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Apts for Rent

1 bedroom and HUGE 2 bedroom, 2 bath apartments available NOW! All utilities included except A/C, 1 bedroom \$504 and HUGE 2 bedroom 2 bath \$674 Please call or text 239-849-7674

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

The cardboard/paper

recycling trailer at the school is **Open**

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Wednesday, Nov. 23

NO SCHOOL - Thanksgiving Break
Senior Menu: Chili, corn bread, coleslaw, Lime Pear Jell-O.
7 p.m.: St. John's Lutheran Thanksgiving Eve Service

Thursday, Nov. 24

HAPPY THANKSGIVING

Friday, Nov. 25

NO SCHOOL - Thanksgiving Break

Sunday, Nov. 27

9 a.m.: Emmanuel Lutheran Worship (No Sunday School)
9 a.m.: St. John's Lutheran Worship
10 a.m.: St. John's Lutheran Sunday School
10 a.m.: Heaven Bound Ministries worship at Pierpont Church
7 p.m.: Snow Queen Contest at GHS Gym

Monday, Nov. 28

Senior Menu: Meatballs, mashed potatoes and gravy, carrots, fruit cocktail, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: French toast sticks, links, fruit, juice, milk.
School Lunch: BBQ, sweet potato tots, broccoli and dip, fruit.
6:30 a.m.: Emmanuel Lutheran Bible Study

Tuesday, Nov. 29

Senior Menu: Creamed chicken, buttermilk biscuit, peas, Mandarin Oranges.
School Breakfast: Egg sandwich, fruit, juice, milk.

"From minor scratches to a complete rebuild . . . we can do it all!"

NOW OPEN

Harris
Auto Body ABDN

225 Brown County Hwy 19 South
Aberdeen: 605/725-4900



Sippel to celebrate 95th Birthday!

Emery Sippel of Groton will celebrate his 95th birthday on November 25. Greetings may be sent to 402 E. 15th Ave., Groton, SD 57445-2290.

2017 DOG LICENSES AVAILABLE NOW!!

Licenses due by Dec. 30, 2016

Fines start after Dec. 30, 2016

Dogs CAN NOT be licensed without providing updated rabies shot information, please bring records for each dog to City Hall

Please contact City Hall as soon as possible if you no longer have any dogs

Spayed or neutered dogs are \$5 per dog, otherwise \$10 per dog

Hey Kids! Come see Santa!



Saturday, Dec. 10, 9-11 a.m.
**Professional Management
Services**

Downtown Groton
Cookies & Juice for the kids
Photographer Available

GROTON

Chamber Of Commerce

Made it possible for Santa to come to Groton!

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DOUG SIPPEL BENEFIT

Event sponsored by Friends and Family of Doug Sippel

SATURDAY
NOVEMBER

26

- > Consignment Auction 4:00 p.m.
- > Live Auction to follow
- > Silent Auction 4:00-8:00 p.m.
- > Split Pot
- > Raffles
- > Fresh Lefsa
- > Lunch Served - Free Will Donation

DOUG HAS
ENCOUNTERED
HEALTH
ISSUES AND IS
UNABLE TO
WORK.
PLEASE COME
SHOW YOUR
SUPPORT!

Partial List of Live Auction Items

- >Registered Angus Bull
- >1/4 Beef
- >Muzzle Loader
- >Weber Q Grill
- >Popcorn Popper
- >Piano
- >Computer Desk
- >Little Tikes KitchenSet

Partial List of Consignment Auction Items

- >1993 Dodge Dakota
Pickup
 - >1994 Prowler 5th Wheel
Camper
 - >Wood Chipper
- Benefit receives 10% of sale
price on Consignment -
consignee 90%. Please call
Topper at 397-7337 with
items.

Groton Legion at 4:00 P.M.
Saturday November 26th

Smaller donation items may be dropped off at the city office. For larger items, please call Topper at 397-7337 or Cheri at 380-2197.

Fund set up at First State Bank in Groton in the name of "Doug Sippel Benefit"

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From The Groton Area Junior Kindergarten Students. . .

HAPPY THANKSGIVING



Axel Abeln, son of Branden and April Abeln. He is thankful for getting a new toys



Nolan Bahr, son of Brian Bahr and Andrea Eisenbeisz. He is thankful for sharing toys, getting new books



Kayson Cameron, son of Arielle Cameron and Bill Cameron. He is thankful for going to grandma and grandpas for thanksgiving.



Rachael Dobbins, daughter of Perryn and Angela Dobbins. She is thankful going boating with her dad.

More students to be featured in tomorrow's GDI

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70th Annual Kiwanis Snow Queen Contest Sunday, Nov. 27, 7 p.m., GHS Gym

Sr./Jr. Snow Queens
Prince/Princesses
Junior Talent
Senior Talent
Guess Frosty



Ice Cream
Social will be
held during
the
intermission



GROTON

Chamber Of Commerce

**Sign Up for Groton Chamber
Bucks at the Holiday Boxes
Located This week at the
Groton Dairy Queen
and S & S Lumber**

Week of Nov. 28: Groton Vet Clinic & Ken's Food Fair

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A Message of Thanks

We're counting our blessings this Thanksgiving, and we couldn't have asked for a better bunch of neighbors than you!

Have a wonderful holiday and please accept our heartfelt gratitude for your most generous support this past year.



Lifetime Warranty on all Collision Work!

Construction is a lot like Thanksgiving!

It takes time to plan and make the Thanksgiving meal, but when you're done, it sure is good. It takes time to plan and build a house, but when Blocker Construction is done with it, it sure is great! We wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and thanks for all your support this past year.



BLOCKER
CONSTRUCTION

NEW CONSTRUCTION
REMODELING
HOOP BARNs

(605) 216-2677

(605) 226-4062

Today in Weather History

November 23, 1996: Heavy snow of 6 to 8 inches fell across most of northern South Dakota, adding to already significant snow depth. Roads became snow-packed, which hampered travel, resulting in the postponement of many activities. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Aberdeen, Isabel, Roscoe, and Mellette; 7 inches at Eagle Butte, Timber Lake, Selby, Faulkton, Leola, Frederick, Webster, and Sisseton; and 8 inches at Britton, Ipswich, Eureka, and McLaughlin.

1909 - Rattlesnake Creek was deluged with 7.17 inches of rain in 24 hours to establish a record for the state of Idaho. (The Weather Channel)

1943 - Northern New Hampshire was in the grips of a record snowstorm which left a total of 55 inches at Berlin, and 56 inches at Randolph. The 56 inch total at Randolph established a 24 hour snowfall record for the state. In Maine, Middle Dam received a record 35 inches of snow in 24 hours. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Rain and gale force winds prevailed along the Northern Pacific coast. Quillayute, WA, received 1.57 inches of rain in 24 hours, including nine tenths of an inch in six hours. Heavy snow fell over northern Oregon and the Cascade Mountains of Washington State. Temperatures began to moderate in the eastern U.S. following a bitterly cold weekend. (The National Weather Summary)


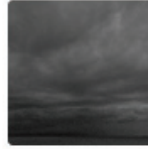





1988 - Low pressure crossing the Great Basin brought wintry weather to parts of the western U.S. Up to a foot of snow blanketed Yellowstone Park, and winds gusted to 70 mph at Casper WY, and reached 95 mph near Reno NV. Up to seven inches of rain was reported in the Grass Valley and Nevada City area of California. Paradise CA was soaked with 5.37 inches of rain in 24 hours. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Low pressure tracking across the Carolinas brought heavy rain to parts of the Southern Atlantic Coast Region for Thanksgiving Day, and blanketed the Middle Atlantic Coast States and southern New England with heavy snow. The storm produced up to nine inches of snow over Long Island NY, and up to 14 inches over Cape Cod MA, at Yarmouth. Totals of 4.7 inches at New York City and 6.0 inches at Newark NJ were records for Thanksgiving Day, the 8.0 inch total at Providence RI was a record for any given day in November, and the 6.5 inch total at Strasburg CT was a record for the month of November as a whole. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2004 - An outbreak of severe thunderstorms produced reports of 54 tornadoes across portions of Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas and Alabama. In Texas's Hardin county, one person was killed with three injured when a tornado struck during the afternoon (Associated Press).

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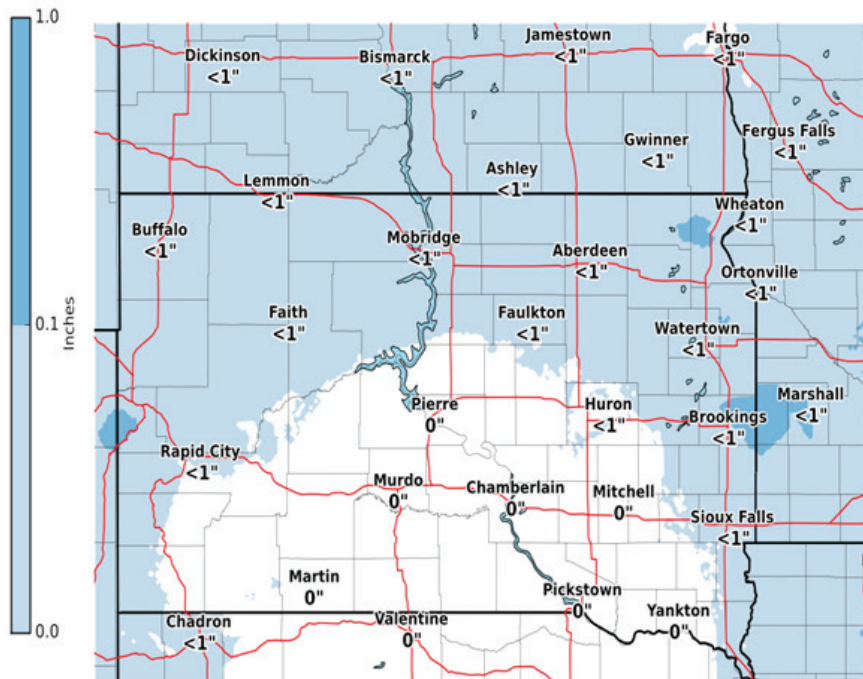
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Today	Tonight	Thanksgiving Day	Thursday Night	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday
						
Patchy Drizzle and Areas Fog then Cloudy	Cloudy	Snow Likely	Gradual Clearing	Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny
High: 37 °F	Low: 29 °F	High: 34 °F	Low: 21 °F	High: 39 °F	Low: 24 °F	High: 44 °F

Light Snow on Thanksgiving Day

Snowfall Thursday

Valid: 11/24/2016 12:00 AM - 11/25/2016 12:00 AM CST



Accumulation generally less than An inch.

High temperatures today and Thursday in the mid30s to lower 40s. Even warmer for Friday and Saturday!



National Weather Service – Aberdeen, SD

www.weather.gov/abr



NWSAberdeen

Created: 11/23/2016 4:17 AM



@NWSAberdeen



Published on: 11/23/2016 at 4:20AM

Dry conditions are expected today, however, a fairly weak system will bring light snow to the region on Thanksgiving Day. Amounts are expected to be generally an inch or less. Highs both today and Thursday will be in the mid 30s to lower 40s. Friday and Saturday will be even warmer.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 37.9 F at 1:02 PM

Low Outside Temp: 34.4 F at 10:44 PM

High Gust: 17.0 Mph at 12:06 AM

Precip: 0.20

Today's Info

Record High: 57° in 1905

Record Low: -17° in 1985

Average High: 35°F

Average Low: 15°F

Average Precip in Nov.: 0.59

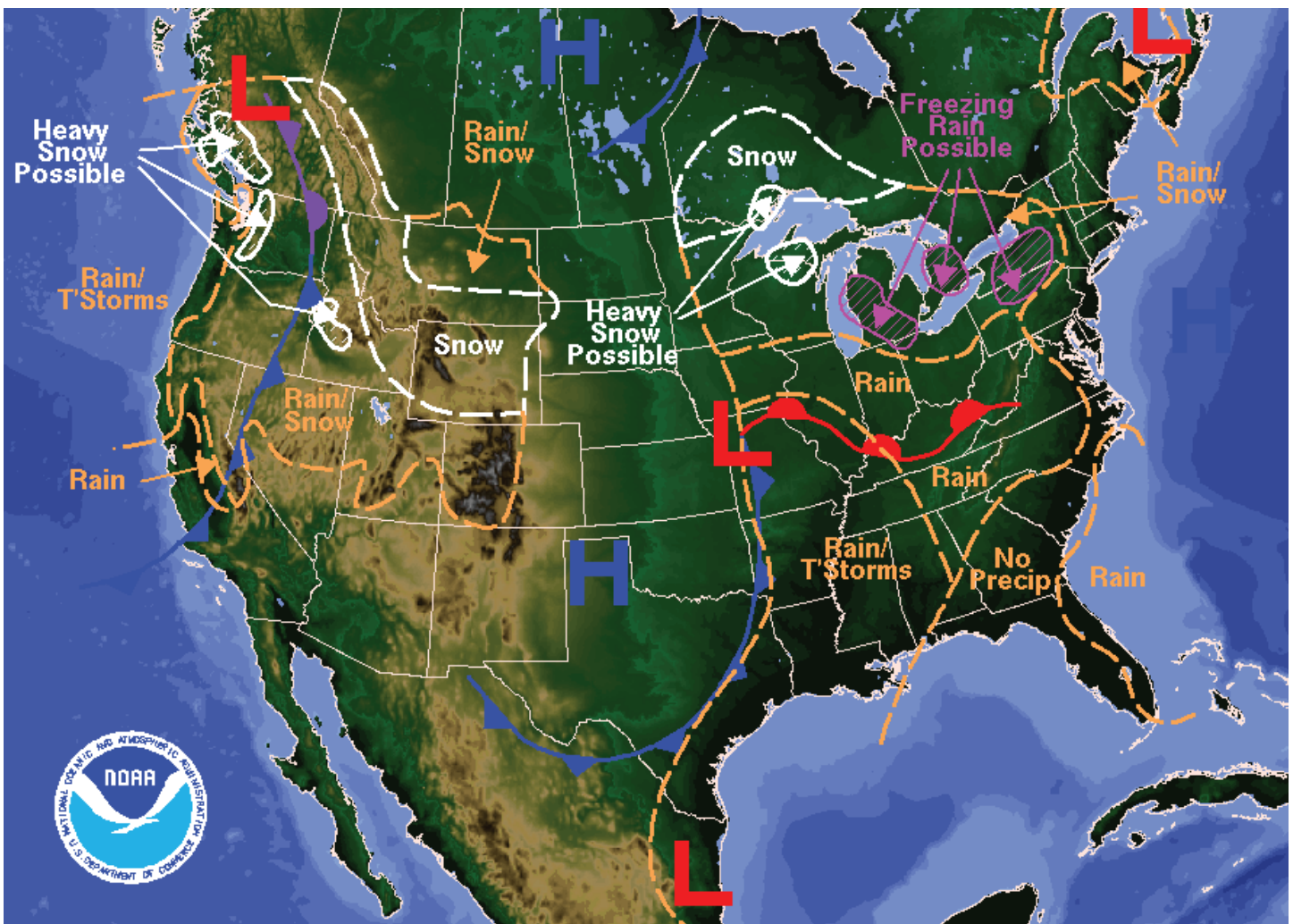
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.20

Average Precip to date: 21.06

Precip Year to Date: 15.20

Sunset Tonight: 4:56 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:45 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Wed, Nov 23, 2016, issued 4:46 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

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WHAT'S IN A GOAL?

