South Dakota Rock and Roll Hall

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Rock and Roll Music Association is inducting nine bands into its Hall of Fame this weekend.

The list includes: the Postmen, Tripp; the Tensions, Tyndall; White Wing, Rapid City; Military Pickle, Brookings; the Handy Brothers Chessman Show, Sioux Falls; the Spectacle Rhythm and Blues Soul Revue, northwest Iowa; the American Music Band, Watertown; Ivory, the Black Hills; and Crow, Minneapolis.

The groups are being honored during a two-day celebration at the Ramkota Inn Exhibit Hall in Sioux Falls. A Friday night concert will feature the Pilgrims and a jam session featuring several Hall of Fame inductees. Ceremonies are scheduled for Saturday night.

The association also recognizes DJs, ballrooms and dance halls, music stores, booking agents, promoters and radio stations.

US Rep. Noem raises about \$280K in 1Q, has \$1.6M on hand

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — U.S. Rep. Kristi Noem, who is up for re-election this year, raised about \$280,000 for her campaign during the first three months of 2016.

The Federal Election Commission report for Noem shows the Republican spent almost \$128,800 during the quarter ending March 31, leaving her with more than \$1.64 million in the bank. Her report showed no campaign debt.

Noem is being challenged by Paula Hawks, a second-term Democratic state representative from Hartford. Hawks's quarterly federal finance report due Friday was not immediately available on the Federal Election Commission website. Calls to Hawks and her campaign were not immediately returned Friday evening.

Noem, first elected after she beat incumbent Democrat Stephanie Herseth Sandlin in 2010, won against her Democratic challenger in 2014 by more than 30 percentage points.

State accepting applications for farmers markets grants

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Department of Agriculture is accepting applications for grants available to support local farmers markets.

Established farmers markets or groups interested in starting a market in South Dakota are eligible for the Farmers Market Grower Grants.

Agricultural development representative Ben Stout says "farmers markets are a great way to connect producers and consumers who otherwise may not meet."

Farmers markets have grown in popularity in the U.S. over the past two decades, tripling the number of these local marketplaces between 2008 and 2015.

South Dakota State University Extension data show the state has gone from having about 20 markets in 2008 to 45 in 2012 and around 60 in 2015.

Grant applications must be submitted by May 1. The grants are funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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John Kay & Steppenwolf, Foghat to perform at state fair

HURON, S.D. (AP) — John Kay & Steppenwolf and Foghat will take the grandstand stage Sept. 4 at the South Dakota State Fair.

State Fairgrounds manager Peggy Besch says the performers are “going to put on a great classic rock show.”

John Kay & Steppenwolf are known for hits including “Born to Be Wild,” “Magic Carpet Ride” and “Rock Me.”

“Slow Ride,” “Fool For the City” and “I Just Want to Make Love to You” are among Foghat’s hits.

Tickets for the general public go on sale June 29.

The fair runs from Sept. 1-5 in Huron.

Mining company to pay \$10.3 million for South Dakota cleanup

DIRK LAMMERS, Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Colorado mining company will pay \$10.3 million to the state of South Dakota and the federal government to cover part of environmental cleanup costs at an abandoned gold and silver mine in the northern Black Hills, a federal agency said Friday.

The Environmental Protection Agency said a settlement agreement was filed in U.S. District Court in the case against Coca Mines Inc. and its former chief executive, Thomas E. Congdon. The EPA and the state contend that the Gilt Edge Mine Superfund site is heavily contaminated from mining activities involving hazardous substances including arsenic, cadmium, chromium, copper, lead, manganese, nickel and zinc.

“We are pleased with this agreement and the compensation for the damage to the environment that it represents,” Shaun McGrath, EPA’s regional administrator in Denver, said in a statement.

The amount of the settlement falls far short of the likely total costs of cleaning up the site, which the EPA estimates at more than \$200 million, though the area has been disturbed by mining and mineral processing operations since the late 1800s.

The lawsuit, which was originally filed Thursday, said Congdon signed a lease to mine roughly 1,352 acres at the site in 1974, and a partnership he formed eventually became Coca Mines Inc. A telephone message left for Congdon was not immediately returned.

Under the agreement, neither Coca Mines Inc. nor Congdon acknowledge any liability. Of the settlement amount, \$9.27 million will go into an EPA account to fund future environmental actions and \$1.03 million will go to the state, according to court documents.

The 360-acre Gilt Edge Mine site is located east of Lead, South Dakota, and includes a former open pit and a cyanide heap-leach gold mine. The site had been used for hard rock mining since the late 1800s and has been extensively disturbed by mining and mineral processing operations.

The agency and South Dakota previously entered into settlements with other former mine operators, recovering more than \$30 million to fund cleanup efforts.

Employers add jobs in 37 US states last month

CHRISTOPHER S. RUGABER, AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Employers added more jobs in three-quarters of U.S. states in March, led by big gains in Maryland, Ohio and New Jersey. Just 12 states shed jobs, while there was no change in South Dakota.

THE NUMBERS: The unemployment rate fell in 21 states, rose in 15 and was unchanged in 14, the

Labor Department said Friday. The unemployment rate doesn't always decline even when more hiring occurs, because more Americans may start job hunting and push up the rate even as others are hired.

The largest monthly job gain was in Maryland, which added 19,300 positions, followed by Ohio, which gained 18,300, and New Jersey with 17,300.

The biggest losses were in Texas, which shed 12,000 jobs, followed by Indiana, with 9,000, and Oklahoma, which lost 5,800. Texas and Oklahoma have large oil and gas industries that have suffered from the drop in energy prices since late 2014.

South Dakota had the lowest unemployment rate in March, at 2.5 percent, followed by New Hampshire with 2.6 percent. The highest unemployment rate was in Alaska, at 6.6 percent.

BIG PICTURE: The figures suggest that hiring was relatively widespread across the country last month. Overall, U.S. employers adding a healthy 215,000 jobs in March. That's just above the average monthly gain of 209,000 in the first quarter.

The U.S. unemployment rate ticked up to 5 percent from 4.9 percent, but mostly for a good reason: More Americans started looking for work, though not all immediately found jobs.

THE TAKEAWAY: The U.S. economy likely barely grew in the first three months of this year, as consumers spent cautiously and business investment was lackluster. At the same time, weak overseas growth has cut into exports.

The Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta projects the economy expanded at just a 0.3 percent annual pace in the first quarter. That's far below the already-weak growth of 1.4 percent in the fourth quarter of 2015.

Still, hiring has remained steady this year, which suggests employers remain confident in future growth and see the slowdown as temporary.

Police: Sioux Falls woman's death ruled accidental

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The death of a woman whose body was found in an apartment near downtown Sioux Falls last month has been ruled accidental.

Sioux Falls Police spokesman Sam Clemens on Friday said the Minnehaha County coroner determined that drug toxicity was a factor in the death of 50-year-old Nancy Flack. Clemens says a toxicology report showed that Flack had toxic levels of methamphetamine and a prescription drug used to treat some mental health disorders.

Flack's body was found on March 29, and police at the time said her death was suspicious.

Police: 3 moms found drunk in car with 6 children

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Police in Sioux Falls say three women are in custody after officers found them while intoxicated in a car with six children.

Police spokesman Sam Clemens says 18-year-old Shaina Dreaming Bear, 26-year-old Deidre Dreaming Bear and 21-year-old Kimberly White Face are facing six counts of cruelty to a minor.

Clemens says officers responding to a report of an intoxicated woman yelling near a park found the women and the children in a parked car Thursday night.

Clemens says the women "were driving around town" with the children, who are now in protective custody.

Clemens says Shaina Dreaming Bear faces additional charges after police found marijuana and pipes in her diaper bag.

The Sioux Falls women are at the Minnehaha County Jail. It wasn't immediately clear if they have attorneys who could comment on the charges.

Head-on crash near Tabor kills 3 people, injuries a fourth

TABOR, S.D. (AP) — Three people died and another person was injured in a two-vehicle crash in Bon Homme County.

The Highway Patrol says a car traveling the wrong way on state Highway 50 collided head-on with a minivan about 3:45 p.m. Thursday.

The 70-year-old woman driving the car was killed, as was the 48-year-old man driving the minivan and a 12-year-old girl riding in the front seat of that vehicle. A 14-year-old girl riding in the minivan suffered injuries that authorities say are serious but not life-threatening.

The crash happened about a mile west of Tabor. The names of the victims were not immediately released.

Sioux Falls police investigating shots fired at vehicle

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sioux Falls police are investigating an incident in which shots were fired at a vehicle.

Officers responded to reports of shots fired about 1 a.m. Friday. They found a sport utility vehicle that witnesses had seen leaving the area, and discovered bullet holes in the SUV.

Police determined that the person inside the vehicle was a victim. He was not hurt, and no other property damage was found.

Warriors' dominance: a 2nd straight title inevitable?

JON KRAWCZYNSKI, AP Basketball Writer

The Golden State Warriors plow into the playoffs with a record 73 wins under their belt and championship rings already on their fingers.

Their domination of the league this season, coupled with the perception that San Antonio and Cleveland are the only real challengers to the Warriors' throne, has cast a feeling of inevitability on this year's NBA playoffs, which begin Saturday.

"I just can't think of a scenario in professional basketball, at least one that I've lived through, in which a team that is this dominant and this complete on both ends of the floor doesn't end up doing what it has set out to do," NBATV analyst Brent Barry said this week.

The league has long fought a perception that the postseason is too predictable, that the best teams always win. Casual fans point to the incredible drama in the win-or-go-home NCAA tournament as the ideal model and lament the perceived lack of upsets in the NBA with its seven-game playoff series that favor the most talented teams.

But a closer look at recent history reveals plenty of surprises along the way. Last year's playoffs were chalky, with the top two seeds in each conference advancing to the conference finals and the top-seeded Warriors beating the Cavaliers — seeded second in the East — in the Finals.

Before that, the sixth-seeded Nets beat No. 3 Toronto in the Eastern quarterfinals, fifth-seeded Memphis made a run to the Western Conference finals in 2013 and a No. 8 seed has beaten a No. 1 seed in 2012, 2011 and 2007.

LeBron James needs no convincing.

His top-seeded Cleveland Cavaliers lost to No. 3 Orlando in the Eastern Conference finals in 2009 and No. 4 Boston in 2010, the infamous series that preceded James' exodus to Miami.

"The regular season doesn't mean anything at this point," Warriors guard Stephen Curry said Friday.