Charlie Brown struck out for the fourth time in the same game. In deep despair he cried out, "Lucy! I'll never make it. All of my life I've dreamed of playing in the big leagues. But I know now I'll never make it!"

"Charlie," she answered, "choose an immediate goal. When you go out to pitch, see if you can walk to the mound without falling."

What's in a goal?

GUIDANCE: Establishing goals provides a process that enables us to accomplish worthwhile projects in life. Great things can be achieved when we know what we want to do. Goals enable us to make plans, solve problems, make decisions and set priorities. Then, at the end of the day, we can sit, review our progress or lack of it, redirect our steps and move forward.

OBJECTIVITY: We all have days when we feel like giving up. But if we have a goal in front of us, we will be able to see progress and see that the struggle is really worth the effort.

ACCOUNTABILITY: If we truly want to make a difference in this world we can find an accountability partner who will work with us to encourage us to "get where we want to go." Being accountable is difficult without someone looking over our shoulder.

LABOR: Anything that has value and worth will require our hard work, patience, perseverance and prayer.

Prayer: Father, You have given each of us a reason for living and a purpose to accomplish. May we use the talents You have given us to achieve great things for You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Philippians 3:13-14 ...Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

The logo for Golden Living, featuring the words "golden" in orange and "living" in blue, with a stylized orange and blue wave graphic below.

We now accept

The logo for Avera Health Plans, featuring the word "Avera" in white on a blue background, with a white cross symbol to the right, and "Health Plans" in white below.

for out patient therapy.

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

News from the Associated Press

Rare black-footed ferrets released in South Dakota park

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's Wind Cave National Park has nine more of one of the rarest mammals in North America, following the release this week of nine black-footed ferret kits.

The ferrets were born in captivity at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Black-footed Ferret Conservation Center in Colorado.

It's the third time the park has augmented its black-footed ferret population since re-establishing a population in 2007. The release is part of an ongoing effort to bring the endangered ferrets back from the brink of extinction.

It's not known exactly how many ferrets are in the park, partly because the nocturnal animals are difficult to spot. The estimate is a couple dozen.

Minnehaha County Commission approves \$46M jail expansion

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Minnehaha County commissioners have unanimously approved a \$46 million, 320-bed county jail expansion.

The Argus Leader reports (<http://argusne.ws/2gyX0L>) a county-appointed building committee spent three years outlining the proposed expansion. It's to go up east of the downtown public safety building and replace the outdated Community Corrections Center.

The facility will cost \$42.5 million, with additional funds allotted for parking lot projects and other expenses. Taxes for county residents will increase. County Auditor Bob Litz says the owner of a \$100,000 home will pay about \$10 more per year.

The 320 beds are projected to meet Minnehaha County's needs until 2030. This also includes 45 rental beds for Lincoln County for five years.

Information from: Argus Leader, <http://www.argusleader.com>

Houston blasts S. Dakota 85-58 advancing to Gulf Coast final

ESTERO, Fla. (AP) — Danyean Dotson scored 21 points and grabbed nine rebounds and Danrad Knowles added 16 points and five boards as Houston ran away from South Dakota in the second half for an 85-58 win in the Gulf Coast Showcase.

The Cougars advanced to Wednesday's championship game against Vermont, an 87-73 winner over Hofstra on Tuesday night. South Dakota will take on Hofstra for the third-place game Tuesday.

Houston (3-0) led 13-2 eight minutes into the game and never trailed. The Coyotes closed to 35-30 on a jumper by Tyler Flack, but the Cougars scored twice before the half and led by nine at the break.

Dotson was 4-for-8 shooting from the 3, and Wes Vanbeck, who had 10 points off Houston's bench, was 2 for 3 from distance.

Matt Mooney and Flack each scored 13 points for South Dakota (5-1). The Coyotes shot 9.5 percent from 3-point range, making just 2 of 21 attempts.

Ex-SD police chief gets life term in fiancée's 2009 killing

By REGINA GARCIA CANO, Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A former South Dakota police chief was sentenced to life in prison without parole Tuesday in the 2009 death of his pregnant fiancée.

The sentence against Russell Bertram, the one-time police chief of Harrisburg, came almost two months after a jury in Burke found him guilty of first-degree murder. Bertram, 64, was accused of fatally shooting 26-year-old Leonila Stickney out of jealousy and to collect more than \$900,000 in insurance benefits. Defense attorneys argued it was an accidental shooting.

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At the time of the incident, Bertram told authorities that he was putting his shotgun into his truck after a hunting trip in Gregory County when the weapon fired accidentally, striking Stickney in the abdomen. County authorities ruled the death an accident after a brief investigation.

Authorities, however, revisited the case after Stickney's estranged husband, David Stickney, received a letter from a life insurance company that was processing a claim from Bertram. David Stickney contacted the South Dakota attorney general's office after getting the letter, setting in motion an investigation that led to a murder charge against the police chief-turned-construction worker on September 2015.

Court records show that a \$750,000 life insurance policy had been taken out on Stickney months before her death, followed by a smaller policy with a \$150,000 accidental death benefit, with Bertram as the beneficiary. But Bertram's defense team argued during the trial that the insurance policy was Leonila Stickney's idea to provide for her family in the Philippines if anything happened to her.

Bertram's attorney, Michael Butler, said Tuesday that an appeal will be filed with the South Dakota Supreme Court.

During the two-week trial in Burke, prosecutors argued jealousy was a factor in the killing because Bertram had undergone a vasectomy and knew the child Stickney was expecting couldn't be his.

After Stickney's death, Bertram traveled to the Philippines and married her sister, Melliza Del Balle. But the marriage collapsed after his arrest, and she filed for divorce citing "extreme cruelty," according to court records. Court filings also show that Del Balle and Bertram have one child.

Del Balle told The Associated Press after Bertram was found guilty in September that her family was "happy" with the verdict.

"He deserves it," Del Balle said. "... We are so happy. Finally, we already have justice. I think he did it on purpose for money."

The Latest: AG approves ranch sale to pipeline developer

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — The Latest on the protest against the Dakota Access oil pipeline (all times local): 4:30 p.m.

North Dakota's attorney general has signed off on a purchase of ranch land by the company developing the Dakota Access pipeline.

Energy Transfer Partners bought some 6,000 acres of ranch property near an encampment where the Standing Rock Sioux and others have protested the pipeline for months. The company said the land, part of a century-old operation known as the Cannonball Ranch, would give its workers better access to its construction sites and the finished pipeline.

State law generally bars corporations from owning agricultural land, though there are exceptions.

Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem said in a statement Tuesday that the purchase was temporarily necessary for commercial development. He said he would monitor how the land is used to make sure the company is complying with the corporate farming law.

1 p.m.

The father of a 21-year-old woman from New York says his daughter was seriously injured while protesting the Dakota Access oil pipeline in North Dakota.

Wayne Wilansky says 21-year-old Sophia Wilansky is having a second surgery on a damaged arm at a Minneapolis hospital and might lose the arm. He says his daughter told him she saw a law enforcement officer throw an object at her that exploded.

Wilansky was injured during a clash late Sunday near the camp along the pipeline route in southern North Dakota where protesters have gathered for months.

The Morton County Sheriff's Office has said authorities didn't use any concussion grenades and suggested an explosion heard during the skirmish might have been caused by small propane tanks that authorities said protesters had rigged to explode.

11:45 a.m.

An official says North Dakota likely will have to borrow more money to police protests against the Dakota Access oil pipeline now that the costs have exceeded the \$10 million in emergency spending authorized by the state.

State Emergency Services spokeswoman Cecily Fong says law enforcement costs related to the protests that have been ongoing since August reached \$10.9 million last week.

She says it's "very likely" that officials will need to request more money from the state's Emergency Commission, which earlier approved borrowing \$10 million from the state-owned Bank of North Dakota.

The CEO of pipeline developer Energy Transfer Partners says he made a verbal offer to Gov. Jack Dalrymple to reimburse the state. Dalrymple's spokesman says no formal offer has been made.

Father of injured pipeline protester says she may lose arm

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON** and **AMY FORLITI**, Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — A New York woman seriously hurt protesting the Dakota Access oil pipeline faces multiple surgeries and could lose an arm, her father said Tuesday, and protesters and law enforcement gave conflicting accounts about what might have caused the explosion that injured her.

Sophia Wilansky, 21, was listed in serious condition and was undergoing surgery at a Minneapolis hospital.

Wilansky's father, Wayne Wilansky, said his daughter was hurt when law enforcement threw a grenade. The Morton County Sheriff's Office maintains authorities did not use concussion grenades or any devices that produce a flash or bang during a clash late Sunday and early Monday near the camp along the pipeline route in southern North Dakota where protesters have gathered for months.

The sheriff's office suggested in a statement Monday that an explosion heard during the skirmish might have been caused by small propane tanks that authorities said protesters had rigged to explode.

Dallas Goldtooth, a protest organizer with the Indigenous Environmental Network, did not immediately respond to a request for comment Tuesday. Wayne Wilansky disputed the claim by authorities, saying "there's multiple witnesses and my daughter, who was completely conscious, said they threw a grenade right at her."

The North Dakota Highway Patrol in a statement Tuesday backed up the sheriff's office's version of events, saying officers during the skirmish spotted protesters with "multiple silver cylinder objects."

"It was at this time an explosion occurred and several protesters ran to the area, pulled a female from under the burned vehicle, and fled the scene," the patrol said.

Officers who investigated found 1-pound propane tanks "including one that appeared to be intentionally punctured," the agency statement said.

During the clash, officers using tear gas, rubber bullets and water sprays against protesters who they say assaulted officers with rocks, asphalt, water bottles and burning logs. One officer was injured when struck in the head with a rock. At least 17 protesters were injured severely enough to be taken to hospitals, according to Goldtooth.

Wayne Wilansky denounced the law enforcement tactics, saying "this is not Afghanistan, this is not Iraq. We don't throw grenades at people."

Morton County Sheriff's office spokeswoman Maxine Herr on Tuesday said "authorities continue to defend our tactics."

A GoFundMe account for Wilansky had raised more than \$194,000 in 18 hours, with more than 7,200 people contributing. It was the highest trending account on Monday night, according to GoFundMe spokeswoman Kate Cichy.

The \$3.8 billion pipeline to carry North Dakota oil to a shipping point in Illinois is largely complete outside of a stretch under a Missouri River reservoir in North Dakota near the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation. The tribe and others have been opposing the construction for months, saying the pipeline threatens the tribe's drinking water along with American Indian cultural sites.

Protests have intensified as the dispute plays out, with total arrests since August reaching 528 on Monday.

North Dakota officials may need to borrow more money to police protests, with costs exceeding the \$10 million in emergency spending authorized by the state.

Total state law enforcement costs related to the protests reached \$10.9 million last week, according to state Emergency Services spokeswoman Cecily Fong. Morton County has spent an additional \$8 million.

Fong said it's "very likely" officials will go back to the state's Emergency Commission to request more money.

Kelcy Warren, CEO of pipeline developer Energy Transfer Partners, told The Associated Press last Friday that he made a verbal offer to reimburse the state for policing costs during an earlier conversation with Gov. Jack Dalrymple.

Dalrymple's spokesman, Jeff Zent, said the governor doesn't recall Warren making an offer and that even if one was made, it's unclear whether the state could legally accept it.

"The bottom line is the governor has not received a formal (offer), nor are we seeking one out," Zent said, adding that "our focus is to continue to press the Obama administration to help cover these costs."

Amy Forliti contributed from Minneapolis. Follow her on Twitter at: <http://www.twitter.com/amyforliti>.
Follow Blake Nicholson on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/NicholsonBlake>

Massive project proposed to remove juniper trees in Idaho

By KEITH RIDLER, Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Federal officials are proposing one of the largest ever projects to remove juniper trees to protect habitat for imperiled sage grouse and might also benefit cattle ranchers.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management on Monday announced it's taking public comments through Jan. 3 on the plan to eliminate the trees from 940 square miles in Owyhee County in southwest Idaho.

"For juniper, these numbers are unprecedented," said Karen Launchbaugh, director of the University of Idaho's Rangeland Center. "This is bold."

Launchbaugh said the sheer scale of the project could give scientists new insights into how to deal with vast juniper forests across the West that have sprung up in the last century. The project must first go through an analysis that includes an environmental impact statement.

Experts say juniper trees have expanded, displacing sagebrush needed by sage grouse and several hundred other species in many Western states due to fire suppression efforts and other human activities. The trees also reduce grasses for cattle.

"The cattlemen will benefit from this because it will mean more forage," Launchbaugh said. "Also, elk and deer will benefit because it's the same forage they eat."

The ground-dwelling, chicken-sized sage grouse are found in 11 Western states, where between 200,000 to 500,000 remain, down from a peak population of about 16 million. The males are known for their strutting courtship ritual on breeding grounds called leks, and produce a bubble-type sound from a pair of inflated air sacks on their necks.

They depend on sagebrush for food year-round, and hens nest underneath the plants. Tall native grasses help screen the hens and their eggs and chicks from predators.

"Conserving habitat for sage-grouse is vital to improving the health of the entire ecosystem," BLM Boise District Manager Lara Douglas said in a statement.

The total size of the project is more than 2,300 square miles, but only a portion of that involves juniper removal, which will be done with chain saws or by mobile, tree-cutting machines called masticators. Officials say the overall project area includes about 70 occupied sage grouse leks.

The federal government has been working to protect that kind of key habitat to avoid an Endangered Species Act listing for the greater sage grouse. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service declined to list the bird last year, noting ongoing conservation efforts, but will review the bird's status within five years.

Conservation efforts include a 139-page plan released late last month by the Interior Department which serves as a how-to guide to Interior Secretary Sally Jewell's five-page secretarial order in early 2015 calling for a "science-based" approach to safeguard the greater sage grouse.

The plan identifies juniper encroachment on sage grouse habitat as one of the key problems, and that a better understanding of removing junipers on a large scale is needed. The proposed Idaho project includes

ongoing analysis of the results of the juniper removal from the 940 square miles.

"We need to somehow get juniper back in its place, and I think this (project) could be really great," said Launchbaugh, noting the many studies likely to come out of the project in which she hopes to take part.

New school choice program hands out \$210K in scholarships

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota organization helping students attend private schools under a state-backed tax credit program has given out 280 scholarships totaling nearly \$210,000, a program organizer said Tuesday.

Since the school choice program's start in July, two companies have donated a total of \$250,000 for the scholarships, supporter Sen. Phyllis Heineman told members of a legislative oversight committee.

Under the law, insurance companies can get an 80 percent tax credit for total contributions to a grant organization that provides the scholarships. The total amount of credits is capped at \$2 million each budget year.

Organizers are talking to a lot of insurance companies, said Heineman, a retiring Republican lawmaker from Sioux Falls who sponsored the bill during the 2016 legislative session to create the program.

"I mean, \$2 million would be our goal," Heineman said of fundraising through December. "We're thrilled with where we're at just because it's such a brand new program and a new concept."

The tax credits target businesses that pay an insurance company tax in South Dakota because it is a stable source of revenue that shows consistent growth.

Supporters say the law gives parents the opportunity to make a choice about where they want their children to go to school.

Critics argue the state has an obligation to provide public education and that the measure could unconstitutionally direct public funds to religious schools. They worry it could lay the groundwork for a larger program that would siphon a significant number of students and support from public schools in the future.