"We have two months to play our best basketball and compete and get it done."

So where will the drama come from this time around? Here are some spots to watch:

LEBRON VS. STAN: The last person James likely wanted to see in the first round was Detroit Pistons coach Stan Van Gundy, who has the Pistons back in the playoffs in his second season as coach. Van Gundy also has final say in the front office and has constructed a team similar to the Magic squad that stunned James' Cavs in 2009. James has reached another gear in the month leading up to the playoffs, but the top-seeded Cavs did go through some rough patches this season and chemistry continues to be an issue.

CARLISLE'S WIZARDRY: Dallas Mavericks coach Rick Carlisle is one of the very best in the game, a master tactician who is never afraid to throw out wonky lineups that can befuddle his opponents. He somehow got a Mavericks team full of flaws to the sixth seed in the West, where they open the playoffs against No. 3 Oklahoma City and rookie coach Billy Donovan. Carlisle has J.J. Barea looking like the slippery water bug that helped the Mavericks capture the championship in 2011 as a No. 3 seed.

BIG-GAME DAME: The fifth-seeded Portland Trail Blazers have been one of the biggest surprises in the league this season, turning the loss of LaMarcus Aldridge to San Antonio into an exciting young team built around point guard Damian Lillard, who has quickly carved a reputation as one of the league's best clutch players. They face the fourth-seeded Clippers and Chris Paul, who has suffered many frustrating playoff setbacks in his brilliant career, in the quarterfinals.

GRIT AND GRIND: Almost no one gives the injury-plagued Grizzlies a chance against No. 2 San Antonio, which won 67 games this season. But coach Dave Joerger, Tony Allen and Matt Barnes will put up a fight and might make the Spurs work a little harder than anyone expects.

HEAT IS ON: The playoffs get their fair share of upsets and surprises in the first round, but they are rarer as the rounds progress. Sitting at No. 3 in the East, the Miami Heat may be best positioned to make a deep run, with a potential matchup against the second-seeded Raptors, who only have one playoff series victory in franchise history, looming in the semifinals. And how fun would an Eastern Conference finals between James and the Cavs and Dwyane Wade and the Heat be?

1 Maryland firefighter dead, another injured after shooting

TEMPLE HILLS, Md. (AP) — One of two firefighters shot Friday night while making a welfare check in a Maryland suburb of Washington has died and another remains in serious condition, officials said.

John Ulmshneider, 39, died Friday night, according to Prince George's County Police Department spokeswoman Julie Parker. She said Ulmshneider was a 13-year veteran of the department.

Department officials said in a statement that volunteer firefighter Kevin Swain also was shot, and was in serious condition.

Firefighters and police had gone to the Temple Hills home after being called by a person concerned the individual inside might be suffering from a medical condition, Prince George's County police Chief Henry P. Stawinski III said at a news conference.

When they arrived on the scene, the person inside was unresponsive, so they decided to force entry, he said. As that was happening, the person inside fired several rounds, striking two firefighters and the person who had initially made the call for a welfare check.

Stawinski said that once officers got into the home, the gunfire stopped. He said no officers fired weapons.

"Will it ever end? God, I hope so," Prince George's Police Chief Henry Stawinski said.

Deputy Fire Chief Benjamin Barksdale said earlier Friday that both firefighters were both critically injured, and one was flown to a trauma center.

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The civilian was not seriously injured, according to the police chief.

The person who was inside the home was in custody and cooperating with police, Stawinski said.

The identity of the person inside the home was not immediately available.

"The main thing that we ask for the men and women of Prince George's County are your prayers, your thoughts," said Prince George's County Executive Rushern Baker.

Today in History The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Saturday, April 16, the 107th day of 2016. There are 259 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 16, 1789, President-elect George Washington left Mount Vernon, Virginia, for his inauguration in New York.

On this date:

In 1879, Bernadette Soubirous, who'd described seeing visions of the Virgin Mary at Lourdes, died in Nevers (neh-VEHR'), France.

In 1912, American aviator Harriet Quimby became the first woman to fly across the English Channel, leaving Dover, England, and arriving near Calais, France, in 59 minutes.

In 1935, the radio comedy program "Fibber McGee and Molly" premiered on NBC's Blue Network.

In 1940, Major League Baseball's first (and, to date, only) opening day no-hitter took place as Bob Feller of the Cleveland Indians pitched a no-no against the Chicago White Sox, 1-0, at Comiskey Park.

In 1945, during World War II, a Soviet submarine in the Baltic Sea torpedoed and sank the MV Goya, which Germany was using to transport civilian refugees and wounded soldiers; it's estimated that up to 7,000 people died. In his first speech to Congress, President Harry S. Truman pledged to carry out the war and peace policies of his late predecessor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

In 1947, the French ship Grandcamp blew up at the harbor in Texas City, Texas; another ship, the High Flyer, exploded the following day (the blasts and fires killed nearly 600 people). Financier Bernard M. Baruch said in a speech at the South Carolina statehouse, "Let us not be deceived — we are today in the midst of a cold war."

In 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote his "Letter from Birmingham Jail" in which he said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

In 1972, Apollo 16 blasted off on a voyage to the moon with astronauts John W. Young, Charles M. Duke Jr. and Ken Mattingly on board.

In 1986, dispelling rumors he was dead, Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi appeared on television to condemn the U.S. raid on his country and to say that Libyans were "ready to die" defending their nation.

In 1991, Sir David Lean, who had directed "The Bridge on the River Kwai," "Lawrence of Arabia" and "Doctor Zhivago" died in London at age 83.

In 1996, Britain's Prince Andrew and his wife, Sarah, the Duchess of York, announced they were in the process of divorcing.

In 2007, college student Seung-Hui Cho (sung-wee joh) shot and killed 32 people on the campus of Virginia Tech before taking his own life.

Ten years ago: In his first Easter message as pontiff, Pope Benedict XVI urged nations to use diplomacy to defuse nuclear crises and prayed that Palestinians would one day have their own state alongside Israel.

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Five years ago: A Taliban sleeper agent walked into a meeting of NATO trainers and Afghan troops at Forward Operating Base Gamberi in the eastern Afghan province of Laghman and detonated a vest of explosives hidden underneath his uniform; six American troops, four Afghan soldiers and an interpreter were killed. President Raul Castro drew a line in the Caribbean sand across which Cuba's economic reforms must never go, telling a Communist party summit that he had rejected dozens of suggested changes that would have allowed the concentration of property in private hands.

One year ago: U.N. Security Council members were moved to tears as a Syrian doctor, Mohamed Tennari, an eyewitness to suspected chlorine attacks on civilians in Syria, gave a graphic eyewitness account of dying children during a closed-door briefing. The NFL reinstated Minnesota Vikings running back Adrian Peterson, clearing the way for him to return after missing most of the previous season while facing child abuse charges in Texas for disciplining his son with a wooden switch.

Today's Birthdays: Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI is 89. Actor Peter Mark Richman is 89. Singer Bobby Vinton is 81. Denmark's Queen Margrethe II is 76. Basketball Hall of Famer Kareem Abdul-Jabbar is 69. Former Massachusetts first lady Ann Romney is 67. NFL coach Bill Belichick is 64. Rock singer and former politician Peter Garrett is 63. Actress Ellen Barkin is 62. Rock musician Jason Scheff (Chicago) is 54. Singer Jimmy Osmond is 53. Rock singer David Pirner (Soul Asylum) is 52. Actor-comedian Martin Lawrence is 51. Actor Jon Cryer is 51. Rock musician Dan Rieser is 50. Actor Peter Billingsley is 45. Actor Lukas Haas is 40. Actress-singer Kelli O'Hara is 40. Figure skater Mirai Nagasu is 23. Actress Sadie Sink (TV: "American Odyssey") is 14.

Thought for Today: "We think too much and feel too little." — Charles Chaplin, English actor-comedian-director (born this date in 1889, died in 1977).

Fan struck by ball at Rays game leaves field on stretcher

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — A fan struck by a foul ball left on a stretcher in the seventh inning of the Chicago White Sox against the Tampa Bay Rays game Friday night.

The fan was sitting in the lower box seats on the home plate side next to Tampa Bay's first-base side dugout. Rays designated hitter Steven Souza Jr. fouled off the ball that struck the fan and he went into the stands to check on her.

The game was delayed about 12 minutes so the injured fan could be removed on the stretcher that was brought out near the on-deck circle.

No other details about the fan's injuries were immediately available.

The ball went through a gap between netting of about the size of one and a half baseballs behind an area designated for photographers.

The primary home-plate area screen at Tropicana Field to protect fans ends at the start of the photo area. A second screen was installed this season behind the photo area. The ball got through the narrow opening.

After several fans were hurt by broken bats and foul balls, MLB announced in December recommendations to extend safety netting at its ballparks to the ends of both dugouts and anywhere within 70 feet of home plate.

After apology, Philly among many Jackie Robinson tributes

ERRIN HAINES WHACK, Associated Press Writers

JOE RESNICK, Associated Press Writers

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — As cities across the country honored Jackie Robinson's pioneering baseball career, one also apologized for its racist treatment of Major League Baseball's first black player nearly

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70 years ago.

When Robinson's Brooklyn Dodgers played the Philadelphia Phillies in 1947, he was told to "go back to the cotton fields" by the Phillies' manager, refused service at a local hotel and taunted by players with racial slurs when he came to bat. On Friday, Philadelphia's city council publicly acknowledged the incident as a dark chapter in the city's history.

"He faced tremendous racism in our city," Councilwoman Helen Gym said. "It was something he never forgot ... but neither should we."

April 15 is recognized nationally as Jackie Robinson Day, and ballparks around the country are also celebrating the 69th anniversary of the day he broke the league's color barrier in 1947. Robinson played for the Dodgers until 1956.

All MLB players, managers, coaches and umpires wore his No. 42 for games. Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred, at Yankee Stadium for the Seattle-New York game, said he was in his office earlier in the day and saw Colorado playing the Cubs on television, with everyone wearing the same number.

"It's a constant reminder that today's different," Manfred said.

Gym presented a resolution, passed by the council last month, before about 100 children, city leaders and Robinson fans — some wearing his No. 42 Dodgers jersey — gathered at the Philadelphia Stars Negro League Memorial Park. Among them was 79-year-old Carolyn Mitchell, who saw Robinson play as a girl.

Mitchell, who is black, said Friday's ceremony was "very meaningful" and that passing by the park gave her back fond memories of watching baseball growing up. The youngest of eight children and her parents' only daughter, Mitchell took to sports early and saw Robinson play in Philadelphia in the early 1950s.

"He was unbelievable," she recalled, smiling. "He could run like crazy. He used to love to steal bases."

In Los Angeles, where the Dodgers played their first game in 1958, Robinson's widow, Rachel, and daughter Sharon were part of a pregame ceremony at Chavez Ravine - where the club first retired Robinson's uniform number on June 4, 1972.

Rachel Robinson was escorted to the mound by Dodgers part-owner Magic Johnson and Hall of Famer Frank Robinson, the first black manager in baseball history. The former Cincinnati Reds and Baltimore Orioles slugger threw a ceremonial first pitch to Dodgers skipper Dave Roberts, who this year became the first minority manager in franchise history.

In Philadelphia, Robinson's skill for basestealing is depicted in a mural on the city's north end painted nearly a decade ago in his honor. Walking near the mural on Friday afternoon with her 10-year-old daughter Nate, Tikeena Harris explained that blacks and whites didn't used to play sports together.

Tommy Keels, who lived nearby and passes the mural regularly, said Robinson was a groundbreaker who represented his race well.

"I lived through Jim Crow," said Keels, 60, who is from Miami. "I was raised in the South. I experienced a lot of things I know he did on a monumental scale."

Jackie Robinson's teammate and roommate Don Newcombe says his friend deserves all the accolades.

"The world owes him whatever they can say about him and do about him that is good, because he was a great man," the former Brooklyn pitcher told the AP on Friday while the Dodgers were taking batting practice.

"I was with him, I roomed with him, he was my good friend, my good buddy, and I loved him. I still love him today like he was still here," said Newcombe, who was the first black pitcher to win the Rookie of the Year award in 1949. "I remember Jackie sitting me and Roy Campanella down one day in Roy's apartment and he told us: 'I can't do it without you. I need you. And one day, we're going to change

the letter I in bitter to an E for better.' And he became so right. God bless him."

Dodgers broadcaster Vin Scully, who was there for Robinson's career in Brooklyn, said Robinson's "self-control under some pressurized circumstances was remarkable."

"We all knew that that fire of competitiveness was always on high, and he was not always welcomed. But he overcame all of that," Scully said. "That, to me was the most remarkable thing — how controlled he was with all the hell that was running around him. He took a lot of abuse, but kept his jaw tight. He had to be an unusual man, and he was."

Orlando Hudson, a 12-year veteran who played second base for the Dodgers in 2009, still has a couple of framed No. 42 jerseys hanging in his home, along with a photo of himself and Rachel Robinson — among his most treasured souvenirs from his playing career.

"Being an African-American male, playing the same position with the Dodgers that he did and wearing number 42 on this day, you can't get better than that," said Hudson, who now works for the Arizona Diamondbacks and has done some speaking engagements with Robinson's widow over the years.

Robinson died on October 24, 1972, at the age of 53, months after he became the first black player inducted into the Hall of Fame.

US defense chief visits aircraft carrier in South China Sea

LOLITA C. BALDOR, Associated Press

ABOARD THE USS JOHN C. STENNIS (AP) — For the second time in five months, Defense Secretary Ash Carter landed aboard a U.S. aircraft carrier in the bitterly contested South China Sea, sending a deliberate message to China on American power in the region.

With a key Asia Pacific ally at his side, Carter's visit aboard the USS John C. Stennis underscores persistent complaints from the U.S. and its allies in the region about China's military build-up in the South China Sea. Beijing has been creating man-made islands, and equipping many with runways, fighter aircraft and other weapons.

Carter stood alongside Philippine Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin as they watched U.S. Navy fighter jets launch into the vivid blue skies, about 70 nautical miles west of the island of Luzon.

Later in the massive gray ship's hangar bay, Carter said his message in making the trip is that the United States "intends to continue to play a role in keeping peace and stability in this region."

He said the only reason America's presence in the region comes up as an issue is because of China's behavior over the last year— and "that's a question of Chinese behavior."

"What's new is not an American carrier in this region. What's new is the context of tension which exists, which we want to reduce," he said.

Rear Adm. Ronald Boxall, the commander of Carrier Strike Group 3, told reporters that the Stennis and the ships in the carrier's strike group "regularly have a (Chinese) ship or two operating with us or near us."

So far, he said, the Chinese vessels have been operating very professionally. "We've been very pleased with the interactions we've had," he said. "They are operating where they think they should, we're operating where we think we should. They generally have professional discussions over the bridge about where we are."

Under a blazing sun, as the heat index pushed past 100 degrees, Carter landed on the Stennis in a Marine V-22 Osprey helicopter. He spent about two hours on the ship, watching a number of fighters shoot into the sky off the flight deck, do circles around the Stennis and then land again, roaring to a stop as their tailhook caught the arresting wire.

He later spoke to several hundred sailors in the hangar bay, including one who asked why the U.S. allows China to participate in the large annual military exercise in the Asia Pacific. Carter said the U.S.

wants to work together with China, and added that Beijing should not isolate itself.

The U.S. insists that the increasing American presence in the South China Sea and the broader Asia Pacific is meant to show support for allies and is not aimed at any one nation.

But the U.S. military presence also reinforces Carter's assertion that America will continue to fly and sail throughout the region, despite China's claims of sovereignty over the vast South China Sea.

China's Foreign Ministry already issued a statement criticizing increased U.S. military support for the Philippines, saying Thursday that, "military exchanges by relevant countries should not target third parties, much less support a few countries in challenging China's sovereignty and security, inciting regional contradictions and sabotaging regional peace and stability."

And on Friday, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said that, "Before the U.S. returned to the Asia Pacific region, relevant countries had sought to control the disputes and handle the conflicts through friendly negotiations, despite the disputes having existed for over four decades."

He told reporters during a press conference that if the U.S. wants a peaceful solution to disputes, "I hope it can practice what it has preached, and that their actions can really help to peacefully solve the disputes."

The Philippines is one of several countries that have overlapping land claims with China. The U.S. has said it does not take a position on the claims, but wants them settled legally.

But Carter's visit to the Philippines this week, and Gazmin's presence on the carrier sent a more pointed message of solidarity.

The visit to the Stennis comes a day after Carter announced new military aid to Philippines that spurred protests from China.

This will be the second time that Carter has flown onto a carrier while it is embarked in the South China Sea. Last November, he was on the USS Theodore Roosevelt as it sailed northwest of Borneo.

That visit came just as week after a U.S. Navy destroyer, the USS Lassen, challenged China's claim to a 12-mile territorial limit around Subi Reef in the Spratly Islands, about 150 miles to 200 miles from where the Theodore Roosevelt was sailing Thursday.

Earlier in the day on Friday, Carter spoke at the closing ceremony for a joint U.S.-Philippines combat exercise called Balikatan or shoulder-to-shoulder.

He said the U.S. "will continue to stand up for our safety and freedoms" and those of America's friends and allies. And he said the U.S. is committed to insuring that the Asia Pacific remains a region where every can rise and prosper.

Report: Hospital apologizes for volunteer outburst

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (AP) — A North Carolina hospital has apologized after a volunteer was captured on video screaming at a visitor and his family and telling them to leave. The man says on the video that the woman also used a racial slur.

The Winston-Salem Journal reports (<http://bit.ly/1RZCmPY>) the nearly seven-minute video was posted to YouTube by Isaiah Baskins. A telephone number for Baskins couldn't be found Friday and the newspaper said it was unable to reach him for comment.

The newspaper reports that Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center issued its apology in the comment section under the video.

The volunteer is shown screaming to someone on a telephone to "get these people out of here." She also is seen shouting at Baskins, "Get out! Get out!"

Man wrongly convicted in 1957 Illinois murder is released

MICHAEL TARM, Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — A 76-year-old man who a prosecutor says was wrongly convicted in the 1957 killing of an Illinois schoolgirl was released Friday shortly after a judge vacated his conviction, meaning one of the oldest cold cases to be tried in U.S. history has officially gone cold again.

Jack McCullough was sentenced to life in prison in 2012 in the death of 7-year-old Maria Ridulph in Sycamore, about 70 miles west of Chicago. In a review of documents last year, a prosecutor found evidence that supported the former policeman's long-held alibi that he had been 40 miles away in Rockford at the time of Maria's disappearance.

Judge William P. Brady said Friday that Maria's abduction and slaying had haunted the small town of Sycamore for decades, and that he had also lost sleep over the case.

"I'm not blind to the importance of this proceeding to many people," he said, minutes before ordering McCullough's release.

McCullough, in handcuffs, appeared shaken by the decision, rocking back and forth, then taking a deep breath. Family members behind him hugged and cried. Moments later, McCullough, of Washington state, looked back, winked and smiled broadly.

On the other side of the room, Maria's brother and sister displayed little emotion.

Hours later, McCullough's stepdaughter, Janey O'Connor, drove him from a jail near the courthouse. McCullough, wearing street clothes, grinned at reporters from the back seat. His request for a first meal out of prison, she said in a phone interview later, was for pepperoni pizza.

O'Connor said she'd been convinced of her stepfather's innocence from the start.

"Jack was just a normal person doing his grandpa thing, and this happened to him," she said.

She said he told her he's looking forward to shopping for his children and grandchildren, because he has "a lot of birthdays and Christmases to catch up on." She said he has been studying Japanese while in prison and wants to travel to Japan.

DeKalb County State's Attorney Richard Schmack, who pushed hard for McCullough's release, told Brady earlier that his office wouldn't retry McCullough if a retrial was ordered. He said prosecutors were fully convinced of McCullough's innocence.

Schmack, elected as state's attorney as McCullough's 2012 trial was coming to an end, filed a scathing report with the court last month. He had conducted a six-month review of evidence, including newly discovered phone records, and his report picked the case apart, point by point.

He said in an email that he was reviewing the judge's ruling and would not be commenting Friday.

Maria's brother, 70-year-old Charles Ridulph, said at the hearing that he would continue to push for a special prosecutor to take over the case. Brady will consider that motion April 22.

McCullough, who was living in the Seattle area when he was arrested, was released on a recognizance bond and isn't allowed to leave Illinois until the state attorney announces a formal decision on a retrial.

Maria's disappearance made headlines nationwide in the 1950s, when reports of child abductions were rare.