Rob Monson, executive director of the School Administrators of South Dakota, said the main concern is transparency in the program. Under the law, the identities of companies that provide contributions are confidential unless the businesses say otherwise.

"I think that we would certainly like to see it cleared up in the actual law that the transparency is there," Monson said.

The \$250,000 in contributions so far went to Great Plains Education Foundation Inc., an Aberdeen organization registered to provide the private-school scholarships to K-12 students.

Students under the South Dakota program are eligible for the scholarships if their families the year before made up to 150 percent of the income standard used to qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, among other conditions.

So far, the scholarships have gone to children attending 38 different schools, Heineman said. The average scholarship amount is about \$750.

Des Moines, Iowa-based insurance holding company Sammons Financial Group Inc. provided a \$150,000 donation. Sioux Falls-based Avera Health Plans has contributed \$100,000, Heineman said.

Heineman said another company has committed funds, but the money hasn't been received yet.

Elk herd to be trimmed, studied for wasting disease

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — About 40 of the elk at Wind Cave National Park were recently fitted with radio collars so researchers can track their location as they study the effects of chronic wasting disease, while others will be killed to cull the park's elk population.

Volunteers and park staff plan to shoot as many as 300 elk over the next several months to bring the population down from 550 to about 250. Trimming the herd and tracking the remaining elk will help researchers understand the role that the high population of elk has in transmission of the fatal disease, U.S. Geological Survey wildlife biologist Glen Sargeant told the Rapid City Journal (<http://bit.ly/2fYJzBl>).

"What we're going to learn here is transferable to other places," Sargeant said.

Wild Cave officials originally sought to relocate some of the elk to Custer State Park, which had a low number of elk, but efforts fell through. Wind Cave officials found there was higher prevalence of chronic wasting disease than originally thought, which led to Custer officials declining further attempts to relocate elk from the national park.

About four dozen volunteer hunters were selected through a lottery but will need to demonstrate their shooting proficiency and physical fitness before being accompanied to the field for shooting by Wind Cave staff.

Harvested elk will be tested for chronic wasting disease, and carcasses that are free of disease will be processed. The meat will be shared among the volunteer shooters and the nonprofit organization Feeding South Dakota.

The first case of chronic wasting disease in South Dakota emerged in 1997, and it first began to spread among the Wind Cave herd in 2002. An estimated 9.5 percent of the elk in Wind Cave are currently affected by the disease, which causes brain degeneration, emaciation, abnormal behavior, loss of bodily functions and death.

Information from: Rapid City Journal, <http://www.rapidcityjournal.com>

Transgender student bathroom plan may go to voters in 2018

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A ballot measure that would require transgender students to use bathrooms corresponding with their sex at birth may go before voters in 2018, Attorney General Marty Jackley said Tuesday.

Jackley announced that he has filed an explanation of the measure with the secretary of state's office. If supporters gather 13,871 signatures from registered voters by November 2017, it would be placed on the ballot for the 2018 election.

The proposal revives a heated fight from the 2016 legislative session over a similar bill, which Republican Gov. Dennis Daugaard eventually vetoed. The state House failed to override the rejection in March.

Ballot measure sponsor Jack Heyd of Box Elder said he wants to protect children and ensure that students have privacy. He fears people going into restrooms for "nefarious" reasons, said Heyd, a political novice who is chairman of the Committee to Ensure Student Privacy.

Heyd said he's contacted people across the state for what will be a grass-roots effort to collect signatures. Ten measures made it onto the ballot for the 2016 election.

"I can't think of a better opportunity for the people to have a vote on something as important as this," said retiring Rep. Fred Deutsch, a Republican who sponsored the bill in 2016.

Under the plan, schools would have to provide a "reasonable accommodation" for transgender students, such as a single-occupancy bathroom or the "controlled use" of a staff-designated restroom, locker room or shower room.

The language mirrors the 2016 bill, which Daugaard said didn't address "any pressing issue" and that such decisions were best left to local schools.

The regulations would set up transgender students to get bullied, said Terri Bruce, a 53-year-old transgender man who fought against the bill earlier this year.

"I would love to speak to people that have never met a transgender person or don't understand what the issues are that would like to hear what the other side of this looks like," Bruce said. "I just ask that people give my community a fair shot at giving a different perspective."

American Civil Liberties Union of South Dakota executive director Heather Smith said in a statement that putting the rights of transgender children up for a popular vote is another "shameful attempt" to put discrimination into state law. The organization is prepared to fight back against such proposals, she said.

Such a bill is likely also to be introduced again during the 2017 session that begins in January. If lawmakers are successful in passing it, Heyd said his work would likely be finished.

"If they can't get the job done, then I'll be ready," Heyd said.

State commissioner leaves governor's administration

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Dennis Daugaard's office says the state's former chief financial officer has left the administration shortly after he was placed on administrative leave.

The governor's office announced Tuesday that Jason Dilges departed his role as commissioner of the state Bureau of Finance and Management.

An aide to Daugaard said last week that Dilges was placed on indefinite administrative leave pending a final decision on his status. Chief of Staff Tony Venhuizen said the matter didn't involve criminal allegations or the handling of state funds, but declined to offer additional details.

Dilges didn't immediately answer a telephone message requesting comment. The governor's office says State Economist Jim Terwilliger will take over as interim commissioner.

Daugaard plans to name a permanent successor after his Dec. 6 budget address to the Legislature.

Unusually late TS Otto takes aim at Central America

PANAMA CITY (AP) — An unusually Tropical Storm Otto swirled over the Caribbean just off Central America on Wednesday heading toward a possible landfall as a hurricane in Costa Rica, which hasn't seen such a storm since reliable record-keeping began in 1851.

Heavy rains from the storm were blamed for three deaths in Panama, and officials in Costa Rica ordered the evacuation of 4,000 people from its Caribbean coast.

The U.S. National Hurricane Center said the westward-moving storm had weakened slightly overnight down to tropical storm status, with winds of 70 mph (110 kph). But it said the storm would likely recover hurricane force and make landfall Thursday in the border region of Nicaragua and Costa Rica.

The storm caused heavy rains in Panama as it moved roughly parallel to that nation's northern coast.

Jose Donderis, Panama's civil defense director, said a landslide just west of Panama City early Tuesday trapped nine people. Seven were rescued but two were pulled from the mud dead. In the capital, a child was killed when a tree fell on a car outside a school.

The country "faces one of the worst meteorological situations, with imminent risk," Donderis said.

Panamanian authorities canceled school and began to release water from the locks and lakes feeding the Panama Canal.

Costa Rica's National Emergency Commission said it was evacuating 4,000 people from the area where the storm was expected to hit and where rivers could overflow. The effort was expected to involve evacuations by plane, boat and road in the low-lying coastal areas.

Costa Rican President Luis Guillermo Solis said Otto could damage the country's important coffee and agriculture sectors.

Early Wednesday, the hurricane had top sustained winds of 70 mph (110 kph) and was moving westward at 5 mph (7 kph), the U.S. hurricane center said. Otto was centered about 235 miles (375 kilometers) east-northeast of Limon, Costa Rica.

AP Sources: Trump taps Gov. Nikki Haley for ambassador to UN

By JULIE BYKOWICZ, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump has chosen South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, the first woman tapped for a top-level administration post during his White House transition so far.

Two sources familiar with the decision, who requested anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss it by name ahead of the announcement, also said that the ambassadorship will be a Cabinet-level position.

Haley, an outspoken Trump critic throughout much of the presidential race, would become his first female — and first nonwhite — Cabinet-level official if confirmed by the Senate. She's the second Asian-American to serve as a U.S. governor.

Not all presidents have treated the ambassadorship to the U.N. as a Cabinet-level position, and Repub-

licans have tended not to grant that status.

Haley's new job clears the way for Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster to step into the role of South Carolina governor. McMaster was an early Trump endorser, backing him before the state's GOP primary in February.

At the time, Haley campaigned for Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, before going on to support Texas Sen. Ted Cruz. Despite misgivings about Trump, she met with the president-elect last week at Trump Tower. Afterward, Haley said they'd had a "very nice" conversation.

Trump is spending Thanksgiving with his family at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Florida.

Airstrike hits Mosul bridge, disrupting IS supply lines

By BRIAN ROHAN and QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA, Associated Press

MOSUL, Iraq (AP) — An airstrike by the U.S.-led coalition on Wednesday "disabled" the fourth bridge on the Tigris River in Mosul, leaving the northern Iraqi city with a single functioning bridge and further disrupting the Islamic State group's supply lines amid the government offensive against IS militants.

The extremist group's media arm, the Aamaq news agency, and a top Iraqi commander in Mosul reported the airstrike, which took place before dawn. It was the second airstrike to target a Mosul bridge this week and the fourth since shortly before the Oct. 17 start of the Iraqi government's campaign to retake the city from IS.

The airstrike was followed by intense fighting in an eastern Mosul neighborhood where Iraq's special forces are slowly advancing toward the city center, hampered by suicide car bombings, sniper's fire and concerns over the safety of civilians still living inside the city.

Mosul had five bridges over the Tigris until shortly before the start of the campaign. Targeting the bridges appears designed to disrupt IS supply lines in Mosul, which is sliced in half by the river. Most of the fighting in Mosul is taking place in the eastern part of the city — east of the Tigris — where Iraqi special forces are slowly moving toward the city center in the face of stiff IS resistance.

The destruction of the bridges means that the Iraqi military and its allies — the Kurdish peshmerga forces and Sunni tribesmen — would have to use military pontoon bridges to cross the river when they arrive at the banks of the river.

Brig. Gen. Haider Fadhil of the Iraqi special forces told The Associated Press that his men were slowly pushing back IS fighters in the densely populated Mosul neighborhood of Zohour. He said their progress was hampered by IS suicide car bombs, several of which were targeted by coalition aircraft before they reached their intended targets. His men were in control of about half the neighborhood by Wednesday afternoon, he said.

Mortars, artillery and automatic fire were used in the fighting, which prompted dozens of families to flee their homes to the safety of centers set up for displaced civilians away from front-line neighborhoods, according to an AP team in Mosul. Unmanned aircraft flew overhead and deep booms from airstrikes could be heard. Plumes of smoke rose above the battlefield.

By the afternoon, reinforcement of about 100 heavily armed special forces troops arrived and moved directly to the battlefield.

The displaced families arrived to safety carrying plastic bags filled with personal belongings. They had walked from neighborhoods closer to the center of the city. One family arrived on a donkey-drawn cart.

Across the street from where the displaced civilians were being loaded onto trucks, a wounded soldier was brought for treatment. Later, the body of a dead soldier arrived in a black Humvee. It was wrapped in a blanket bearing the image of Imam Hussein, one of the most revered saints to Shiite Muslims. Later, five members of the same family were rushed into the medical aid station. All five — a man and four children — were bleeding from shrapnel wounds when a mortar hit their home in the Tahrir neighborhood.

Dozens of other displaced civilians also descended on the aid station but were turned away by troops, who said they had intelligence that IS was planning to send suicide bombers masquerading as displaced families there.

The progress of the Mosul campaign has been slow as the Iraqis and the U.S.-led coalition avoid using overwhelming power against the Islamic State group because of the presence inside the city of some 1

million civilians.

On Tuesday, a U.N. spokesman said the number of displaced people fleeing the military operation in Mosul has risen to over 68,000.

Stephane Dujarric said 8,300 Iraqis had been displaced from the city and outlying districts over the past four days, citing figures from the U.N.-linked International Organization for Migration.

The majority of the displaced — 59,200 — came from the districts surrounding Mosul and the rest from inside the city, he said.

In Turkey, Prime Minister Binali Yildirim and the prime minister of Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region, Nechirvan Barzani, met Wednesday to discuss the operation to oust IS militants from Mosul, according to an emailed statement.

Ankara and the Iraqi Kurds have forged strong economic bonds. Barzani later travelled to Istanbul where he met with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Abdul-Zahra reported from Baghdad. Associated Press writers Bassem Mroue in Beirut and Suzan Fraser in Ankara, Turkey, contributed to this report.

Dalai Lama: 'I have no worries' about Trump's election

By GANBAT NAMJILSANGARAV and GRACE BROWN, Associated Press

ULAANBAATAR, Mongolia (AP) — Exiled Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama said Wednesday he has "no worries" about Donald Trump's election as U.S. president, adding that he expects the businessman will align his future policies with global realities.

The 1989 Nobel Peace Prize winner's remarks were his most extensive yet regarding the election of the real estate tycoon and reality television star who has called for putting America's concerns first and shown little interest in Washington's traditional espousal of global democracy and social justice.

Commenting at the conclusion of a four-day visit to Mongolia, the leader of Tibetan Buddhism said he looks forward to seeing Trump at some point following the Jan. 20 inauguration. Such meetings usually draw protests from Beijing, which accuses the Dalai Lama of seeking to split Tibet from China.

The 81-year-old monk said he has always regarded the U.S. as the leader of the "free world" and wasn't concerned about remarks made by Trump during the election campaign. Some of those comments have been cited as offensive to Muslims, Hispanics and other U.S. minority groups.

"I feel during the election, the candidate has more freedom to express. Now once they (are) elected, having the responsibility, then they have to carry their cooperation, their work, according (to) reality," he told reporters in the Mongolian capital, Ulaanbaatar. "So I have no worries."

Tenzin Dhardon Sharling, spokeswoman for the self-declared Tibetan government-in-exile in the northern Indian town of Dharamsala, said she was not aware of any plans for a meeting between the Dalai Lama and Trump.

She said the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan exile community have enjoyed good relations with successive U.S. presidents and expected that to continue under a Trump administration.

"His holiness has always put great hope in the U.S. as a champion of democracy. He hopes for continued support from the new president and his government," she said in a telephone interview.

China had demanded Mongolia scrap his visit for the sake of the "general picture of a sound and steady development of bilateral ties." Mongolia's fragile economy is heavily dependent on China, and the countries are in discussions of a \$1.2 billion Chinese loan to help pull it out of a recession.

Mongolian television station Eagle TV's website reported that China has delayed talks on the loan and on cooperation in mining, apparently in response to the visit by the Dalai Lama, who has lived in India since fleeing Tibet in 1959. Mongolia's Foreign Ministry said it had not received any notice, while China's Foreign Ministry offered no confirmation but demanded Mongolia take measures to "eliminate the negative impact" of the visit.

"The incorrect actions of the Mongolian side regarding the Dalai's visit harmed the political foundations

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of China-Mongolian relations and caused a negative impact on the development of the bilateral relations," spokesman Geng Shuang told reporters at a daily briefing.

In his comments in Ulaanbaatar, the Dalai Lama said his visit to the landlocked, primarily Buddhist nation had no political purpose and that he had not publicly advocated independence for Tibet since 1974. The Dalai Lama has long called for Tibet to remain under Chinese rule, but with greater political participation by Tibetans and stronger protections for its traditional Buddhist culture.

China says Tibet has been part of its territory for centuries, although many Tibetans say they were effectively an independent country for much of that time.

Asked to comment on climate change — which Trump has denounced as a hoax — the Dalai Lama said he was heartened by the turn to alternative energy sources such as solar and wind power.

"I think ... we must now concentrate on these things. I don't know whether we can reduce cars or not. People everywhere busy, busy. I don't know if it will be possible," he said.

Referencing past efforts to minimize damage to the ozone layer, the Dalai Lama said that raised the chances of similar cooperation on climate change.

"So that gives us hope, there is possibility," he said.