She had been playing outside in the snow with a friend on Dec. 3, 1957, when a young man approached, introduced himself as "Johnny" and offered them piggyback rides. Maria's friend dashed home to grab mittens, and when she came back, Maria and the man were gone.

Forest hikers found her remains five months later.

At his trial four years ago, prosecutors said McCullough was the man who called himself Johnny in 1957, noting that he went by the name John Tessier in his youth. They said McCullough, then 18, dragged Maria away, choked and stabbed her to death.

McCullough has maintained his innocence throughout, saying he had "an iron-clad alibi" that he had

been in Rockford, attempting to enlist with the U.S. Air Force at a military recruiting station, on the night Maria disappeared.

New phone records, Schmack said, helped to prove McCullough had made a collect call to his parents at 6:57 p.m. from a phone booth in downtown Rockford, which is 40 miles northwest of where Maria was abducted between 6:45 p.m. and 6:55 p.m.

Schmack reviewed police reports and hundreds of other documents, which he said had been improperly barred at trial and contained "a wealth of information pointing to McCullough's innocence, and absolutely nothing showing guilt."

He also noted that Maria's friend had identified McCullough as the killer five decades later from an array of six photographs; McCullough's picture stood out, partially because everyone but him wore suitcoats and their photos were professional yearbook photos.

McCullough, who was born in Belfast, Ireland, came to the U.S. with his mother in 1946 and settled in Sycamore, where he lived until he was 18, he said in a 2011 interview after his arrest. He said the town had the wholesome feel of the fictional town in the television show "Happy Days." He served four years in the Air Force and 10 years in the Army, including a stint in Vietnam.

Michigan couple faces jail over lost Dr. Seuss library book

TECUMSEH, Mich. (AP) — A judge told a Michigan couple they could land in jail for up to 93 days and face a maximum \$500 fine for failing to return a novel and a Dr. Seuss book borrowed from the local public library.

Cathy and Melvin Duren of Tecumseh, Michigan, appeared in Lenawee County court on Thursday to each face a misdemeanor charge of failure to return rental property. They owe about \$35 in late fees for "The Rome Prophecy," borrowed in April 2015. They lost a Dr. Seuss book their teenage son borrowed for their granddaughter in July 2014.

"I can't image going to jail over it, but I certainly will fight these charges because I'm not guilty," Cathy Duren said.

Although the couple admitted they were negligent in returning the books, they think it's unfair to each be charged a \$105 "diversion fee" to the Lenawee County Economic Crimes Unit in addition to fines owed to the Tecumseh Public Library, WXYZ-TV (<http://bit.ly/1VpAbYg>) reported.

In December, the Durens received a letter advising them to return the books and pay the fees, as well as the replacement costs if they couldn't find the books. The letter also informed them that they could be charged with a crime.

In January, the couple was able to find and return "The Rome Prophecy," but they couldn't locate the Dr. Seuss book. The title of the book wasn't known.

Cathy Duren sent a \$55 money order to the prosecutor's office to cover the late fees and replacement costs for the lost book. But Cathy Duren said her money order was refused because she and her husband declined to pay the additional \$210 in diversion fees to the Lenawee County prosecutor's crime unit.

Cathy Duren said she feels that she's being extorted by the prosecutor's office.

The Durens had to pay \$100 bond to avoid going to jail last Friday when they were served with arrest warrants.

The couple said they probably will never check out a library book again.

Cops: Dad's stranger-danger test scares teens into 911 call

WESTLAKE, Ohio (AP) — A suburban Cleveland man had a friend pose as a threatening ex-convict

during a test to see whether his teenagers would let a stranger into their home, prompting them to flee and call 911, police said Friday.

A prosecutor will consider potential child-endangering charges against the adults.

Westlake police said the father "refused to acknowledge the emotional upset he had caused" and described his 14- and 16-year-old sons' actions as an "epic fail." But officers commended them for barricading themselves in a bedroom, jumping out a second-floor window onto a garage roof and then running to a neighbor's home to call for help.

The stranger showed up at their door Thursday afternoon and was let in by the younger teen, breaking the family rule on admitting only known relatives, police said. Once inside, the man told the boys that their father owed him money, and he threatened them.

"This guy was crazy. This guy wanted to kill us," the elder son told a dispatcher on the 911 call. "He said, 'If I start chopping up bodies in here, then I'm going to be the bad guy. I just got out of jail two weeks ago.'"

The fake convict, a 45-year-old man from Cleveland Heights, was in contact by phone with the father during the charade, and when the friend thought things had gone too far and wanted to stop, the father insisted it play out, police said.

One son said in the 911 call that he'd spotted his father's car parked in the street but didn't see him in it. The teen said he thought his father was around the house but wasn't certain, so their instinct was to run away.

Rock ramps at North Texas park help turtles exit the water

BEDFORD, Texas (AP) — Some turtles having a tough time crawling out of an updated North Texas pond can now use special exit ramps.

The Fort Worth Star-Telegram (<http://bit.ly/1qM5G2q>) reported Thursday that the small lake at Boys Ranch Park in Bedford was lined with concrete and has steeper embankments. The reptiles were having a tough time getting in and out of the water.

City workers have installed three exit ramps made of rocks to make navigation easier for the turtles and other animals, including ducks.

City spokeswoman Natalie Foster says the plan originally called for one ramp for turtles, then workers realized that wasn't enough.

The small turtle ramps measure about 5 feet long and 2 feet wide.

Mountain lion dashes from Los Angeles school to backyard

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Students and teachers at a Los Angeles high school missed their lunch break Friday after a mountain lion strolled onto campus and tried to join them.

The big cat was spotted walking across the quad at John F. Kennedy High School shortly after noon. Instead of sitting down to eat, students and teachers quickly secured themselves in their classrooms and called authorities.

Police officers and wildlife officials responded, and the mountain lion dashed off campus and into a nearby backyard.

Officers eventually tranquilized the large animal, which wandered around the yard for several minutes looking confused as it tried to find a way around a fence that kept it off a residential street.

Eventually it sat down and dozed off. Officers moved in to remove it after it was fully asleep.

It wasn't clear how the animal got on campus. It is in the city's Granada Hills area, not far from foot-

hills leading to rugged backcountry.

Still, the mountain lion would have had to make it through a large residential neighborhood and around a freeway to get to the school.

A recording left on the school's voicemail said, "Students are all secure in their classrooms. Proper authorities are on campus to remove the animal."

Market boycott due to LGBT law could hurt state's economy

EMERY P. DALESIO, AP Business Writer

HIGH POINT, N.C. (AP) — Furniture retailer Ron Werner usually spends \$2 million a year at North Carolina's gargantuan, semiannual furniture market, but he's skipping this week's event.

Werner knows not attending the High Point Market will mean missing an early look at new trends that could get hot later on, translating to big sales for his own business. But he said the state left him little choice when it passed a law last month that critics say discriminates against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

"The state just came out with this nasty and mean-spirited law that provides for state-sanctioned discrimination," he said. "How do we jump on a plane and go to North Carolina? They put up a sign that says, 'Gay? Stay away.'"

Some fear that Werner's decision might start a wave that could damage a tradition of commerce that brings an estimated \$5 billion a year in economic activity to North Carolina. About 75,000 buyers and sellers from around the world usually cram into this traditional furniture city of 100,000 every six months for a five-day spend-a-thon. This year, however, the High Point Market's organizers are warning that thousands of attendees could skip the event, which starts Saturday. Among those who won't be attending are buyers for Williams-Sonoma Inc. retail outlets, including Pottery Barn and West Elm, spokesman Pat Connolly said Friday.

The High Point Market remains vibrant after 107 years because it's still less expensive for exhibitors than shows in Las Vegas, Dallas or Milan, said T. William Lester, a city and regional planning professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill who co-authored a 2013 study on the market's economic impact.

But an extended boycott could "whittle away the competitiveness of the built-up advantage that High Point has," Lester said.

Lester noted that furniture purchased from manufacturers within 75 miles of the city accounts for about half of the market's \$5 billion economic impact. A 5 percent drop in market sales could translate into a loss of more than \$100 million for North Carolina furniture manufacturers, which employ about 14,000 workers.

"These are jobs that are really difficult to grow at new companies and we want to hold onto these manufacturing jobs as much as possible," he said. "These are solid, middle-income jobs for people who don't have an advanced degree."

The state's tourism industry also stands to suffer.

Werner said he canceled a five-day reservation of a four-bedroom private home he'd rented for his five-person team — at a cost of \$2,700 — and adds he won't be entertaining at the High Point restaurant he has frequented for years.

If only 2,000 of the estimated 58,000 out-of-town market visitors like Werner stay away from High Point, it could mean a loss of about \$15 million in lodging, food and other tourism-related spending, Lester said.

The boycott is one of a number of protests spurred by the new North Carolina law enacted last month,

which directs transgender people to use public toilets corresponding to the sex listed on their birth certificate. The law also excludes LGBT people from state anti-discrimination protections, blocks local governments from expanding LGBT protections, and bars all types of workplace discrimination lawsuits from state courts.

Supporters describe the law as a common-sense policy that keeps male sexual molesters from posing as transgender women to filter into female toilets and locker rooms.

Werner, co-owner of three HW Home stores in the Denver area, said instead of the North Carolina market, he'll visit producers in California and attend a smaller furniture market in Las Vegas in July as he shops for furnishings to tempt his customers. He suspects his absence from High Point will be barely missed by furniture-makers, but "there's business that we would have done that is not going to happen."

A fellow boycotter, furniture retailer Claus Ihlemann, said by skipping the market this month, he will miss discovering new vendors to supply Decorum Furniture, his contemporary furniture store in Norfolk, Virginia.

Nonetheless, he said, "I do think in speaking up and speaking your conscience, you're starting a lot of conversations and you're making people think about what is right or wrong."

While dozens of retailers, interior designers and other buyers said they will stay away, no major furniture-makers announced scrapping plans to show off their new products. And of the dozens of manufacturers contacted by The Associated Press, none said they would boycott the market.

Any boycott's effects won't be known until after the event, when registered no-shows are tallied against last-minute drop-ins, High Point Market Authority spokeswoman Ashley Grigg said. Exhibitors don't share sales information that can be compared to previous markets, she said.

Gov. Pat McCrory has downplayed any boycott, the effects of which were also not readily apparent earlier this week as trucks loaded with furnishings began arriving at already-rented and rebuilt exhibitor spaces. Police officers guided arriving truckers to waiting areas until spots opened at loading docks. Movers carried sofas and tables into showrooms. Thousands of carpenters and other tradesmen were swarming to complete displays incorporating the work of sign artists, woodworkers and photographers.