While the U.S. has in the past called on China to respect civil liberties in Tibet, Trump has praised authoritarian rulers such as Russia's Vladimir Putin who have been strongly criticized by human rights groups.

Chinese President Xi Jinping congratulated Trump in a phone call and the country's state media have welcomed his election as harkening a less confrontational policy toward China. Those outlets have also applauded Trump's announcement that he would abandon a U.S.-led free trade agreement in Asia that had excluded China.

However, Trump has also accused Beijing of unfair trade practices and pledged to bulk-up the U.S. military, leaving questions as to his ultimate approach to relations with the world's second-largest economy.

Associated Press writer Ashwini Bhatia in Dharamsala, India, contributed to this story.

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

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

1. WHAT INDUSTRY COULD BENEFIT FROM IMMIGRATION PLAN

Some analysts believe the prison population could climb under the Trump administration, and private prison companies stand to benefit the most.

2. TRUMP HAS NO SAY WHETHER CLINTON IS PROBED

The Justice Department is solely responsible for conducting investigations without the influence or opinion of the White House.

3. A YEAR AFTER MCDONALD VIDEO, CHICAGO'S REFORMS UNEVEN

High crime rates persist, and a federal investigation of the city's police practices now may be concluded by the "law and order" appointees of Trump.

4. AMERICANS TAKE BREAK FROM POLITICS, TURN TO TRADITION

They'll start by jamming the nation's roads, airports and railways in what has been predicted to be one of the busiest travel holidays in nearly a decade.

5. TENNESSEE ACCIDENT REVIVES DEBATE

A crash that killed five children in Chattanooga is reviving discussion over whether school buses should also be equipped with seat belts.

6. WHO IS BEING BLAMED FOR MALAYSIAN AIR BAG DEATHS

Five Malaysians have died in accidents linked to faulty Takata air bags and some are blaming weaknesses in the country's recall system.

7. WHERE OTTO IS HEADING

The Category 1 hurricane is tracking toward a possible landfall in Costa Rica, which hasn't seen such a storm since reliable record-keeping began in 1851.

8. COURT BLOCKS FEDERAL PLAN TO EXTEND OT PAY TO MANY

The rule would have made an estimated 4 million more American workers eligible for overtime pay heading into the holiday season.

9. FOR YEEZY, A TRYING YEAR

A relentless schedule and a churning life in the social media glare apparently takes its toll on hip-hop superstar Kanye West, hospitalized for exhaustion and stress.

10. NHL EXPANSION TEAM UNVEILED

The Vegas Golden Knights' logo is a fighting helmet with a "V" in the middle. Their colors are steel grey, gold, red and black.

Trump stance on illegal immigration may aid private prisons

By REBECCA BOONE, Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump's promise to deport millions of immigrants in the country illegally and his selection of tough-on-crime Alabama Sen. Jeff Sessions as attorney general could mean big money for the private prison industry.

Some analysts believe the prison population could climb under the Trump administration, and the stock market seems to agree.

A day after the election, CoreCivic Co., formerly Corrections Corporation of America, saw the biggest percentage gain on the New York Stock Exchange with shares climbing 43 percent.

Geo Group, another private prison company, saw its shares jump 21 percent.

The federal prison population had been trending down for nearly a decade when the Obama administration announced in August that it would phase out its use of some private facilities.

The announcement followed a Justice Department audit saying private facilities have more safety and security problems than government-run lockups.

The policy change did not cover private prisons used by Immigration and Customs Enforcement. However federal officials have also said they would consider phasing out private contractor immigration facilities.

Trump, however, said during his campaign that the nation's prison system was a mess and voiced support for private prisons.

"I do think we can do a lot of privatizations and private prisons. It seems to work a lot better," Trump told MSNBC in March, though he didn't offer any details on what that might mean for the federal prison system.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement holds up to 34,000 immigrants awaiting deportation.

Forty-six of the roughly 180 facilities in which ICE holds those immigrants are privately run, with about 73 percent of detainees held in the private facilities, the agency says.

"Trump was saying during his 100-day plan that mandatory minimums for people re-entering the country would be set at two years — that's going to require a longer-term need for beds," said Michael Kodesch, a senior associate with financial services firm Canaccord Genuity Inc.

Immigration detention centers are particularly profitable for private prison companies because they command a higher rate for each inmate bed, he said.

Yet what's good for investors isn't good for the country, said Bob Libal, executive director of Grassroots Leadership, a national nonprofit group that works to reduce incarceration and detention rates.

"They're handing the keys to a deportation machine over to the Trump administration," Libal said. "And I think there's no reason to believe that the Trump administration won't drive that machine forward through human rights protections or due process protections people in the detention system."

Sessions, Trump's pick for attorney general, was among a handful of Republican senators blocking a bipartisan bill that would reduce lengthy sentences for low-level drug offenders.

McLaurine Klingler, a spokesperson for Sessions, said no one on Sessions' staff was immediately available to talk about his feelings on the DOJ's use on private prisons.

CoreCivic spokesman Jonathan Burns said the company doesn't take positions on proposals, legislation or policies that would determine the basis of an individual's incarceration or detention.

He said the company instead works to "educate lawmakers on the benefits of public-private partnership generally and the solutions CoreCivic provides."

Associated Press writers Sadie Gurman in Denver and Astrid Galvan in Phoenix contributed to this report.

Trump Justice Dept. could shift drug prosecution policies

By ERIC TUCKER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — An Obama administration Justice Department that emphasized the need to be "smart on crime" is being replaced with a Trump presidency that campaigned on being "tough on crime."

The difference between those two philosophies remains to be seen, but one area where the divide is likely to be felt most acutely is in the thousands of drug cases the Justice Department prosecutes annually.

If confirmed as attorney general, Sen. Jeff Sessions, an Alabama Republican and former prosecutor, would inherit a Justice Department that's pursued dramatic changes in the treatment of nonviolent drug criminals. Department leaders, most prominently former Attorney General Eric Holder, have directed prosecutors to limit their use of mandatory minimum punishments, sought to roll back a sentencing structure they see as overly harsh and encouraged the early release of hundreds of inmates.

Sessions is expected to bring a different perspective, given President-elect Donald Trump's campaign warnings that crime in America is "out of control" and his posturing as a law-and-order candidate. Since Sessions opposed legislation this year to revamp the criminal justice system, his selection as attorney general also represents a probable setback for broader overhaul efforts that have stalled in Congress even with the support of the Justice Department.

"I think it slows down reform efforts a little bit nationally," said Inimai Chettiar, justice program director at the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law. "Even though the president doesn't necessarily have the power to change all of the state and local laws, having a national champion was really important."

Sessions "adamantly opposed very moderate efforts to reform sentencing laws," Chettiar added. "He's definitely not a mainstream conservative when it comes to the criminal justice system."

The Justice Department's drug policy is important given the sheer volume of defendants moved through the federal system. Nearly half the Bureau of Prisons population is behind bars for drug offenses, which in fiscal year 2015 was the most common type of federal crime, with 22,631 cases, according to the U.S. Sentencing Commission.

There's been bipartisan support in recent years for proposals aimed at cutting the prison population, but little agreement on how to do it.

The Obama administration, which three years ago unveiled a new clemency initiative, has commuted the sentence of 1,023 federal prisoners, including 79 on Tuesday — a total the White House says is more than the last 11 presidents combined. That effort, which relies on the Justice Department for recommendations of good clemency candidates, could fall by the wayside in a new administration.

Under Holder, the Justice Department in 2013 began a policy initiative known as "Smart on Crime" that directed prosecutors to avoid seeking mandatory minimum prison terms — punishments that limit a judge's discretion and are typically dictated by the quantity of drugs involved in a crime — for low-level, nonviolent offenders.

Justice Department officials say prosecutors appear to be following the directive: The number of federal drug prosecutions dropped in the last year. The cases that were pursued involved more serious crimes, and officials said fewer than half of all drug cases in fiscal year 2015 involved charges with a mandatory minimum sentence.

As attorney general, Sessions would be in a position to undo the "Smart on Crime" memo and replace it with a new one encouraging harsher charging decisions for drug offenders.

But as a senator, Sessions has sometimes expressed support for a more flexible criminal justice system,

including telling former Attorney General Alberto Gonzales at his 2005 confirmation hearing that the drug sentencing guidelines that inform judges' decisions were "tougher than we need them to be."

In 2010, Sessions co-sponsored the Fair Sentencing Act, which increased the quantity of crack cocaine needed to trigger a mandatory minimum punishment and aimed to reduce the disparate penalties for crack and powder cocaine. And Trump's running mate, Indiana Gov. Mike Pence, said at the vice presidential debate that "we need criminal justice reform."

At other moments, though, Sessions has struck a different tone.

During hearings this year, he's said "good people don't smoke marijuana" and also criticized as risky Justice Department policies that he said raise too high the standard to prosecute cases.

Though fiscally minded Republicans have endorsed criminal justice changes, Sessions was among a group of GOP lawmakers this year who opposed legislation that would have allowed judges to reduce prison time for some drug offenders. He warned that the bill would release thousands of violent felons and endanger lives, at a time when crime in some large cities was rising.

That hard-line stance makes some advocates pessimistic about the prospect for a system overhaul under a Sessions administration.

"It was pretty modest reform, and you would have thought that it was a jailbreak the way he talked about that bill," said Kevin Ring, vice president of Families Against Mandatory Minimums. "That was pretty bland, and he was so opposed to it."

Follow Eric Tucker at <http://www.twitter.com/etuckerAP>

Q&A: Why Justice Dept. operates free of White House sway

BY ERIC TUCKER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The revelation that President-elect Donald Trump does not intend to seek a new investigation into Hillary Clinton was startling not only because it seemed to reverse a campaign pledge.

It also suggested that Trump thinks that that's his decision to make, reflecting an apparent lack of regard for the cherished independence of the Justice Department, which is responsible for conducting investigations without the influence or opinion of the White House.

Trump on Tuesday told reporters and editors of The New York Times that "I don't want to hurt the Clintons; I really don't," despite having said during the campaign that he'd seek a special prosecutor to investigate Clinton and that she'd be in jail if he were elected.

Some questions and answers about how the White House and Justice Department interact — and how the system actually works:

Q: DO PRESIDENTS OVERSEE INVESTIGATIONS OF THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT?

A: Definitely not.

Long-standing protocol dictates that the FBI and Justice Department operate free of political influence or meddling from the White House. That's one reason that the FBI director serves a 10-year term and does not turn over the reins as presidential administrations come and go. It also means that presidents are not supposed to supervise, initiate or stop law enforcement investigations.

White House officials and Justice Department lawyers aren't even meant to talk with each other about ongoing criminal investigations or civil enforcement actions, though there is some leeway granted for matters of national security.

A 2007 Justice Department memorandum says the department will advise the White House of criminal or civil-enforcement matters "only where it is important for the performance of the president's duties and where appropriate from a law enforcement perspective."

"This limitation recognizes the president's ability to perform his constitutional obligation to 'take care that the laws be faithfully executed' while ensuring that there is public confidence that the laws of the United States are administered and enforced in an impartial manner," the memo states.

Q: WHY IS THAT SO IMPORTANT?

A: Justice Department officials have long considered it imperative that their investigations not be politicized or tainted by suspicions of interference by the White House or other elected leaders.

Any hint of political meddling could undermine public faith in the legitimacy of an investigation. It could raise the prospect that a person is being investigated, or is being spared from investigation, on the whims of political considerations rather than evidence of guilt or innocence.

Past episodes that have blurred the line between politics and the administration of justice have been fairly disastrous for the government.

During the Watergate scandal, for instance, President Richard Nixon refused to turn over White House audiotapes to Archibald Cox, a special prosecutor investigating the matter. Attorney General Elliot Richardson and Deputy Attorney General William French Smith both resigned rather than follow Nixon's order to fire Cox. Cox was then fired at Nixon's request by then-Solicitor General Robert Bork, an episode that became known as "the Saturday Night Massacre."

In 2007, Alberto Gonzales resigned as attorney general in the wake of the dismissal of several U.S. attorneys, who serve at the president's pleasure. Some of the fired attorneys said they felt pressured to investigate Democrats before elections, though Gonzales said they were dismissed based on their performance records.

Q: DOES THAT MEAN PRESIDENTS HAVE NEVER WEIGHED IN PUBLICLY ON ONGOING MATTERS?

A: The White House has typically balked at questions about the status of Justice Department investigations. But officials, including the president, haven't always strictly abided by that firewall.

President Barack Obama caused a stir in 2014 when he appeared to prejudge an ongoing FBI investigation into the Internal Revenue Service by telling Fox News that there was "not even a smidgeon of corruption."

Obama also said in 2012 that there was "no evidence" that his CIA director David Petraeus caused harm to national security through his affair with his biographer. The FBI later concluded that he had given the woman, Paula Broadwell, classified information and Petraeus pleaded guilty.

Obama told CBS' "60 Minutes" in October 2015 that Clinton's use of a private email server as secretary of state was a mistake but didn't endanger national security — an eyebrow-raising statement given that the FBI's investigation was still underway and law enforcement officials at the time had made no such public characterization.

Conversely, Justice Department and FBI officials are expected under their own protocol to avoid taking public investigative action in the run-up to an election for fear of being seen as influencing the outcome. That's one reason department officials frowned on FBI Director James Comey's disclosure to Congress, less than two weeks before the election, that the FBI would review emails it had recently found that it thought might be connected to the Clinton email case. He announced the conclusion of that review two days before the election with no charges being brought.

Follow Eric Tucker on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/etuckerAP>

Many Thanksgiving travelers hoping to leave politics behind

By TAMMY WEBBER and REBECCA SANTANA, Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — When Mary Mitchell gathers with family for Thanksgiving, she plans to enjoy cooking with her sister, a satisfying meal and maybe a game of charades afterward. One thing that's not on the list: politics.

"It's kind of a sacred time for family to be together, be thankful and enjoy a holiday," Mitchell said Monday as she waited for a flight from New Orleans to her home in Chicago. "I really don't think ... that the political arena should be given that much power to come into your home at that time when it's really special family time."

Almost 49 million people are expected to travel 50 miles or more for the holiday, the most since 2007, according to AAA. Many are hoping to take a break from the rancor and division of the election between Republican Donald Trump and Democrat Hillary Clinton and instead focus on what unites them: family and tradition.

Kevin Baumann, a 47-year-old boilermaker from Spokane, Washington, belongs to a union whose members are expected to vote Democratic and is accustomed to talking politics at family gatherings, where things can get heated. But Baumann said he has no plans to bring up the subject Thursday at his parents' house, an annual event he missed the last two years because of work.

"We'll avoid it," said Baumann, as he stopped in central Montana with his 27-year-old son on his way home to Washington after working on a coal plant in Iowa. "We've got bigger things to talk about during the holidays."

Some people dread a family showdown so much that they're opting to stay home, said Heather McCutcheon, 48, a Chicago massage therapist and practitioner of Reiki, a method of reducing stress through touch.

"They are anticipating at best that it will be awkward and uncomfortable; at worst, a conflict," McCutcheon said.

She said she's seen Facebook posts issuing open Thanksgiving invitations for those who don't want to go home. Another friend plans to celebrate with family but is getting a hotel room to avoid her mother's gloating over Trump's win.

McCutcheon will spend Thanksgiving with friends, all of whom — like her — supported Clinton. But she still doesn't want to talk politics: "I don't want to spend Thanksgiving rehashing this," she said. "I'm hoping for a moratorium on political talk."

Trump voter Stephanie Keller of Picayune, Mississippi, agrees that people should focus on coming together this Thanksgiving — to support the president-elect.

"I hope that people calm down and realize that a decision has been made by obviously a majority of the United States and that we can just come together and support him the way that we're supposed to," said Keller, who was at the New Orleans airport on her way to Boston to visit a friend.

Some families have already set ground rules.

"My sister-in-law is a big Trump supporter, and she and I have gone back and forth for this entire election," said Arlene Anjos of Roselle Park, New Jersey, who voted for Clinton. "It got to the point where we were having a conversation about Thanksgiving and ... one of the agreements was that we're not going to talk about politics anymore."

"That is off-limits for this Thanksgiving dinner," she said.

Santana reported from Kenner, Louisiana; Matthew Brown in Billings, Montana, also contributed to this report.

Tons of security: Dump trucks protect NY Thanksgiving parade

By TOM HAYS, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Fans of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade who come to see the soaring SpongeBob and Snoopy balloons may get a far less heartwarming sight this year: giant dump trucks filled with sand.

More than 80 city sanitation trucks will be used at intersections and other strategic spots along the 2 ½ mile parade route to create an imposing physical barrier to terror. The trucks weigh about 16 tons empty and up to twice that with sand.

"You can ram a New York City Sanitation Department sand truck with a lot of things, but you're not going to move it," said John Miller, the New York Police Department's top counterterrorism official.

While the trucks have been used like this before — most recently to protect Trump Tower — the New York Police Department says they will play a bigger role at this year's parade in the wake of the cargo truck attack in Nice, France, that killed more than 80 people and a recent posting in an English-language Islamic State magazine that called the parade "an excellent target."

As scary as that sounds, authorities say there's no confirmation of a credible threat and they have repeatedly urged spectators to not stay away.

Miller said that while such postings are psychological warfare intended to spread a message of fear, "We never accede to that." A front-page headline in Tuesday's Daily News creatively paraphrased the message

the NYPD seeks to send: "Truck You, ISIS!"

Aside from the trucks, security for the parade includes teams of officers armed with assault weapons, bomb-sniffing dogs and portable radiation detectors. Plainclothes officers will blend in with the crowd, and other officers will be posted on rooftops along the parade route.

The effort comes at a time when the nation's largest police department already is stretching its resources to protect the midtown Manhattan home of President-elect Donald Trump. On Election Day, at least a half-dozen dump trucks walled off Trump Tower's entrance on Fifth Avenue, making for photos that went viral on the internet.

There was a similar dump truck spectacle with Ronald Reagan as president in 1983, when the Secret Service stationed them at the White House. Officials at the time indicated it was a response to unspecified threats in the wake of the truck bomb attack on a Marine compound in Beirut that killed 239 American soldiers.

In recent years, authorities also have used the trucks to help safeguard the United Nations General Assembly and President Barack Obama's motorcades when he visits the city — an instant formula for epic gridlock. They also were deployed last year for the visit of Pope Francis.

Authorities say the Islamic State group is trying to incite followers to rent trucks of their own to ram into crowds. In response, the NYPD has stayed in touch with rental companies and urged them to report anything suspicious.

Paperwork filed on Monday in a federal case was yet another reminder of the truck threat. It quoted the man charged with seeking to join the terror group saying it wanted someone to commandeer a garbage truck for a "Times Square operation."

Search for missing relatives in Mexican city marks 2 years

By CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN, Associated Press

IGUALA, Mexico (AP) — In the two years since dozens of families in the southern Mexico state of Guerrero banded together to search for relatives who have disappeared, Maria Carmen Figueroa Acevedo has missed only one weekly gathering.

Without hesitation she says she believes her son Ricardo is alive. She dreams regularly of his homecoming. Spending each Tuesday with other families like hers is a weekly dose of hope and why the group has made it to its second anniversary this month. "It gives me the strength to continue," Figueroa said.

The Other Disappeared collective stopped short of calling the milestone a celebration, given the tragedies behind the group's formation. But some 150 relatives turned out Tuesday at site recently occupied for their headquarters, a large property they cleared themselves with a concrete structure spruced up with paint to hold their meetings.

They grapple with a problem that is widespread in Mexico. Nearly 28,000 people were reported missing across the country from 2007 through the end of July, according to government statistics. The real total is believed to be significantly higher due to the fact that many families do not report their loved ones' disappearances out of fear, because many of the disappearances are believed tied to drug violence and reprisals by cartels.

The Iguala group gained notice in 2015 when The Associated Press interviewed relatives of more than 150 of the disappeared in and around Iguala. The vast majority of their missing were young men.

Since its formation two years ago, the group's members have had the remains of 18 relatives returned to them by authorities. Five more sets of remains have been identified and await transfer to their families, said Adriana Bahena Cruz, a representative of the group.

They plan to remodel the building on their headquarters site to have two training rooms and a multi-purpose meeting space. Eventually, they hope to partner with a genetics lab so they can have DNA testing done at the site. They would also like to attract a business, perhaps a factory of some kind, to provide employment for the families, especially the jobless female members left alone to raise children by the disappearance of husbands.

The site on Iguala's north side will be called Victims' City.

"The Victims' City is a place where people can come for help," Bahena said.

The Other Disappeared collective formed in November 2014, less than two months after 43 students from a rural teachers college were abducted by local police in Iguala and turned over to a drug cartel. The students' disappearances drew so much national and international attention that other families, many for the first time, came forward to say they had missing relatives, too.

They began meeting every Tuesday in a church to press their cases. And on Sundays they ventured into the mountains surrounding Iguala to search for signs of secret graves under a punishing sun.

Last month, when leaders of Mexico's Executive Commission for Victims Assistance held a public meeting in Iguala with the governor of Guerrero and representatives of the families, the agency said that up to that point they had assisted the families of 295 missing people in and around Iguala.

In spite of an intensive federal police and military presence since the disappearance of the 43 students, violent crime still sows fear in Iguala, a city that is a center of heroin trafficking. There were 130 killings in the city through October, which was already 24 percent ahead of the total for all of 2015.

Maria del Rosario Noveron Aguilar, who has been searching for her son and daughter-in-law since April 2014, said new members continue to join the Other Disappeared.

"There is a great need to find our relatives," Noveron said. "People continue disappearing."

In an interview with the AP, the Interior Department's deputy secretary for human rights questioned the concept of Victims' City.

"We said clearly that we did not agree with the proposal because it meant re-victimizing," Roberto Campa said, adding that the international norm is to try to reincorporate victims into society at large, not do something that "maintains them as victims."

But Bahena said the name came from the group itself.

"To us — the victims — the name doesn't bother us," she said. "Unfortunately, that's the label they have given us."

For Kanye West, a swirling, eventful year ends in a hospital

By MARK KENNEDY, AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — It's been a hectic year for Kanye West. There was a new album that had a tortured, months-long release. Two fashion shows that were plagued by last-minute changes and long delays. There also was the reopening of a bitter feud with Taylor Swift, an ambitious U.S. concert tour, a newborn son, and a harrowing robbery of his wife.

"When was the last time I wasn't in a hurry," West asks on the song "Real Friends" from the new CD "The Life of Pablo." On another track, West admonishes his less industrious friends: "Y'all sleeping on me, huh? Had a good snooze?"

A relentless schedule and a churning life in the media glare with his wife, Kim Kardashian, apparently took their toll on the Grammy Award-winner. West was taken to Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center in Los Angeles on Monday afternoon for stress and exhaustion.

"In the last 12 months, there probably hasn't been anyone more in the spotlight than Kanye and his wife," said Bob Williams, the CEO/COO of Burns Entertainment & Sports Marketing, which specializes in celebrity procurement and music licensing.

"I don't know any celebrity who has been under more scrutiny than the two of them are," Williams added. "That creates tremendous pressure from the outside — expectations to perform, pressure to respond. It takes time. It takes effort."

In the days leading to his hospitalization, West's behavior was somewhat erratic. On Saturday in Sacramento, California, he ended his show after just four songs but not before a 10-minute tirade about Beyonce, Jay Z, Hillary Clinton, Mark Zuckerberg, the radio and MTV.

West also flooded his Instagram account with nearly 100 fashion photos, many snaps of photos that were out of focus and poorly cropped. Then Sunday's concert in the Los Angeles area was canceled just a few hours before it was to start; West soon decided to scrap the entire tour. Requests for comment from the

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rapper's record label have gone unanswered.

Chuck Creekmur, the founder of AllHipHop.com, has met West several times and while he has no inside knowledge into the artist's mind, he said it feels like the relentless publicity and stress of creativity may be too much.

"The lights are bright and if they are on you all the time — coupled with your own quest for immortality and greatness — I can only imagine it's like running a marathon that never ends," Creekmur said.

For much of 2016, West has been front-and-center, showing off his work and ideas — finished or not — like a ringmaster at a never-ending cultural circus, fueled by his perfectionist streak.

"That perfectionist mentality can become a consuming state of being because there's no such thing," said Creekmur. "If you are in pursuit of perfection, you'll probably find yourself going insane because there is literally no such thing as perfection."

West's year included debuting his latest Yeezy fashion line in baking heat that felled some of the more than 100 models during New York Fashion Week this fall. He was also on "Ellen" with a rambling speech that was full of name-dropping, ambition and "realness."

He also went on Twitter to complain he was \$53 million in debt. He rushed to the side of his wife after she was tied up and robbed of more than \$10 million in jewels in Paris, which left her badly shaken. He melted down at "Saturday Night Live" when staffers tore out the shiny stage he had requested.

And in perhaps the most jaw-dropping act of synergy and ambition, West took over Madison Square Garden in February, spinning new tracks from "The Life of Pablo" while simultaneously debuting his third clothing collaboration with Adidas. Not only did he get 20,000 people to attend at up to \$500 per seat, he also streamed it live on Tidal and movie theaters. No detail was too small: There was a list of 38 rules to which models had to adhere, including "do not act cool."

The CD — which was going to be called "So Help Me God," then "SWISH" and briefly "WAVES" — would actually not be released until April. West had vowed it would only be available on Tidal but backed down.

The album did produce two much-discussed cultural items — one lyrically and one visually — from a single song, "Famous." On it, he rapped: "I feel like me and Taylor might still have sex" and took credit for her fame. It re-ignited the bitter Swift-West feud — West infamously snatched the microphone from Swift at the 2009 MTV Music Awards — and led to furious back-and-forth between the superstars..

The video to the song only added to the firestorm. On it, West and Swift are shown naked, along with a post-coital Chris Brown, Rihanna, George W. Bush, Anna Wintour, Caitlyn Jenner, Bill Cosby and Donald Trump.

Trump would also feature in the lead-up to West's hospitalization. On Friday, during a concert in San Jose, California, West said he didn't vote for president but would have cast a ballot for Trump, praising the president-elect's "method of communication" as "very futuristic." He also spoke about his plans to run for that office in 2020, saying that he will become "a different kind of president."

Williams, the marketing expert, said West seems to thrive on living on the edge. "There can be a fine line between being controversial and too controversial and I think that Kanye has kind of crossed that line a few times," he said. "It's been a very long, busy arduous year."

AP Entertainment Writer Sandy Cohen contributed to this report.

Asian stocks rise after Dow hits record

By JOE McDONALD, AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Asian stocks rose Wednesday after a post-U.S. election rally drove the Dow Jones industrial average to a new high.

KEEPING SCORE: Sydney's S&P-ASX 200 rose 1 percent to 5,465.50 and Seoul's Kospi added 0.5 percent to 1,992.55. Hong Kong's Hang Seng advanced 0.5 percent and the Shanghai Composite Index gained 0.1 percent to 3,250.43. Japanese markets were closed for a holiday. Benchmarks in New Zealand, Taiwan and Singapore also rose, while Indonesia declined.

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WALL STREET: The Dow surpassed 19,000 for the first time. Retailers soared after strong earnings from Dollar Tree and Burlington Stores. Health care stocks slumped after weak results from medical device company Medtronic. The Dow has closed at a record high six times in the two weeks since the presidential election, but trading volume has fallen.

ANALYST'S TAKE: "The bulls have got control here," said Chris Weston of IG in a report. "U.S. equity and many other developed markets are going higher, at least in the short-term." Weston noted investors assume the U.S. Federal Reserve will go ahead with an interest rate hike in December. "Emerging markets have found support and are even attracting buyers," said Weston. "If the Fed were to assess financial conditions in the wake of a potential rate hike they would be wholly enthused."

TRUMP WATCH: President-elect Donald Trump announced the United States would withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership in a brief video statement but avoided mentioning his campaign pledge to build a wall along the Mexican border. Trump's gradual release of policy after giving few details on the campaign trail has started to reduce investor uncertainty, shoring up share prices. "As Trump has rowed back and not mentioned some of his more extreme policy sound bites, some worries about the nature of his presidency may have begun to abate," said Alex Furber of CMC Markets in a report.

CURRENCY: The dollar held steady at 111.07 yen and the euro was little-changed at \$1.0626.

ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. crude gained 2 cents to \$48.05 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract lost 21 cents on Tuesday to close at \$48.03. Brent crude, used to price international oils, shed 2 cents to \$49.10 in London. The contract added 22 cents the previous session to \$49.12.

CNN, Tapper sorry for banner that said 'if Jews are People'

NEW YORK (AP) — CNN and host Jake Tapper have apologized for an on-screen banner Tapper says "horrified" him when it appeared during his show.

The vacationing Tapper responded to outraged viewers with Twitter posts explaining he's "furious."

The offending phrase appeared Monday during a discussion among substitute host of "The Lead" Jim Sciutto and two journalists about Republican President-elect Donald Trump's support from the alt-right.

The segment focused on a white nationalist leader whose anti-Semitic declarations Sciutto called "hate-filled garbage." An on-screen caption stated, "Alt-Right Founder Questions if Jews are People."

CNN has issued a statement calling the caption "poor judgment" and saying it very much regrets it and apologizes.

One of the journalists on the show was The Boston Globe's Matt Viser, who said Tuesday he was bombarded with messages calling him a "closet Nazi" because the caption appeared below his image and led people to believe he's the white nationalist leader.

School bus driver arrested as city mourns 5 children

By JONATHAN MATTISE, Associated Press

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. (AP) — A school bus driver was behind bars Tuesday after a crash killed five youngsters and plunged Chattanooga into mourning over what the mayor called the "most unnatural thing in the world" — a parent losing a child.

Police said Johnthony Walker, 24, was speeding along a narrow, winding road Monday afternoon with 35 elementary school students aboard when he wrapped the bus around a tree. Walker was arrested and charged with five counts of vehicular homicide.

Reeling from the tragedy, Chattanooga residents lined up to donate blood, created a memorial of flowers and stuffed toys at the crash scene.

At an evening prayer vigil, a local church overflowed and a gospel choir cried out in booming song. Preachers and officials spoke of grief, strength and faith.

Children the same age as those who died were talking, getting antsy and playing a little in the capacity-

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filled lobby. Reality intruded, though, as an usher walked a tearful woman through the crowd. "This woman needs a seat. She lost her daughter," he said.

Parents who send their children off to school every day struggled to come to grips with the shock and break the news to their loved ones.

"It's real tough, said Dajuan Butchee, whose daughters, Jamya and Janesa, are eighth-graders who used to go to the same school as the youngsters killed in the wreck. "It's tough on my kids because they know some of the victims as well."

Butchee said it wasn't the first time he heard about a bus speeding: "I think it should wake up more bus drivers to be more cautious because you're dealing with a lot of kids' lives."