Three blocks from the market center, blue-collar workers streamed into Oscar's Fine Foods for some of the best burgers in town, and furniture companies were calling in big delivery orders for workers who couldn't spare time for lunch.

Debbie Lockhart's father started the restaurant 54 years ago when surrounding manufacturing plants and hosiery mills were humming. Now that furniture is made primarily in Asia, about 60 percent of Lockhart's annual sales come in the two months around each of the year's two market meetings.

"That's how we survive," Lockhart said. "It helps tremendously, because everything's moved out of here."

Escaped Texas jail inmate found hiding in dishwasher

JASPER, Texas (AP) — An East Texas jail inmate who fled while being treated at a hospital has been caught hiding in a dishwasher.

Jasper County jail records show that 20-year-old Wesley Evans of Silsbee (SILZ'-bee) was being held Friday on multiple charges following his day on the run. Jasper is 125 miles northeast of Houston.

Sheriff Mitchel Newman says Evans was arrested on March 8 on charges of aggravated robbery, auto theft and arson. He fled Tuesday after being taken to a local hospital for a hand injury.

Investigators say Evans was found Wednesday in the dishwasher of an apartment at his girlfriend's apartment complex.

Jail records show Evans also faces charges of escape and assault causing bodily injury. No attorney was listed for Evans. His bond is set at \$172,500.

Stinking drunk? Police say "inebriated" man used fart spray

ATHENS, Ga. (AP) — Police in Georgia have arrested a man for allegedly causing a stink at a bar.

The Athens Banner-Herald (<http://bit.ly/1Mx8avn>) reports that a woman told officers Blake Leland Zengo, 20, of Bogart, sprayed her in the face with a product designed to smell like flatulence.

An Athens-Clarke County police report says several people left the bar Saturday, citing a foul smell inside, and then told police that Zengo was the culprit.

The police report described Zengo as "very inebriated" and said a bottle of spray designed to cause an offensive odor was found in his pants pocket. Zengo denied spraying anything.

He was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct, public intoxication and underage consumption of alcohol. He was released from jail on \$1,500 bond.

It's unclear whether Zengo has an attorney.

Following Diana's footsteps, British royals visit Taj Mahal

SHONAL GANGULY, Associated Press

AGRA, India (AP) — The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge invoked nostalgia Saturday as they sat and smiled for photos on the same marble bench in front of the Taj Mahal where Prince William's late mother, Princess Diana, had posed alone for a memorable 1992 photo.

Winding down their weeklong royal tour of India and Bhutan, William and his wife, the former Kate Middleton, were briefed by a guide as they entered the compound that houses the iconic monument to love.

Ahead of the British royals' visit, about a dozen armed policemen entered the complex and the left section was cordoned off. Ordinary tourists were allowed to enter the building from the right. The royal couple caused a great deal of excitement, with dozens of people taking pictures on their cellphones.

William and Kate's visit to the Taj Mahal was filled with symbolism. Comparisons will inevitably be drawn to Diana and the lonely figure she cut in front of the white marble mausoleum built by a Mughal emperor to entomb his beloved wife.

Newspaper headlines had suggested at the time that Diana was delivering a hidden message about the end of her marriage to Prince Charles. Four years later, the two announced their divorce.

When asked Saturday how to describe the monument, William, on his first visit to India, replied, "Stunning."

Despite the scorching April temperatures — it was well over 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) — the couple smiled happily for photographs.

Much has been made of Kate's wardrobe choices during her visit to India, and on Saturday she wore a summery white and blue dress that ended just above the knees.

The streets of Agra, a normally chaotic city, were freshly swept in the morning in anticipation of the royal couple.

Agra is the last stop on William and Kate's India tour.

They arrived in Mumbai on April 10 and laid a wreath at the Taj Palace hotel, which was targeted in the 2008 terrorist attacks that killed 166 in the city. They played cricket with local children and met Bollywood stars and business leaders at a charity ball before flying to New Delhi, where their schedule included lunch with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and a birthday party to honor Queen Elizabeth II, who turns 90 next week.

The couple, travelling without their young children, Prince George and Princess Charlotte, then flew to northeastern India's Assam state to visit Kaziranga National Park, which has two-thirds of the world's population of Indian one-horned rhinos as well as endangered swamp deer.

They then flew to neighboring Bhutan for two days, at the invitation of its King Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck and Queen Jetsun Pema, before flying back to visit the Taj Mahal.

The royal couple was scheduled to leave for London on Saturday night.

Pope implores Europe to treat refugees with dignity

DEREK GATOPOULOS, Associated Press

NICOLE WINFIELD, Associated Press

ELENA BECATOROS, Associated Press

MORIA, Greece (AP) — Pope Francis implored Europe on Saturday to respond to the migrant crisis on its shores "in a way that is worthy of our common humanity," during an emotional and provocative trip to Greece.

The pope visited the island of Lesbos alongside the spiritual leader of the world's Orthodox Christians and the head of the Church of Greece to thank Greece for its welcome and highlight the plight of refugees as the European Union implements a controversial plan to deport them back to Turkey.

Greek state television ERT reported that Francis would take 10 refugees — eight Syrians and two Afghans — back with him when he leaves. Asked about the report, the Vatican spokesman, the Rev. Federico Lombardi told The Associated Press: "I have nothing to say at this time."

Asked if he would have an update later, Lombardi said: "Each moment has its significance."

The Vatican is already hosting two refugee families, so the gesture would be in keeping with Francis' call for Europe to open its hearts and borders to those most in need.

Many refugees fell to their knees and wept at Francis' feet as he and the two Orthodox leaders approached them at the Moria detention center. Others chanted "Freedom! Freedom!" as they passed by. Francis bent down as one young girl knelt at his feet sobbing uncontrollably. A woman told the pope that her husband was in Germany, but that she was stuck with her two sons in Lesbos.

In his remarks to them, Francis said the refugees should know that they are not alone and shouldn't lose hope. He said he wanted to visit them to hear their stories and to bring the world's attention to their plight.

"We hope that the world will heed these scenes of tragic and indeed desperate need, and respond in a way worthy of our common humanity," he said. "May all our brothers and sisters on this continent, like the Good Samaritan, come to your aid in the spirit of fraternity, solidarity and respect for human dignity that has distinguished its long history."

Francis, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I and the archbishop of Athens, Ieronymos II, then signed a joint declaration calling on the international community to make the protection of human lives a priority and to extend temporary asylum to those in need.

The declaration also called on political leaders to use all means to ensure that everyone, particularly Christians, can remain in their homelands and enjoy the "fundamental right to live in peace and security."

"The world will be judged by the way it has treated you," Bartholomew told the refugees. "And we will all be accountable for the way we respond to the crisis and conflict in the regions that you come from."

Francis and the two Orthodox leaders, officially divided from Catholics over a 1,000-year schism, then lunched with eight of the refugees to hear their stories of fleeing war, conflict and poverty and their

hopes for a better life in Europe. And then they went to the island's main port to pray together and toss a floral wreath into the sea in memory of those who didn't make the journey.

Earlier Saturday, Francis met Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and thanked him for the "generosity" shown by the Greek people in welcoming foreigners despite their own economic troubles, the Vatican said.

Tsipras, for his part, said he was proud of Greece's response "at a time when some of our partners — even in the name of Christian Europe — were erecting walls and fences to prevent defenseless people from seeking a better life."

Hours before Francis arrived, the European border patrol agency Frontex intercepted a dinghy carrying 41 Syrians and Iraqis off the coast of Lesbos. The refugees were detained and brought to shore in the main port of Mytilene.

The son of Italian immigrants to Argentina, Francis has made the plight of refugees, the poor and downtrodden the focus of his ministry as pope, denouncing the "globalization of indifference" that the world shows the less fortunate.

The wreath-tossing ceremony is a gesture Francis first made when he visited the Italian island of Lampedusa in the summer of 2013, his first trip outside Rome as pope, after a dozen migrants died trying to reach the southern tip of Europe. He made a similar gesture more recently at the U.S.-Mexican border, laying a bouquet of flowers next to a large crucifix at the Ciudad Juarez border crossing in memory of migrants who died trying to reach the U.S.

"He is slightly provocative," said George Demacopoulos, chair of Orthodox Christian studies at the Jesuit-run Fordham University in New York. Citing Francis' Mexico border visit in February, in the heat of a U.S. presidential campaign where illegal immigration took center stage, he added: "He is within his purview to do so, but that was a provocative move."

The Vatican insisted Saturday's visit is purely humanitarian and religious in nature, not political or a "direct" criticism of the EU plan.

However, the Vatican official in charge of migrants, Cardinal Antonio Maria Veglio, has said the EU-Turkey plan essentially treats migrants as merchandise that can be traded back and forth and doesn't recognize their inherent dignity as human beings.

The March 18 deal stipulates that anyone arriving clandestinely on Greek islands on or after March 20 will be returned to Turkey unless they successfully apply for asylum in Greece. For every Syrian sent back, the EU will take another Syrian directly from Turkey for resettlement in Europe. In return, Turkey was granted concessions including billions of euros to deal with the more than 2.7 million Syrian refugees living there, and a speeding up of its stalled accession talks with the EU.

Human rights groups have denounced the deal as an abdication of Europe's obligations to grant protection to asylum-seekers.

Experts give new details of IS destruction of Syrian museum

DAMASCUS, Syria (AP) — Polish experts back from assessing damage at the museum in the Syrian city of Palmyra offer grim new details about the extent of the destruction caused by the Islamic State group.

The museum was trashed and some of its best-known artifacts and statues were smashed by the extremists during the 10 months they controlled the town, before being driven out last month.

Bartosz Markowski, from the Polish Archaeological Center at the University of Warsaw, told The Associated Press in Damascus on Saturday that most of the 200 objects which were exhibited on the ground floor were destroyed, many of them with hard tools.

He and his colleagues spent a week collecting fragments of sculptures and preparing them for transportation to Damascus for conservation. He says many artifacts have been stolen.

Rescuers rush to trapped residents as Japan quakes kill 32

EMILY WANG, Associated Press

MARI YAMAGUCHI, Associated Press

MASHIKI, Japan (AP) — Army troops and other rescuers rushed Saturday to save scores of trapped residents after a pair of strong earthquakes in southwestern Japan killed at least 32 people, injured about 1,500 and left hundreds of thousands without electricity or water.

Rainfall was forecast to start pounding the area soon, threatening to further complicate the relief operation and set off more mudslides in isolated rural towns, where people were waiting to be rescued from collapsed homes.

Kumamoto prefectural official Riho Tajima said the death toll stood at 22 from the magnitude-7.3 quake that shook the Kumamoto region on the southwestern island of Kyushu early Saturday. On Thursday night, Kyushu was hit by a magnitude-6.5 quake that left 10 dead.

Japanese media reported that nearly 200,000 homes were without electricity, and that drinking water systems had also failed in the area. TV video showed people huddled in blankets, sitting or lying shoulder-to-shoulder on the floors of evacuation centers. An estimated 400,000 households were without running water.

Hundreds of people lined up for rations at shelters before nightfall, bracing for the rainfall and strong winds. Local stores quickly ran out of stock and shuttered their doors, and people said they were worried about running out of food.

"I could hear the noise of all my dishes come crashing down, the rattling, and I was shocked and sad, now I've lost all my dishes," said Ayuko Sakamoto, who was among those in line for the food.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said that 1,500 people had been injured in the quakes. Tajima said that 184 were injured seriously, and that more than 91,000 had been evacuated from their homes. More than 200 homes and other buildings were either destroyed or damaged, she said.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe expressed concern about secondary disasters, with forecasters predicting rain and strong winds for later in the day. With the soil already loosened by the quakes, rainfall can set off mudslides.

"Daytime today is the big test" for rescue efforts, Abe said. Landslides have already cut off roads and destroyed bridges, slowing down rescuers.

Police received reports of 97 cases of people trapped or buried under collapsed buildings, while 10 people were caught in landslides in three municipalities in the prefecture, Japan's Kyodo News agency reported.

TV video showed a collapsed student dormitory at Aso city's Tokai University that was originally two floors, but now looked like a single-story building. A witness said he heard a cry for help from the rubble. Two students were reported to have died there.

In the town of Mashiki, where people were trapped beneath the rubble for hours, an unconscious 93-year-old woman, Yumiko Yamauchi, was dragged out from the debris of her home and taken by ambulance to a hospital. Her son-in-law Tatsuhiko Sakata said she had refused to move to shelter with him after the first quake Thursday.

"When I came to see her last night, I was asking her: 'Mother? I'm here! Do you remember me? Do you remember my face?' She replied with a huge smile filled with joy. A kind of smile that I would never forget. And that was the last I saw of her," Sakata said.

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Among the other casualties, according to the Kumamoto prefectural government, were a 69-year-old man who died of head injuries and a 28-year-old woman who suffocated.

The area has been rocked by aftershocks, including the strongest with a magnitude of 5.4 Saturday morning. The Japan Meteorological Agency said that the magnitude-7.3 quake early Saturday may have been the main one, with one from Thursday night a precursor.

David Rothery, professor of planetary geosciences at The Open University in Britain, said the Saturday morning quake was 30 times more powerful than the one Thursday night. "It is unusual but not unprecedented for a larger and more damaging earthquake to follow what was taken to be 'the main event,'" he said.

Rothery noted that in March 2011, a magnitude-7.2 earthquake in northern Japan was followed two days later by a magnitude-9.0 quake that caused a devastating tsunami. "Fortunately, this time the epicenters have been below land rather than under the sea, and no tsunamis have been triggered," he said.

The epicenters of Thursday's and Saturday's quakes were relatively shallow — about 10 kilometers (6 miles) — and close to the surface, resulting in more severe shaking and damage. National broadcaster NHK said as many as eight quakes were being felt an hour in the area.

One massive landslide tore open a mountainside in Kumamoto's Minamiaso village all the way from the top to a highway below. Another gnawed at a highway, collapsing a house that fell down a ravine and smashed at the bottom. In another part of the village, houses were left hanging precariously at the edge of a huge hole cut open in the earth.

Suga, the chief Cabinet secretary, told reporters that the number of troops in the area was being raised to 20,000, while additional police and firefighters were also on the way.

He pleaded with people not to panic. "Please let's help each other and stay calm," he said in a nationally televised news conference.

At a hot springs resort, dozens of people trapped were picked up by military helicopters, Asahi TV reported.

Kyushu island's Mount Aso, the largest active volcano in Japan, erupted for the first time in a month, sending smoke rising about 100 meters (328 feet) into the air, but no damage was reported. It was not immediately clear whether there was a link between the quakes and the eruption. The 1,592-meter (5,223-foot) -high mountain is about a 1 1/2-hour drive from the epicenter.

The historic Aso Shrine, a picturesque complex near the volcano, was seriously damaged, with a number of buildings with curved tiled roofs flattened on the ground like lopsided fans. A towering gate, known as the "cherry blossom gate" because of its grandeur, especially during spring, collapsed.

The Nuclear Regulation Authority reported no abnormalities at Kyushu's Sendai nuclear plant.

Rival camps reflect Brazil's divide amid impeachment

JENNY BARCHFIELD, Associated Press

BRASILIA, Brazil (AP) — Separated by only a boulevard, two rival camps of demonstrators in Brazil's capital underscore the sharp ideological divide that is playing out in Congress as lawmakers debate whether to oust the president.

On one side of Brasilia's showcase Eixo Monumental, which cuts through the center of city and dead ends at Congress, several thousand supporters of embattled President Dilma Rousseff have pitched a tent city, sleeping in hammocks and eating rice and beans served by volunteers at communal kitchens.

Largely union members and land reform activists, and overwhelmingly poor, they have come by bus

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from across this continent-sized country to defend Rousseff and her left-leaning Workers' Party, which they credit for unprecedented improvements in their lives. They call the impeachment debate in the nearby lower house of Congress that started Friday and is expected to go all weekend an attempt by Brazil's elite to take back power after 13 years of Workers' Party rule.

"They're trying to knock down what the Workers' Party conquered, what we conquered," said Francisco das Chagas, a 47-year-old mechanic who came from his home state of Alagoas, in the impoverished northeastern region that's Rousseff's stronghold. "It's classist."

On the other side of the boulevard, several hundred better-heeled protesters are demanding Rousseff's impeachment, blaming her for the tanking economy and the plague of corruption, which are reflected in the country's sky-high taxes and dismal public hospitals, schools and other basic services. They say a fresh start with a new president is the only hope for breathing life into an economy that's expected to contract around 4 percent this year.

Pro-impeachment protester Joao Pedro Netto says that while the Workers' Party was born out of a desire to help the poor, it is now as corrupt as any other of Brazil's more than 30 political parties. The 30-year-old small business owner said improving the country's woeful public school system for his two small children is his top priority and for this to happen Rousseff's party must go.

Both sides have pledged to flood the city with supporters ahead of a crucial vote Sunday in the Chamber of Deputies, which will determine whether the impeachment proceeds to the Senate. Proponents of impeachment need 342 of 513 votes, and tallies in the main Brazilian news outlets show them hovering near that number.

The proceedings stem from alleged violations of Brazil's fiscal laws committed by Rousseff's administration to shore up public support amid a flagging economy.

Rousseff says that such accounting was common practice, insisting that she committed no crime and denouncing the proceedings against her as a "coup."

Her supporters in the tent city, which sprang up early this week as busloads of activists arrived from as far afield as the Amazonian state of Rondonia, say her government and that of her predecessor, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, served the interests of poor people like them.

Ze Silva, a 25-year-old schoolteacher from the agricultural heartland of Mato Grosso, warned that if Rousseff is pushed out "Brazil would return to its same old ways . and the masses would slide back into misery, like it used to be."

However, the irony of the location of the pro-Rousseff camp wasn't lost on their foes across the boulevard. The pro-government tents are pitched in the parking lot of Brasilia's Mane Garrincha stadium, which underwent a \$900 million facelift ahead of the 2014 World Cup, making it the world's second most expensive stadium — despite the fact that Brazil's capital does not have a top division soccer team to play in it.

This kind of wanton waste is just what has fueled anger against the government. The fight against corruption has been a rallying cry of the anti-Rousseff movement, fueling massive protests in recent months as an unfolding corruption probe centered around the state-run Petrobras oil company has exposed the extent of the rot.

While Netto and other pro-impeachment protesters want Rousseff out, they worry that the next batch of leaders would also be corrupt.

If the Chamber of Deputies votes Sunday to send the impeachment measure to the Senate and that body votes to open a trial against Rousseff, she would be suspended from office and Vice President Michel Temer would take over. Temer is implicated in the vast Petrobras corruption scheme. The next-in-line to take office after Temer is House Speaker Eduardo Cunha. He is also heavily implicated in the

Petrobras scheme.

The political crisis has dragged on for months, hamstringing attempts to jumpstart the economy and battle an outbreak of the Zika virus. The country is also gearing up to host the Olympics.

"This issue has been an open wound for a long time," said Leonardo Picciani, a congressman from Rio de Janeiro state who has gone against the pro-impeachment position of his party. "It must be closed on Sunday, whatever the result."

The protesters, however, weren't so sure.

Both side vowed to keep the encampments going until their side declares a definitive victory.

"If Brazil continues like this, it's going to sink," said Netto.

Bernie Sanders says he met with Pope Francis.

KEN THOMAS, Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders said in an interview with The Associated Press that he met with Pope Francis, describing the meeting as a "real honor."

Sanders said the meeting took place Saturday morning before the pope left for his one-day visit to Greece. He said he was honored by the meeting, and that he told the pope he appreciated the message that he is sending the world about the need to inject morality and justice into the world economy. Sanders said it's a message he has been sending as well.

"We had an opportunity to meet with him this morning," Sanders said. "It was a real honor for me, for my wife and I to spend some time with him. I think he is one of the extraordinary figures not only in the world today but in modern world history."

The Vermont senator is challenging Hillary Clinton for the Democratic presidential nomination and the meeting comes the weekend before Tuesday's pivotal New York primary, a state with a significant number of Catholic voters. Clinton holds a 250-delegate lead over Sanders in the primaries and the senator is trying to string together a series of victories in upcoming contests to draw closer to the nomination.

Sanders said it was a brief meeting at the papal residence. "I told him that I was incredibly appreciative of the incredible role that he is playing in this planet in discussing issues about the need for an economy based on morality, not greed."

Sanders and wife, Jane, stayed overnight at the pope's residence, the Domus Santa Marta hotel in the Vatican gardens, on the same floor as the pope. They were seen at the hotel reception, carrying their own bags.