Police said Walker was driving well over the posted 30 mph limit when he lost control of the bus, which was not equipped with seat belts. He was jailed on \$107,500 bail for a court appearance Nov. 29 on charges that included reckless driving and reckless endangerment. It was not immediately known whether he had a lawyer.

The hospital said 12 children remained hospitalized Tuesday: six in critical condition and six stable.

Dr. Darvey Koller, a pediatric emergency room physician at Children's Hospital at Erlanger, said identifying the students after the crash was a lengthy process in some cases.

"Many of them were scared or too dazed to talk to us," Koller said at a news conference Tuesday. "Because of their young age, many of them were unable to spell their names, did not know their birthdays or even their parents' names — several said 'Momma' when they were asked what their name was."

Hospital staff photographed each child and showed the images to teachers to figure out identities, he said.

Three of the children killed were in fourth grade, one was in first grade and another in kindergarten, said Kirk Kelly, interim superintendent of Hamilton County schools. Their families were notified, but their names were not released. All the children aboard went to Woodmore Elementary School.

"The most unnatural thing in the world is for a parent to mourn the loss of a child," Mayor Andy Berke said. "There are no words that can bring comfort to a mother or a father. So today, the city is praying for these families."

Chattanooga middle-schooler Armanie Bryant said: "They didn't get to live their lives. They didn't get married. They didn't have no kids, anything about their future."

The National Transportation Safety Board sent a team to investigate, and police obtained a warrant to remove the bus' black box, which contains data on the vehicle's movements.

As the investigation got underway, NTSB chairman Christopher Hart said the agency will look at such factors as the driver's actions, the condition of the bus, and whether seat belts — something the NTSB has been pushing for — would have made a difference.

Craig Harris, a parent of two children who were on the bus, told ABC's "Good Morning America" that the bus driver sometimes drove too fast.

"There has been times where I've seen him going a little faster than he probably should be going," Harris said. He said his daughter and stepson were in shock and pain after the crash.

Walker had an accident involving property damage in September, and his license was suspended for about a month in 2014 for failure to show proof of insurance, according to state commercial driver records. He appeared to have no criminal record in Tennessee, authorities said.

Hamilton County School District spokeswoman Amy Kutcher declined to say whether the district had received any complaints involving Walker, who was employed by an outside bus contractor, Durham School Services. She referred all questions about his performance and that of other Durham drivers to the company.

"Legally, there is no way that we could discipline someone who is not our employee," Kutcher said. "We've got 192 Durham bus drivers. Obviously, this is a bad one."

Durham CEO David A. Duke issued a statement on Twitter saying the company was "devastated" by the accident and working with police and school officials to investigate. Company officials did not return calls and emails seeking comment.

Durham has had other drivers who have run into legal trouble in the school district that includes Chattanooga, according to news reports. Last year, one driver pleaded guilty to aggravated statutory rape, and another was arrested on child-porn possession charges. Both were fired.

Durham, based in Warrenville, Illinois, operates about 13,700 vehicles around the U.S. and has nearly as many drivers, according to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. It had a "satisfactory" safety rating from the agency in July 2015.

The company has had 346 crashes over two years, including three resulting in deaths and 142 with injuries, federal figures show. During that period, it had 53 incidents involving unsafe driving violations.

On Tuesday morning, the heap of mangled metal that used to be a bus was loaded on a trailer and taken away, and counselors were on hand for the students and staff as classes resumed at the school. The Rev. Tavner Smith and a dozen staffers from the Venue Church went to offer support.

"It's devastating," Smith said. "You send your kids to school and think you're going to see them that evening."

Associated Press writers Rebecca Reynolds Yonker and Erik Schelzig contributed to this report. Yonker reported from Louisville, Schelzig from Nashville.

Trump again disavows alt-right, white supremacists

By **BILL BARROW**, Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump is again distancing himself from the alt-right movement as its white supremacist members claim his election as a boon for their agenda.

"I disavow and condemn them," Trump said Tuesday during a wide-ranging interview with staff members of The New York Times.

It's the latest attempt from Trump to separate himself from groups and individuals widely condemned for their advocacy of white supremacy in American culture.

The Republican president-elect added that he does not want to "energize" the groups, one of which garnered viral headlines this weekend with a gathering in Washington, where organizers and attendees evoked Adolf Hitler's Third Reich with cries of "Heil Trump" and reprisals of the Nazi salute.

The Times has not yet released a full transcript or video of the meeting, but participants used Twitter to share his remarks throughout the exchange.

Richard Spencer, an alt-right leader who convened the weekend gathering sponsored by his National Policy Institute, told the Associated Press he was "disappointed" in Trump's comments. But Spencer said he understands "where he's coming from politically and practically," adding that he will "wait and see" how the real estate mogul's administration takes shape.

Still, Spencer argued Trump needs the alt-right movement and should be wary of shunning it because of a few news cycles of bad publicity "that do not define what we're doing." Spencer said Trump needs people like him "to actualize the populism that fueled his campaign."

Trump's denunciation also comes amid continued criticism over Trump tapping Steve Bannon, who managed the final months of the billionaire businessman's presidential campaign, as chief White House strategist. Bannon was previously the leader of Breitbart News, an unapologetically conservative outlet that Bannon has described as a "platform for the alt-right."

At the Times, Trump said Breitbart "is just a publication" that "covers subjects on the right" and is "certainly a much more conservative paper, to put it mildly, than The New York Times."

Before Trump's latest denunciations, Spencer told AP earlier Tuesday that he doesn't see either Trump or Bannon as members of his movement, though "there is some common ground."

He said he and like-minded "identitarians" — his preferred label for white identity politics — see Trump's election as validating their view that the United States is flailing because it has embraced multiculturalism and political correctness at the expense of its European heritage.

Spencer said "without an intellectual vanguard" that white nationalists can provide, Trump would have

a “meaningless” tenure mired in the “mainstream conservative movement” that he’s railed against. “The whole promise of his campaign was that he wouldn’t do that,” Spencer said.

Throughout his campaign, white nationalists have embraced Trump’s hard-line approach on immigration and other issues. He sometimes used his Twitter account to distribute comments and links from white supremacist accounts, including a famous quotation from Benito Mussolini, the 20th century fascist leader of Italy.

The president-elect’s son, Donald Trump Jr., also became a flashpoint by using social media to distribute imagery with xenophobic or racist connotations. In September, the younger Trump posted a doctored image of himself, his father and several other prominent Trump allies next to Pepe the Frog, a cartoon character that Spencer chose as a mascot for his movement. Trump Jr. also retweeted an academic who argued that anti-Semitism is a “logical” response to a belief that Jews control the world’s banks.

In February, the elder Trump refused during a CNN interview to denounce the Ku Klux Klan and one of its former leaders, David Duke, saying he “didn’t know anything” about Duke. Initially, he said a faulty ear piece left him unable to hear the questions clearly, but days later he issued a clearer condemnation.

“David Duke is a bad person,” he said in an MSNBC interview. “I disavowed the KKK,” he added. “Do you want me to do it again for the 12th time?”

Associated Press writer Jonathan Lemire in New York contributed to this report. Follow Barrow on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/BillBarrowAP> .

Bruce Arena returns as US coach, replacing Jurgen Klinsmann

By RONALD BLUM, AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Bruce Arena was a decade removed from the U.S. national team when he received a telephone call from U.S. Soccer Federation Secretary General Dan Flynn on Sunday asking him to meet with USSF President Sunil Gulati the following day.

By midday Tuesday, the winningest coach in the team’s history regained the job he had not wanted to give up.

“I never expected to be back in this role the way it came about over the last 48 hours,” Arena explained. “I hate to say this now to Sunil: I would’ve done this for free.”

A day after Jurgen Klinsmann was fired following two losses that began the final round of World Cup qualifying, Arena agreed to a contract running through the 2018 tournament in Russia.

With the Americans 0-2 at this stage for the first time, the USSF wants to spark a turnaround when competition resumes March 24 with a home game against Honduras followed four days later with a match at Panama. The 65-year-old Arena, inducted into the U.S. National Soccer Hall of Fame in 2010, starts work Dec. 1.

“We need to build the chemistry of this team and have a common goal and really work on a team concept,” he said during a telephone news conference. “I really believe individually and positionally we have good players and we’ve just got to get them working together as a team.

“There are no real secrets on how you build good teams: It takes a lot of hard work, it takes communication, it takes discipline and it takes some talent, and I think we have enough talent to build a good team and end up in Russia 2018. It’s going to take a little time, a little bit patience and a lot of hard work.”

Arena first took over as national team coach after the 1998 World Cup and led the U.S. to a 71-30-29 record. Gulati fired him, failed to reach a deal with Klinsmann and then brought in Bob Bradley.

“I don’t view it as Bruce 2, but sort of Bruce 2.0,” Gulati said. “I think he’s got far more experience than he did when he had the national team the first go-round. He’s proven and re-proven many times at all levels of the game in the United States that he’s an extraordinarily capable and successful coach.”

A wisecracking Brooklynite known for blunt talk and sarcasm, Arena coached the University of Virginia to five NCAA titles from 1978-95, then led D.C. United to championships in Major League Soccer’s first two seasons before losing in the 1998 final. He guided the Americans to the team’s best World Cup finish

since 1930, a 1-0 loss to Germany in the 2002 quarterfinals.

Arena was let go after the team's first-round elimination by Ghana in 2006. He coached MLS's New York Red Bulls from July 2006 to November 2007, then was hired the following August by the Galaxy. He led that team to MLS titles in 2011, 2012 and 2014.

"I think 10 years later I'm better prepared for this job than I was in 1998 and 2002 and ultimately 2006, so I'm hopeful the experiences I had are going to benefit the program," he said. "One of the things you learn from experience is you see things a lot clearer and a lot quicker than you did previously, and the game has slowed down a bit, where I can see as a coach in my position how things are happening on the field."

Hired by Gulati in 2011, Klinsmann coached the U.S. to the 2013 CONCACAF Gold Cup title and the second round of the 2014 World Cup, where the Americans lost to Belgium 2-1 in extra time.

Gulati cited three disappointments that led to Klinsmann's firing: not qualifying for the 2017 Confederations Cup, the under-23 team's failure to reach this year's Olympics and the poor start to the final round of qualifying in the North and Central American and Caribbean region.

The U.S. would have reached the Confederations Cup by winning last year's Gold Cup, but Jamaica upset the Americans in the semifinals, and the U.S. lost a playoff to Mexico.

"Really starting at the Gold Cup, we've had some very up-and-down results," Gulati said. "The Gold Cup was a big disappointment for everyone: for Jurgen, for the players, for our fans."

Two weeks ago, Gulati said he expected Klinsmann to keep his job through the 2018 World Cup. But Mexico won 2-1 in Columbus, Ohio, the first U.S. home loss in qualifying since 2001. That was followed by a 4-0 defeat last week in Costa Rica, the Americans' first four-goal loss in qualifying since 1980.

"None of us expected the two results we got," Gulati said.

He held a series of conversations with USSF board members after last Tuesday's defeat, made the decision Sunday and joined Flynn for a Monday meeting in Los Angeles with Klinsmann.

While Gulati returned to New York, Flynn remained in Los Angeles to negotiate Arena's contract, which was agreed to at 11:30 a.m. EST Tuesday and approved by the board 15 minutes later. Arena's return was announced at 1:21 p.m.

A star forward for Germany in the 1990s, Klinsmann was criticized by some — including Arena — for his use of foreign-born players. Five German-Americans were on his 23-man World Cup roster.

"If I made those comments, I certainly don't believe that that's my attitude," Arena said. "I believe anyone that has a passport in the United States is certainly eligible to play for our national team, and I embrace all players that are eligible to play. I just want to make sure their heart is in the right place and when they place that U.S. jersey on they're playing for that crest on their shirt."

Trump begins backing off campaign vows on Clinton, climate

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Two weeks after his election victory, President-elect Donald Trump began backing off campaign promises Tuesday, including his hard line on climate change and his vow to jail "Crooked Hillary" Clinton that had brought thunderous "Lock her up" chants at his rallies.

A top adviser said Trump is now focused on matters that are essential in setting up his administration, not on comments he made during the heat of the campaign.

After a year blasting The New York Times, Trump submitted to an interview with reporters and editors at their Manhattan office. Among the topics covered, he:

— Pushed back against questions about conflicts that could arise due to a lack of separation between his government post and his many businesses, declaring that "the law's totally on my side, the president can't have a conflict of interest."

— Took his strongest stance yet against the "alt-right," a term often used as code for the white supremacist movement. Though members are celebrating his victory, he said, "It's not a group I want to energize. And if they are energized, I want to look into it and find out why."

— Spoke positively not only of fellow Republicans in Congress — "Right now they are in love with me"

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— but also of President Barack Obama, who he said is “looking to do absolutely the right thing for the country in terms of transition.”

Trump, who left late Tuesday to spend Thanksgiving at his estate in Florida, also continued to work to populate his incoming administration, officially asking GOP presidential rival Ben Carson to head the Department of Housing and Urban Development, according to a person familiar with the offer who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the person was not authorized to discuss the deliberations publicly. Carson is expected to respond after the holiday.

Adviser Kellyanne Conway said earlier on MSNBC’s “Morning Joe” that Trump is “thinking of many different things as he prepares to become the president of the United States, and things that sound like the campaign aren’t among them.”

His interview comments on a possible prosecution of his former foe Clinton stood in stark contrast to his incendiary rhetoric throughout the campaign, during which he accused her breaking laws with her email practices and angrily barked at her that “you’d be in jail” if he were president.

“I don’t want to hurt the Clintons, I really don’t,” Trump said in the interview. Sympathetically, he said, “She went through a lot and suffered greatly in many different ways.”

Though he declined to definitively rule out a prosecution, he said, “It’s just not something that I feel very strongly about.”

Trump had vowed throughout the campaign to use his presidential power to appoint a special prosecutor to probe his Democratic rival for both her reliance on a private email server as secretary of state and what he called pay-for-play schemes involving the Clinton Foundation. Adviser Conway signaled to congressional Republicans earlier Tuesday that they should abandon their years of vigorous probes of Clinton’s email practices and her actions at the time of the terror attacks in Benghazi, Libya.

“If Donald Trump can help her heal, then perhaps that’s a good thing,” she told reporters at Trump Tower in New York.

But some of his conservative supporters strongly disagreed.

If Trump’s appointees do not follow through on his pledge to investigate Clinton for criminal violations he accused her of, “it would be a betrayal of his promise to the American people to ‘drain the swamp’ of out-of-control corruption in Washington,” said the group Judicial Watch.

And Breitbart, the conservative news site whose former head, Stephen Bannon, is now a senior counselor to Trump, headlined its story about the switch with “Broken Promise.”

FBI Director James Comey has declared on two occasions there is no evidence warranting charges against Clinton. Justice Department investigations are historically conducted without the influence or input of the White House.

As for global warming, Trump has repeatedly questioned the idea, suggesting at times that it is a hoax perpetrated by the Chinese to hurt U.S. manufacturers with environmental regulations.

But on Tuesday, he said he would “keep an open mind” about pulling the United States out of the landmark, multi-national Paris Agreement on climate change — he’d said in the campaign he would yank the U.S. out — and he allowed, “I think there is some connectivity” between human activity and climate changes.

Trump, who has yet to hold the traditional news conference held by a president-elect in the days after winning, said his own businesses are “unimportant to me” in comparison to the presidency, but he also said he now believes he could continue to run them at the same time if he wanted.

There have been concerns raised about conflicts of interest since many of the businesses are subject to government actions in the U.S. and abroad. But he said he would be “phasing” control over to his grown children, although “in theory I could run my business perfectly and then run the country perfectly. There’s never been a case like this.”

Earlier Tuesday, it was confirmed that Trump’s charity had admitted it violated IRS regulations barring it from using its money or assets to benefit Trump, his family, his companies or substantial contributors to the foundation.

According to a 2015 tax return posted on the nonprofit monitoring website GuideStar, the Donald J. Trump Foundation acknowledged that it used money or assets in violation of the regulations during 2015

and in prior years. The tax filing, first reported Tuesday by The Washington Post, didn't provide details.

On another topic, the president-elect, who has been criticized for being slow to denounce racist acts done in his name, said, "I disavow and condemn" a recent "alt-right" conference in Washington where some attendees raised their arms in a Hitler-like salute while chanting "Heil Trump." But he defended his appointment of Bannon, whose links to the movement have drawn widespread criticism from Democrats.

Associated Press writers Steve Peoples in Palm Beach, Florida, Jill Colvin in San Jose, California, and Laurie Kellman and Eric Tucker in Washington contributed to this report.

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The Latest: Trump offers Housing secretary job to Ben Carson

NEW YORK (AP) — The Latest on Donald Trump's transition to the presidency (all times local):
6:10 p.m.

President-elect Donald Trump has formally offered retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson the position of secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

That's according to a person familiar with the offer who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the person was not authorized to discuss the deliberations publicly.

Carson had previously said he was not interested in serving in Trump's administration.

But his business manager Armstrong Williams says Carson has always maintained he'd be open to considering a senior role in the administration if Trump convinced him there was no one else for the job.

Williams says Carson was especially intrigued by the HUD position after being floated as a potential secretary of education or health and human services.

Carson will consider the offer over Thanksgiving.

Trump tweeted about Carson Tuesday, saying he was "seriously considering" him for the post and praising him as "a greatly talented person who loves people!"

4:15 p.m.

Former Washington, D.C., schools chief Michelle Rhee says she's not seeking a job in President-elect Donald Trump's administration.

Rhee met with Trump on Saturday amid speculation that she was being considered for education secretary.

Rhee tweeted a statement Tuesday saying she's "not pursuing a position with the administration." She says she appreciated the chance to discuss education with Trump. She says those who urged her not to meet with him were "wrong" and that it's important to find common ground on education policy.

Rhee is a Democrat who served as District of Columbia schools chancellor from 2007 to 2010, where she was viewed as a national leader in urban education reform. She later founded a nonprofit called StudentsFirst.

2:50 p.m.

President-elect Donald Trump says there's "some connectivity" between humans and climate change.

He tells The New York Times on Tuesday that "clean air is vitally important" and he's keeping an open mind about whether to pull the United States out of a multinational agreement on climate change.

He appeared to break dramatically with his own previous remarks that climate change was a hoax.

The Times reported that he said Tuesday, "I think there is some connectivity. Some, something. It depends on how much."

2:40 p.m.

President-elect Donald Trump is disavowing white nationalist sympathizers who celebrated his election during a conference in Washington over the weekend.

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He tells The New York Times that "I disavow and condemn them."

He was responding to a question during Tuesday's interview about a weekend event during which attendees cheered Trump's election and gave Nazi salutes.

The Times is publishing excerpts via Twitter of its interview Tuesday with Trump. The newspaper didn't immediately release a transcript.

2:30 p.m.

President-elect Donald Trump says that in theory he could run his business and the country with no conflict of interest.

He tells The New York Times on Tuesday that "the president can't have a conflict of interest," but he's in the process of handing over his business to his children, anyway.

Trump is facing questions about whether he and his children face a conflict of interest by having roles in the presidential transition and the Trump Organization.

He said of his critics, "If it were up to some people, I would never, ever see my daughter Ivanka again" to avoid any business-presidential conflict.

2:00 p.m.

President-elect Donald Trump says he wants to move on from years of investigations of Bill and Hillary Clinton.

He tells The New York Times that prosecuting the Clintons "would be very, very divisive for the country." He says he doesn't want "to hurt the Clintons," adding that he doesn't think his supporters will be disappointed once he explains that "we, in many ways, will save our country."

The Times is publishing excerpts via Twitter of its interview Tuesday with Trump. The newspaper didn't immediately release a transcript.

Trump adviser Kellyanne Conway earlier in the day told MSNBC that Trump was sending a signal to congressional Republicans to abandon years of investigations into Hillary Clinton's private email server and the deadly raid on the U.S. compound in Benghazi, Libya.

12:45 p.m.

President-elect Donald Trump says he is "seriously considering" retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson to head the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Trump's announcement on Twitter comes a week after Carson let it be known that he is not interested in being considered for any position in the Trump administration.

In Tuesday's tweet, Trump says: "I am seriously considering Dr. Ben Carson as the head of HUD. I've gotten to know him well — he's a greatly talented person who loves people!"

Last week, Carson business manager Armstrong Williams said Carson had opted out of being considered for any position, including as head of the Department of Health and Human Services or the Education Department.

Williams also said Trump had made clear he wanted his rival-turned-adviser in some role.

12:42 p.m.

White House spokesman Josh Earnest is confirming that President Barack Obama has spoken with his successor on at least one occasion since their Oval Office meeting.

However, Earnest says he wouldn't discuss any details of their talks. He says the White House has traditionally not unveiled details of calls that Obama has had when consulting former presidents, and that's a precedent it wants to protect with President-elect Donald Trump.

Earnest says Trump indicated during their Oval Office meeting that he wanted the opportunity to consult with Obama during the course of the transition. Meanwhile, Obama has committed to a smooth transition, and as a result, they have "spoken at least once" since that meeting.

Earnest says Trump is free to discuss whatever he chooses about his consultations with the president.

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10:15 a.m.

President-elect Donald Trump's visit to The New York Times is to consist of a private meeting with the publisher followed by an on-the-record session with Times journalists.

Trump at first abruptly canceled the meeting, accusing the organization of changing the ground rules. The Times said Trump's team actually tried to change the conditions by asking that the entire session be off the record.

But before long, both sides said the meeting was back on Tuesday.

9:31 a.m.

President-elect Donald Trump may be visiting with The New York Times after all.

Spokesman Hope Hicks told reporters gathered in Trump Tower on Tuesday morning that Trump was "going to The New York Times" later in the day.

The statement comes only hours after Trump tweeted that he would not be meeting with the newspaper. He wrote on Twitter that he canceled the meeting "with the failing @nytimes when the terms and conditions of the meeting were changed at the last moment. Not Nice."

8:45 a.m.

A top adviser to Donald Trump is suggesting that the president-elect is going to help Hillary Clinton "heal" and not pursue a probe of her private email server.

Kellyanne Conway said on MSNBC on Tuesday that Trump is setting a tone for congressional Republicans by refraining from calling for more investigations. She says that "he doesn't wish to pursue these charges."

Days earlier, Trump told CBS's "60 Minutes" that he wants to think about whether to look more into Clinton's homebrew email server and the Justice Department's decision to not recommend charges against her.

Now Conway says that, "if Donald Trump can help her heal, then perhaps that's a good thing."

Trump during the campaign vowed to put his Democratic presidential rival "in jail" over the matter.

8:30 a.m.

President-elect Donald Trump has abruptly canceled a meeting with The New York Times. He accused the organization of changing the conditions for the session "at the last moment." The newspaper denied the charge and said Trump's aides tried to change the rules.

He'd been scheduled to meet Times reporters, editors and columnists and did not give details of his complaint, saying in a morning tweet only that "the terms and conditions of the meeting were changed at the last moment. Not nice."

Eileen M. Murphy, the newspaper's senior vice president for communications, said the paper "did not change the ground rules at all."

She said Trump's aides asked for a private meeting only, with nothing on the record, after having agreed to a meeting that would consist of a small off-the-record session and a larger on-the-record one with reporters and columnists.

Times reporters tweet news of Trump meeting as it happens

By DAVID BAUDER, AP Television Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Reporters at The New York Times tweeted details from a meeting with President-elect Donald Trump as it happened on Tuesday, contrasting it with an off-the-record session Trump held a day earlier with leaders at the top television networks.

Reporters Maggie Haberman and Mike Grynbaum sent a steady stream of Twitter quotes from Trump on his decision not to pursue a case against former opponent Hillary Clinton about her private email server, and potential conflicts between his business and upcoming job in government.

The off-again, on-again Times meeting came as questions swirled about how forthright Trump will be

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with the media and, by extension, his soon-to-be constituents. He hasn't held a news conference since his election and on Tuesday sent out a video news release about some of his plans upon taking office.

His meeting with television executives and anchors Monday triggered reports that he criticized them about campaign coverage.

Trump's meeting at the Times headquarters, announced Monday, was briefly cancelled early Tuesday as the president-elect tweeted that the "terms and conditions" had been changed at the last minute. "Not nice," tweeted Trump.

The Times said Trump's team had tried to make the meeting off-the-record, meaning details could not be reported, but the newspaper refused. A few hours later, the meeting was back on, and Trump had a private meeting with the Times' publisher before the session with the publisher, editors and reporters.

The Times said that before the give-and-take on issues, the president-elect complained about some of the newspaper's coverage of him, saying "I think I've been treated very rough."

A day earlier, Trump reportedly had harsh words with television news division leaders at a Trump Tower meeting, including complaints about a picture NBC used of him where he had a double chin and singling out CNN's campaign coverage. Besides news executives like CNN's Jeff Zucker, Fox News' Bill Shine and MSNBC's Phil Griffin, the meeting included on-air personalities like ABC's David Muir, CBS' Charlie Rose and NBC's Lester Holt.

Even though Trump aide Kellyanne Conway briefly talked to reporters about the meeting afterward, media participants were constrained from talking publicly about it.

"The symbolism was powerful and all wrong for them," said Frank Sesno, a former CNN Washington bureau chief and a journalism professor at George Washington University. "For these powerful people to be marched to the tower of Trump to get their heads cut off — figuratively speaking — is not the positive imagery they could have hoped for."

There can be reasons for holding off-the-record meetings, which are hardly unprecedented in Washington. In Monday's meeting, media executives collectively could have delivered privately a powerful message to the incoming president about the importance of transparency and accessibility in a democracy, he said.

But, he said, "under no circumstances would you let this become habit-forming."

President Barack Obama occasionally talked to journalists off the record but never held an entirely off-the-record meeting with a large group of media leaders similar to Trump's with television executives. Obama's administration was criticized by free press advocates for releasing handout photos, and occasionally handout videos, when independent media could have documented the occasion. Obama has held regular news conferences.

The networks would not say Tuesday whether they had requested an on-the-record session with Trump. Individual networks likely had less leverage than a single organization like the Times; if a network refused to attend an off-the-record session, for example, their leaders had to worry that their competitors would be there.

"Television has always been more deferential to power than newspapers," said Mark Feldstein, a University of Maryland professor and author of "Poisoning the Press: Richard Nixon, Jack Anderson and the Rise of Washington's Scandal Culture." Broadcasters require government approval of licenses, and threatening to reject licenses was one weapon Nixon wielded against broadcasters, he said.

More than newspapers, television networks are dependent upon the ratings boost that a presidential appearance can bring. Trump's post-election interview with "60 Minutes" delivered one of that show's biggest audiences in years.

"Trump is trying to intimidate the networks into giving him less critical coverage," Feldstein said. "The question is how are the media going to respond to him and (the network meeting) is not an auspicious beginning."

Journalists are trying to encourage Trump to hold an open news conference, which has been traditional for presidents-elect shortly after their victories. Trump's release of a video late Tuesday talking about his early priorities was alarming to many news organizations.

The Associated Press reported on the content of Trump's message but did not send the video to members

of the news cooperative. Kathleen Carroll, senior vice president and executive editor of The Associated Press, likened it to the AP's refusal to take handout pictures of President Obama signing bills into law.

"We believe we ought to cover the president of the United States, and the president-elect, when they are doing the people's business," she said. "Setting out policies and how you are going to govern is the people's business."

Carroll noted with some alarm that both Trump and Clinton gave few news conferences in the final months of their campaigns. Public officials are obliged to answer questions on behalf of the people they serve, and not just with friendly, hand-picked audiences, she said.

Police: Package bomb explodes when man opens it in kitchen

By KRISTEN DE GROOT, Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — A bomb stuffed inside a padded envelope exploded in a downtown apartment early Tuesday when a man opened the package, apparently thinking it contained medicine, police said. The man was hospitalized with hand and chest injuries.

Federal agents and the city's bomb squad were investigating the pre-dawn blast, which injured a man in his 60s. Authorities said the man, whose name wasn't released, had arrived home at around 4 a.m. after being out of town and was opening his mail.

Chief Inspector Joe Sullivan said the envelope contained shrapnel and caused "substantial damage" to appliances in the kitchen. The man's most serious injuries involved his left hand.

The package was "target specific," police Commissioner Richard Ross said. Authorities don't believe the envelope was sent in the mail because it had an old barcode on it, he said.

Authorities hadn't seen that type of explosive device in Philadelphia before, Sullivan said, but they're "familiar with it in other areas of the world."

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives special agent Sam Rabadi said the device is being analyzed a laboratory.

The victim was hospitalized in stable condition after surgery.

He opened the package near the stove in the kitchen of the apartment, which he shares with a roommate, leading police to initially believe the blast may have been an accidental explosion caused by an inhaler getting too close to heat.

Investigators were running down a number of leads but had no motive, Rabadi said.

"We are going to look at every possible motive that comes across our radar," he said.

Aly King and Brian Muldoon live two doors down from the townhouse where the blast happened and said they didn't hear any explosion but their dog woke up around 3:45 a.m.

King said she let her puppy out in the backyard and that's when she heard firefighters in the alley, shuffling garbage cans, and saw emergency vehicles filling the street. They said they had never met the victim.

"It's kind of a peculiar time of day to open a package, at 4 a.m.," Muldoon said.

Ten residents were evacuated from nearby apartments but were allowed to return after the bomb squad cleared other packages.

The man's roommate told police that the man often receives medical inhalers in the mail. He was home at the time of the blast but was uninjured.

Associated Press writer Shawn Marsh contributed from Trenton, New Jersey.

Ex-gymnastics doctor arraigned; police probing 50 complaints

By DAVID EGGERT, Associated Press

MASON, Mich. (AP) — A former USA Gymnastics doctor pleaded not guilty Tuesday to three counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct in his home with a girl under 13, charges that Michigan's attorney general said are the "tip of the iceberg" as authorities investigate roughly 50 complaints.

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Larry Nassar, who was arrested Monday while running an errand at a Lansing-area tire store, was arraigned by video from jail. He was released after 10 percent of a \$1 million bond was paid, more than two months after two gymnasts — including a member of the 2000 U.S. women's Olympic team — accused him of sexual abuse during medical treatments.

Also on Tuesday, a Detroit attorney said he filed a civil lawsuit against Nassar on behalf of a Los Angeles woman who says she was sexually abused about 20 years ago during treatments when she was a 14-year-old gymnast.

It's at least the third civil suit filed against Nassar.

The woman filing Tuesday's lawsuit is not the girl in Michigan's criminal case.