Dr. Jeffrey Sachs, a Sanders foreign policy adviser and adviser to the United Nations on climate change, said there were no photographs taken of the meeting.

The Vatican is loathe to get involved in electoral campaigns, and usually tries to avoid any perception of partisanship as far as the pope is concerned. Popes rarely travel to countries during the thick of political campaigns, knowing a papal photo op with the sitting head of state can be exploited for political ends.

However, Francis has been known to flout Vatican protocol, and the meeting with Sanders is evidence that his personal desires often trump Vatican diplomacy.

"His message is resonating with every religion on earth with people who have no religion and it is a message that says we have got to inject morality and justice into the global economy," Sanders said.

Sanders said the meeting should not be viewed as the pope injecting himself into the campaign. "The issues that I talked about yesterday at the conference as you well know are issues that I have been talking about not just throughout this campaign but throughout my political life. And I am just very

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much appreciated the fact that the pope in many ways has been raising these issues in a global way in the sense that I have been trying to raise them in the United States.”

Sachs said Sanders and his wife Jane met the pope in the foyer of the domus as the pope was leaving for Greece. The meeting lasted for about five minutes, Sachs said.

Sanders later joined his family, including some of his grandchildren, for a walking tour of St. Peter's Basilica, one of the holiest Catholic shrines.

Sanders traveled to Rome to attend a Vatican conference on economic inequality and climate change. He is an admirer of the pope and has praised the pope's views on poverty and the environment.

The trip gave Sanders a moment on the world stage, putting him alongside priests, bishops, academics and two South American presidents. Sanders has been at a disadvantage during his campaign against Clinton, President Barack Obama's former secretary of state, on issues of foreign policy but he was peppered with questions from academics and ecclesiastics during the meeting in a manner that might have been afforded a head of state.

The invitation to Sanders to address the Vatican conference raised eyebrows when it was announced last week and touched off allegations that the senator lobbied for the invitation.

But the chancellor for the pontifical academy, Bishop Marcelo Sanchez Sorondo, said he invited Sanders because he was the only U.S. presidential candidate who showed deep interest in the teachings of Francis.

Thousands mark 2nd anniversary of S. Korean ferry disaster

KIM TONG-HYUNG, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Thousands of South Koreans participated in memorial events Saturday for the more than 300 people who died in a ferry disaster two years ago that deeply rattled the country.

Hundreds of people, carrying umbrellas in light evening rain, created long lines at a square in the capital, Seoul, waiting to place flowers on a makeshift altar near where relatives of the victims had camped out for months in protest.

Seoul police were expecting nearly 5,000 people to participate in the event, with speeches, concerts and film screenings planned. Police were also preparing for the possibility of the gathering turning into an anti-government march, but the event was proceeding peacefully at the start.

Hours earlier, about 2,500 people, including grieving family members and government officials, gathered for an event at a memorial altar in Ansan, where most of the victims lived. There were other memorial events around the country, including a gathering at a small island port near the site of the accident, where relatives had spent months waiting for divers to return with the bodies of their loved ones.

A total of 304 people, most of them students from a single high school in Ansan, died when the ferry Sewol sank off South Korea's southwest coast in April 2014 in a disaster partially blamed on official incompetence and corruption.

Divers recovered 295 bodies from the ship's wreckage and nearby seas before the government stopped underwater searches after seven months. Nine victims remain missing.

The tragedy touched off an outpouring of national grief and soul-searching about public safety. The relatives of the victims, angry that higher-level officials haven't been held accountable, have been calling for a stronger investigation into the government's responsibility for the disaster.

“We really want to move on,” Jeon Myung-sun, the father of one of the student victims, said during a speech in Ansan. “We would be able to go back to our ordinary lives if the people who are responsible are held responsible, and after finding out why (the accident) happened and why our children had to

die.”

South Korea’s top court in November last year upheld a life sentence for the ferry’s captain. The court concluded that he committed homicide by “willful negligence” because he fled his ship without giving an evacuation order.

Indonesia moves jailed cleric amid inhumane treatment claim

NINIEK KARMINI, Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Indonesian authorities on Saturday moved the jailed spiritual leader of the 2002 Bali bombers from a notorious prison island amid demands by his lawyer to end his “inhumane” treatment.

The ailing 77-year-old Abu Bakar Bashir was confined to a tiny isolation cell on Nusa Kambangan in the wake of the Jan. 14 suicide bombings in the Indonesian capital Jakarta to prevent him from radicalizing other prisoners and to cut him off from extremist networks.

Hendra Eka Putra, the chief warden, said Bashir was moved to Gunung Sindur prison, about 50 kilometers (30 miles) southeast of Jakarta. He was transported in an armored car from Jakarta to the prison in an operation involving more than 230 officers.

Bashir’s lawyer Mohammad Mahendradatta said Thursday that the condition of Bashir’s 2 square meter (22 square foot) cell was “simply shocking and inhumane treatment against him is causing his health to deteriorate.”

“His transfer was made on the basis of humanity because of his old and health-related rights,” Putra said. “The government has considered that he needed a prison that has better health facilities and doctors.”

Bashir, known as the spiritual leader of al-Qaida-linked militants behind the Bali bombings that killed 202 people, was sentenced to 15 years in prison in 2011.

Prosecutors said he was a key player in funding a militant training camp in Aceh that brought together men from almost every known extremist group in predominantly Muslim Indonesia. A higher court later cut the sentence to nine years.

Mahendradatta had told The Associated Press that Bashir was kept in his isolation cell for 23 hours a day and slept on thin mats over a cement floor without blankets. He was denied reading materials and personal items, regularly awakened from his sleep because of mosquitoes, and consultations with medical staff took place behind barriers.

Putra declined to say whether authorities would continue to isolate Bashir in his new prison. He said Bashir would not be denied basic rights.

The Gunung Sindur maximum-security prison, which was built in 2010, is equipped with high-tech security measures including cellular signal jammers to prevent unauthorized communications by inmates.

Financial markets are calmer, but world economy faces risks

PAUL WISEMAN, AP Economics Writers

MARTIN CRUTSINGER, AP Economics Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — The world economy is still sluggish. But at least markets are calmer and China’s economic problems look more manageable than they did when the world’s top finance officials met in February.

Finance ministers and central bankers from the Group of 20 major economies emerged from their

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meeting in Washington on Friday relieved that financial markets had recovered from that turbulence. "I came away feeling a little more encouraged than when I arrived," Bank of Canada Governor Stephen Poloz told reporters.

The G-20 discussions took place as part of the spring meetings of the 189-nation International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Talks will wrap up Saturday.

Early this year, world markets were being rattled by a drop in the Chinese currency and by tumbling oil prices, both of which seemed to signal deep troubles for the global economy.

Since then, the yuan and oil prices have stabilized, and China on Friday said its economy registered solid 6.7 percent growth the first three months of 2016.

The respite from market tumult does not mean all is well with the world economy.

The IMF on Tuesday downgraded its outlook for the global economy this year and issued a list of risks that could make things worse: Conflict in the Middle East. A refugee crisis in Europe. The possibility that British voters will decide in June to pull their country out of the European Union. A growing political backlash in the United States and Europe against international trade.

Japanese Finance Minister Taro Aso said that the world's financial markets are starting to regain "composure" but "downside risk" persists. He expressed particular concern about risks from volatility in capital flows and foreign exchange rates.

Japan is concerned about the value of the yen, which has risen rapidly this year against the dollar despite an unusual move by the Bank of Japan in February to introduce negative interest rates in an unsuccessful effort to spur flagging growth and keep the yen low to boost exports.

Even China's solid first-quarter numbers raised fears the Chinese government is backsliding on commitments to reform its economy. Critics worry it pumped up the first-quarter numbers by investing heavily in inefficient state-owned companies — an approach that could drag down growth in the long term.

Global finance officials are seeking to address the political backlash against globalization, which has helped propel the presidential campaign of Republican front-runner Donald Trump in the United States and a campaign in Britain to leave the EU.

In a statement Friday, the G-20 pledged to pursue policies that will bolster growth and further stabilize financial markets, but they offered no new measures to accomplish these goals.

The IMF is urging countries to launch a new round of public works projects to improve roads and other types of infrastructure in hopes the higher government spending will boost growth. But in an era of high budget deficits, that call has not met with much support. In Friday's communique, the G-20 did not offer any new proposals on infrastructure spending.

"The United States cannot and must not be the only engine of growth," U.S. Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew said. "All major economies need to deploy a full tool kit of economic policy measures."

The G-20 statement repeated a goal to increase transparency of all countries on tax matters — an issue that taken on urgency following the recent release of the Panama Papers showing the widespread use of tax havens by the world's rich and powerful.

Surging oil production, low prices to challenge Doha meeting

JON GAMBRELL, Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — OPEC isn't what it used to be.

Ahead of a planned meeting of most of the cartel and other major oil producers in Qatar to approve a freeze on oil production, some OPEC members are pumping record levels of crude even as prices

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wallow at less than half their level two years ago — a clear sign of the dissention gripping the group.

While markets may well react off any decision made on Sunday in Doha, analysts predict low prices will continue through this year and into the next as producers keep pumping to keep their government budgets afloat.

That calls into question what long-term gain producers can expect from a promised freeze, and indeed how much power OPEC now wields as American shale firms stand poised to re-enter the market if prices rise.

"We put the probability of a successful freeze agreement ... at 50 percent," Societe Generale analyst Michael Wittner wrote this month. "There is simply a tremendous amount of uncertainty."

At least 15 oil-producing nations representing about 73 percent of world output are expected at the Doha meeting, Qatar's energy and industry minister, Mohammed bin Saleh al-Sada, has said. The gathering follows a surprise Doha meeting in February between Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela, in which they pledged to cap their crude output to their January levels if other producers do the same.

The countries hope the cap will help global oil prices rebound from their dramatic fall since summer 2014, when prices stood at above \$100 a barrel, though no one is talking seriously about the more dramatic step of reducing global supply by collectively cutting production for now.

Prices dropped briefly under \$30 a barrel, a 12-year low, in January, but have climbed to around \$40 a barrel this week, boosted in part by market speculation about the coming meeting.

The drop is good news for consumers. Drivers in the United States now pay \$2.05 a gallon (54 cents a liter) on average, the lowest rate for this same date since 2009, according to AAA. Airlines also have enjoyed savings of billions of dollars in jet fuel costs.

But for producing countries that depend on oil revenues, the results have been devastating. OPEC member Nigeria's once-fast-growing economy cratered, while Venezuela faces triple-digit inflation and rationing.

The low prices have squeezed wealthy Gulf nations too, though less dramatically, with rulers across the United Arab Emirates raising fees on airport departures and parking.

Iraq says it boosted its production to over 4 million barrels of oil a day in March, record territory, as Kuwait says it pumps 3 million barrels a day and wants to reach 4 million a day by 2020.

Analysts say Bahrain, Oman and Saudi Arabia face the biggest threat from the low prices, especially if no deal is struck.

OPEC kingpin Saudi Arabia, producing some 10 million barrels of oil per day, is rapidly burning through cash reserves while keeping its production high to fund its ongoing war in Yemen and cover government spending.

"If nothing is decided in Doha, then the fiscal constraints will accelerate much more rapidly than if action is taken and oil prices respond," said Mathias Angonin, a Dubai-based analyst with the ratings agency Moody's.

But several spoilers lurk for oil producers, chief among them OPEC member Iran, which announced late Friday it would send an emissary to the meeting.

With many international sanctions lifted after its nuclear deal with world powers, Iran began exporting oil into the European market again and is eager to claw back a market share. It produces 3.2 million barrels of oil a day now, with hopes of increasing to 4 million by April 2017. On Friday, the Iranian Oil Ministry reiterated it would not join a freeze "before it brings its oil exports to the pre-sanctions levels."

Sunni-ruled Saudi Arabia already has said it won't back any freeze if Iran, its Shiite rival, doesn't agree to it, throwing into question whether any deal will be agreed to at all. The kingdom seems determined to ride out the low prices that could squeeze Tehran.

That dispute underscores the level of discord inside OPEC as it faces arguably its biggest challenge since the oil glut of the 1980s.

"Ultimately, we believe the biggest hurdle to reaching any meaningful agreement will be the conflicting Saudi and Iranian stances," Goldman Sachs said in a report released this week.

Yet there is a market risk to walking away without a deal: a contentious OPEC meeting in December that ended without an agreement saw oil prices tumble.

Meanwhile, though more-costly U.S. shale oil production has dropped, it could re-enter the market if oil prices rise. And a large amount of crude already building up provides a major damper on prices, as does a generally weakened global economy, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Perhaps prophetically, Goldman Sachs titled its recent report: "Doha is no panacea."

With friends like these: GOP race spurs awkward endorsements

JULIE PACE, AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Lindsey Graham says Republican presidential hopeful Ted Cruz is "not my favorite." Ben Carson says there are "better people" than Donald Trump to serve as commander in chief.

And those are the candidates Graham and Carson want to win.

Presidential endorsements often create strange alliances — remember over-the-top Trump validating buttoned-up Mitt Romney four years ago? But rarely have so many partnerships of political necessity appeared to be as reluctant, awkward, even downright tortured as in the 2016 GOP race.

"Neither Trump nor Cruz win Mr. Congeniality contests," said Ana Navarro, a Republican strategist whose preferred candidate, Jeb Bush, flamed out in February. When it comes to the leading GOP candidates, Navarro said she's "not sure why anybody would want to hang out with them."

Bush found a way to throw his support behind Cruz without ever actually having to hang out with the Texas senator. Rather than join Cruz for the traditional on-camera grip-and-grin that normally accompanies an endorsement, Bush took a more subdued approach: a brief, 219-word statement posted on Facebook.

Bush has made no public appearances with Cruz since that initial announcement and has stayed quiet about his support for his former rival on social media. Graham, who joked earlier this year that choosing between Cruz and Trump was like picking between being murdered or poisoned, did hold a private fundraiser for Cruz, but has not made any public appearances with his Senate colleague.

Trump has had more success getting his supporters to appear on stage with him. His surprise endorsement from Chris Christie stunned the political world and appeared for a time to be a perfect union, with the New Jersey governor traveling with the billionaire businessman, and even standing beside Trump during a celebratory press conference after the March 1 Super Tuesday contests.

That's when things took a turn.

Christie's deer-in-the-headlines expression as Trump rambled on at length sparked a thousand internet parodies. Not only has Christie not appeared on stage with Trump since then, he's barely spoken about his favored candidate in public and has bristled at questions about the real estate mogul from reporters back home in New Jersey.

Carson was also game for an on-camera endorsement of Trump last month. The soft-spoken retired neurosurgeon, who is a favorite of religious conservatives, praised Trump as a man who is far more reflective privately than he comes across publicly.

Trump probably would have preferred if Carson had just left it there.

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Instead, Carson has set off on one of the most extraordinary surrogate tours, raising more questions about Trump's qualifications to be president than he's answered. He's said he would have preferred another scenario than seeing Trump winning the nomination, suggested Trump's supporters aren't making a rational decision, and conceded that his favored candidate has "major defects."

"Is it possible Ben Carson is secretly with us and sabotaging Trump from the inside?" former Bush adviser Tim Miller wrote on Twitter. Miller is now working for a super PAC that opposes Trump.

To be sure, both Trump and Cruz have rallied a few loyal endorsements.

Former GOP candidate and business executive Carly Fiorina has been one of Cruz's most active surrogates, campaigning for him aggressively throughout the country. Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker waited until just before his state's primary to back Cruz, but his late seal of approval was seen as a boon for the Texas senator, who went on to top Trump in the Midwestern battleground.

Trump has benefitted from the support of Alabama Sen. Jeff Sessions, who announced his support shortly before his home state's March 1 primary, a contest the New York businessman went on to win handily. Sessions has also set up a foreign policy advisory group for Trump and is helping introduce the real estate mogul to prominent Washington Republicans.

But Trump and Cruz have an incentive for avoiding having a parade of elected officials joining them on the campaign trail. Both have cast themselves as Washington outsiders who want to shake things up in the nation's capital rather than be embraced by their party's leaders.

Rep. Chris Collins, R-N.Y., was the first House member to endorse Trump. Even as he's taken on an active role in promoting the businessman, he says he's not expecting a flood of his colleagues to follow. "Mr. Trump is a political outsider," he said. "He's not collecting endorsements."

At the Vatican, Sanders blasts 'immoral' wealth inequality

KEN THOMAS, Associated Press

NICOLE WINFIELD, Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Bernie Sanders issued a global call to action at the Vatican on Friday to address "immoral and unsustainable" wealth inequality and poverty, using the high-profile gathering to echo one of the central platforms of his presidential campaign.

The Democratic senator from Vermont cited Pope Francis and St. John Paul II repeatedly during his speech to the Vatican conference commemorating the 25th anniversary of a landmark teaching document from John Paul on social and economic justice after the Cold War.

Sanders arrived in Rome hours after wrapping up a debate in New York Thursday night, saying the opportunity to address the Vatican conference was too meaningful to pass up. The roughly 24-hour visit precedes Tuesday's crucial New York primary, which Sanders must do well in to maintain a viable challenge to Democratic front-runner Hillary Clinton.

Pope Francis apologized that he couldn't personally greet participants at the Vatican conference. No meeting with Sanders was expected.

But the trip gave Sanders a moment on the world stage, placing him alongside priests, bishops, academics and two South American presidents. Sanders has been at a disadvantage during his campaign against Clinton, President Barack Obama's former secretary of state, on issues of foreign policy but he was peppered with questions from academics and ecclesiastics in a manner that might have been afforded a head of state.

Sanders trails Clinton in the Democratic primaries but the trip to the Vatican and his massive rally earlier this week with 27,000 people in New York City may have offered a glimpse of the senator's aim

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to become a progressive leader, win or lose.

The discussions gave him a chance to expand on his core campaign messages about the need to reform banking regulations, campaign finance rules and higher education. Asked about inequality in public education, he said it was "beyond disgraceful" and cited challenging conditions in Detroit's school system.

He told the audience that rather than a world economy that looks out for the common good, "we have been left with an economy operated for the top 1 percent, who get richer and richer as the working class, the young and the poor fall further and further behind."

"We don't choose to politicize the pope," Sanders told attendees, "but his spirit and courage and the fact, if I may say so here, that his words have gone way, way, way beyond the Catholic Church."

Sanders also warned that youth around the world are no longer satisfied with the status quo, which includes "corrupt and broken politics and an economy of stark inequality and injustice."

During the meetings, he sat next to the other main guest of honor at the Vatican: Bolivian President Evo Morales, whose is renowned for his anti-imperialist, socialist rhetoric. President Rafael Correa of Ecuador also attended.

As he walked through Vatican City's Perugino gate, Sanders was greeted about two dozen supporters, some of whom carried signs bearing Sanders' name. "This is the first candidate I have seen in awhile, a matter of fact my entire life, that I feel like wants to make real changes," said Kevin Jaksik, 29, of Austin, Texas, who now lives in Rome.

Back home, Clinton holds a significant delegate lead against Sanders, but the senator has vowed to stay in the campaign until the party's July convention. His message calling for a political revolution to address wealth inequality and the influence of Wall Street on U.S. politics has galvanized many Democrats and independents.

Despite being enmeshed in an increasingly bitter campaign against Clinton, Sanders aides said the trip was not aimed at appealing to Catholic voters who comprise a large share of the Democratic electorate in New York and an upcoming contest in Pennsylvania.

The Vatican has been loath to get involved in electoral campaigns and usually tries to avoid any perception of partisanship involving the pope. Popes rarely travel to countries during the thick of political campaigns, knowing a papal photo opportunity with a sitting head of state could be exploited for political ends.

As a result, the invitation to Sanders to address the Vatican conference raised eyebrows and allegations that the senator lobbied for the invitation.

The chancellor for the pontifical academy, Bishop Marcelo Sanchez Sorondo, has said he invited Sanders because he was the only U.S. presidential candidate who showed deep interest in the teachings of Francis.

The Rev. Matt Malone, editor of the Jesuit magazine America, said Sanders' trip was unlikely to have much of an impact on Catholic voters, noting that conferences like the one Sanders is attending "happen all the time."

"I don't think that Bernie Sanders going to the Vatican is going to help Bernie with Catholics any more than Ted Cruz going to a matzo factory is going to help him with the Jewish vote," said Malone, who served as a speechwriter to former Rep. Marty Meehan, a Massachusetts Democrat.

But there were other benefits. The trip offered his extended family a brief respite: Sanders was accompanied on the trip by his wife, Jane Sanders, and 10 family members, including four grandchildren.