Those alleged assaults against the girl occurred between 1998 and 2005, from the age of 6 until the girl was 12. She was not a gymnast, patient or family member, said Attorney General Bill Schuette.

He said Nassar, a former associate professor of osteopathic medicine at Michigan State University who lives in Holt in suburban Lansing, committed "predatory, menacing" acts and "stole this young lady's childhood."

"This is the tip of the iceberg," Schuette said during a news conference Tuesday.

University police chief James Dunlap said his department has received roughly 50 complaints.

"We're dealing with decades of effort to go back and identify witnesses and to compile those for submission to the attorney general's office," he said.

Ingham County 55th District Court Magistrate Mark Blumer ordered Nassar to wear an electronic tether and to surrender his passport. He also was prohibited from being present with anyone under 18, including his children, unless another adult is there.

A preliminary hearing was scheduled for Dec. 15.

Nassar, who could face life imprisonment if he is convicted, has denied wrongdoing.

Shannon Smith, one of his lawyers, said his wife — who was in the courtroom — and "hundreds of people support him 100 percent. We have received countless emails and communications from other doctors, physicians, physical therapists, ex-patients, ex-coworkers supporting him."

Assistant state attorney general Angela Povilaitis had asked that bond be denied or, in the alternate, that a very high amount be imposed.

"She has come forward bravely to report this and to cooperate and prosecute this case," she said.

Nassar was fired in September by Michigan State. In October, a former gymnast who was on the national team from 2006 to 2011 filed a lawsuit in Los Angeles, alleging Nassar repeatedly sexually abused her and renowned husband-and-wife coaches Bela and Martha Karolyi turned a blind eye to molestations.

Indianapolis-based USA Gymnastics, which has been named in two civil lawsuits, said previously that that it cut ties with Nassar after learning of athlete concerns about him in the summer of 2015.

"USA Gymnastics today learned about the charges against Dr. Larry Nassar through a media report," it said. "As we previously have made clear, when USA Gymnastics first learned of athlete concerns regarding Dr. Nassar, those concerns were reported to the FBI and Nassar was dismissed from further involvement with USA Gymnastics."

Detroit attorney Brian McKeen said he filed Tuesday's civil lawsuit in Ingham County.

His client lived in East Lansing when she sought treatment for lower back pain in late 1996 and early 1997 from Nassar, McKeen said.

"This doctor used this young girl's innocence and naiveté against her," McKeen said. "She trusted her doctor's authority when he insisted his treatments were standard procedure, but they were no more than sexual assault and abuse of a child."

Smith, Nassar's lawyer, had not seen the civil lawsuit Tuesday afternoon and declined to comment on it.

The attorney general, who is investigating criminally at the request of the campus police, said his department is in the best position to prosecute instead of the local prosecutor because it is believed that potential crimes crossed into multiple jurisdictions in Michigan and possibly across state lines. He said his office is working with the FBI and federal prosecutors in Michigan.

"We are unable to comment further due to the ongoing FBI investigation and pending litigation," USA Gymnastics said.

Associated Press writer Corey Williams in Detroit contributed to this report.

Follow David Eggert on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/DavidEggert00> . His work can be found at <http://bigstory.ap.org/author/david-eggert>

Trump's charity admits to violating IRS self-dealing ban

By CHAD DAY and MICHAEL BIESECKER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump's charity has admitted that it violated IRS regulations barring it from using its money or assets to benefit Trump, his family, his companies or substantial contributors to the foundation.

The admissions by the Donald J. Trump Foundation were made in a 2015 tax filing made public after a presidential election in which it was revealed that Trump has used the charity to settle lawsuits, make a \$25,000 political contribution and purchase items such as a painting of himself that was displayed at one of his properties.

The filing's release, first reported by The Washington Post, comes as the New York attorney general's office investigates whether Trump personally benefited from the foundation's spending.

The filing also shows Trump's foundation accepted money from a Ukrainian businessman who also gave money to one of Trump's favored targets on the campaign trail: The Clinton Foundation. The charity also donated to a conservative group that backed Trump during his candidacy.

The 2015 tax filing was posted on the nonprofit monitoring website GuideStar on Nov. 18 by someone using an email address from the foundation's law firm, Morgan, Lewis & Bockius, said GuideStar spokeswoman Jackie Enterline Fekeci.

In the tax filing, the foundation acknowledged that it used money or assets in violation of the regulations not only during 2015, but in prior years. But the tax filing doesn't provide details on the violations.

Questions about the violations sent via email to Trump's transition team weren't immediately answered Tuesday.

Marcus S. Owens, a partner at the Washington law firm Loeb & Loeb and a former director of the IRS exempt organizations division, said the lack of detail in the tax filing makes it difficult to determine the extent of the charity's violations.

"There's no way to tell for sure whether the self-dealing is small and trivial or large and a pattern of ongoing deliberate misuse of the charity's assets," Owens said.

Generally, he said, self-dealing violations require the violator to pay an excise tax equal to 10 percent of the amount involved in the transactions. The violator also would have to repay the foundation for the full amount involved. Owens also noted that self-dealing is a violation of New York state law, where the charity is registered.

New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, a Democrat, launched an investigation into the charity after reporting by the Post drew attention to some of the foundation's purchases, three of which are listed in the latest filing: two portraits of Trump and a football helmet autographed by former NFL quarterback Tim Tebow.

As the Post reported previously, Trump bid \$12,000 for the football helmet, and his wife, Melania, bid \$20,000 for one of the portraits. The other portrait, which Trump bid \$10,000 for, has been hanging on a wall at his golf course in Doral, Florida, according to the Post.

Despite the high-dollar price tags, the foundation's latest tax filing now values them at a combined \$1,675. The tax filing does not specify if any of the items are related to the self-dealing violations.

The foundation has previously said it amended its tax filings after it gave an improper \$25,000 check to a political committee supporting Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi in 2013.

Charities are barred from engaging in political activities, and the president-elect's staff says the check he signed was mistakenly issued following a series of clerical errors. Earlier this year, the Trump Foundation

paid a \$2,500 fine to the IRS over the check.

The latest tax filing shows two Trump entities gave to his foundation, a break from recent years when the foundation's donations came mostly from other donors.

The Trump Corporation gave about \$566,000 to the foundation, and Trump Productions LLC, the company which produced "The Apprentice" and "Celebrity Apprentice," gave \$50,000 in 2015.

Another large contributor was the foundation of Victor Pinchuk, a Ukrainian billionaire who has advocated for closer relations between the European Union and Ukraine. The Victor Pinchuk Foundation gave \$150,000 to the Trump Foundation in 2015. Pinchuk's foundation has also given between \$10 million and \$25 million to the Clinton Foundation.

The Trump Foundation's tax filing shows that it also gave at least \$10,000 to Project Veritas, a Trump-backing nonprofit group led by conservative activist James O'Keefe.

During the presidential campaign, O'Keefe's employees posed as would-be Democratic donors and volunteers during a months-long ruse that captured one Democratic operative seeming to boast about his connections to Hillary Clinton's campaign and claiming he hired people to provoke Trump rally-goers.

The undercover sting prompted the Democratic Party and liberal groups to cut ties with at least two operatives.

Associated Press writers Julie Bykovicz and Jeff Horwitz contributed to this report.

Trump faces hurdles to reinstating waterboarding

By **DEB RIECHMANN, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump backs waterboarding and his pick for CIA director has called those who have done it "patriots" not "torturers." Yet a Trump administration faces steep legal and legislative hurdles to reinstate the interrogation practice that simulates drowning.

Under a law approved last year, all government employees, including intelligence agents, must abide by Army guidelines for interrogating prisoners — guidelines that don't permit waterboarding. Those rules are subject to review, but it's not clear if they can be revised to allow the practice.

If the Trump administration were to try to change the law or the guidelines, the effort would run into bipartisan opposition in Congress. The most formidable obstacle there would be a fellow Republican, John McCain. The Arizona senator, who was beaten as a prisoner of war in Vietnam in the 1960s, adamantly opposes waterboarding. As chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, he would be well-positioned to block any attempt to revive it.

McCain has clashed before with Trump, who during the campaign claimed the former Navy pilot wasn't a war hero because he had been captured. At a security conference in Canada last weekend, McCain indicated he was ready to take on Trump again as begins another six-year term after winning re-election.

"I don't give a damn what the president of the United States wants to do or anybody else wants to do," McCain said. "We will not waterboard. We will not do it."

Waterboarding and other harsh methods were used in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks to try to obtain useful information from terrorist suspects. Many intelligence, military and law enforcement officials say the practice is ineffective as well as immoral. They say it breaks down trust between the suspect and interrogators and often prompts a detainee to say anything to stop the harsh treatment.

But Trump, who revved up his supporters with tough talk against against Islamic State extremists, pledged to interrogate terrorist suspects with waterboarding and a "hell of a lot worse."

"Don't tell me it doesn't work," Trump said. "Torture works, OK folks?"

Trump's nominee for CIA is Rep. Mike Pompeo, a conservative congressman from Kansas who has criticized President Barack Obama for "ending our interrogation program," which Obama did not do. Pompeo criticized the release of the Senate's 2014 report on harsh interrogation of detainees and argued that the CIA program operated within the law.

"Our men and women who were tasked to keep us safe in the aftermath of 9/11 — our military and our intelligence warriors — are ... not torturers, they are patriots," Pompeo said then.

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The views of Trump's other nominees are more opaque.

Trump's national security adviser, Retired Army Lt. General Michael Flynn, has not ruled out the use of waterboarding. "If the nation was in grave danger from a terrorist attack involving weapons of mass destruction, and we had certain individuals in our custody with information that might avoid it, then I would probably OK enhanced interrogation techniques within certain limits," he told Politico in October.

Trump's pick for attorney general, Sen. Jeff Sessions, R-Ala., was one of a few senators who voted against bipartisan anti-torture provisions in 2005 and 2015. But in 2008, Sessions said: "I am glad we are no longer utilizing waterboarding. I hope we never have to do it again." That was before the rise of IS militants.

And on Tuesday, Trump told The New York Times that he asked retired Marine Gen. James Mattis, a strong prospect for defense secretary, about waterboarding and was surprised to hear Mattis does not favor it.

Waterboarding has been prohibited since 2009. Two days after taking office, Obama issued an executive order prohibiting all government employees from using any interrogation method that wasn't spelled out in the Army Field Manual, a military how-to guide.

Wanting to ensure that no future president could tear up the order, McCain teamed up with Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., to turn it into law. Their anti-torture amendment was adopted in a 78-21 bipartisan vote and became law late last year.

The law requires the Army to conduct a review of the field manual every three years in consultation with the attorney general, the FBI director and the director of national intelligence. The first review deadline is Dec. 19, 2017, during Trump's first year in office.

It's not clear if the review could result in changes allowing waterboarding or other harsh interrogation methods.

The best interrogation methods build rapport with suspects, according to the High-Value Detainee Group, a team of the nation's top interrogators who deploy to question detainees around the world. The group recently issued a report on the best interrogation practices, based on the latest behavioral and social science research.

Human rights advocates have long fought against any resumption of harsh interrogation techniques. They say the intelligence community stands firmly against it and point to a comment made this year by former CIA Director Michael Hayden. He said: "If any future president wants (the) CIA to waterboard anybody, he better bring his own bucket, because CIA officers aren't going to do it."

Iraqis finally put out some oil fires set months ago by IS

By **BRIAN ROHAN** and **SINAN SALAHEDDIN**, Associated Press

QAYARA, Iraq (AP) — For months, residents of the Iraqi town of Qayara have lived under a dark cloud of toxic fumes released by oil well fires lit by retreating Islamic State fighters.

But in recent days, oil workers and firefighters have extinguished the blazes closest to the populated center. The move has returned a small measure of order to Qayara, where complaints about government neglect have simmered since last summer, when the militants torched the oil wells as the Iraqi army drove them out.

The work is far from complete, but it could be a first step in easing some of the bitterness, anger and social fissures among people who desperately need government services and reconciliation after waves of retaliatory violence that followed the defeat of the extremists.

"The atmosphere is good. The wells are almost fully under control. They extinguished most. Some of them are still ablaze, but we see the morning, we can see the sun," shop owner Mohannad Seoud Ahmad Matar said Tuesday. "Ten days ago, this sky was completely dark. You couldn't distinguish day from night."

Eight burning wells have been extinguished in recent weeks, said Oil Ministry spokesman Assem Jihad, adding that most were located near homes. The area's 54 wells once pumped nearly 10,000 barrels a day before IS militants took the fields in their June 2014 onslaught when they seized a third of Iraq's territory.

Jihad could not say how many were still burning, but from the edge of the town, at least five separate sites could be seen.

The work has taken so long because of security concerns: Militants initially still had fired mortars occasionally into the area, and it also had to be cleared of booby traps and unexploded ordinance left behind by IS fighters.

"The work accelerated since the security situation improved," Jihad said. "But it's still unclear how long it will take to finish, as there are still fires in wells and scattered oil pools."

Droplets of oil fell from the toxic clouds on the town south of Mosul, leaving a sooty residue on clothing, houses, crops and even livestock.

In one oilfield on Qayara's outskirts, blackened bulldozers pushed dirt over the burning ground at several sites to try to smother the flames. With each push of the shovel, however, black crude flowed in a new stream, making the task seem futile.

Workers without masks wrapped their faces in scarves as protection from the smoke. Rays of sunlight that cut through thick clouds reflected off glass-like melted sand. Near one well, oil flowed downward from its source — a river of pollution portending a costly cleanup.

"it's hot, it's boiling, a very high temperature," said Hussein Saleh Jibouri, a worker standing on a moon-scape where black and white clouds obscured the sun and a stream of oil flowed into a valley. Some of the oil oozed into trenches to divert it from the Tigris River and inhabited areas.

Where a burning oil well once raged, children with blackened faces played war, simulating battles between militants and the Iraqi army with fake homemade guns and using rocks as grenades. One wielded a pipe to simulate a rocket launcher, while another staged a mock beating of an IS prisoner. The Iraqi army triumphed in the end, and the children cheered atop a pile of cinderblocks they pretended was a tank.

Several children ventured deeper into the smoke to get a free meal handed out by the state oil company, which was working to put out the fires.

Last week, the U.N. warned that the toxic smoke, which also was coming from a nearby sulfur gas factory, will have mid- and long-term effects on the health and livelihood of residents, as well as the environment. More than 1,500 people have sought medical treatment for respiratory problems.

"People usually came to our health center seeking treatment for symptoms like fever, coughing, respiratory problems, diarrhea and asthma complications," said Dr. Tayseer Alkarim, an oncologist from the France-based group called WAHA. The NGO has been in Qayara since September to help support the only hospital in the area with medicine, doctors and nurses during the crisis.

"Now that the main oil fire is not burning anymore, the number of patients is down. So it's an improvement from when we first came — then there was no medication or health care here."

Salaheddin reported from Baghdad

Zika-caused birth defect may become clear only after birth

By MIKE STOBBE, AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Researchers say a severe birth defect caused by Zika infection may not be apparent at birth but develop months afterward, further confirmation that the virus can cause unseen damage to developing babies.

The findings come from a study of 13 Brazilian babies whose heads all appeared normal at birth but then grew much more slowly than normal.

Most people infected with Zika never develop symptoms, but infection during pregnancy can cause devastating birth defects, including microcephaly, in which a baby's skull is much smaller than expected because the brain hasn't developed properly.

Microcephaly is diagnosed based on a measurement of the baby's head circumference. It can be done during pregnancy using ultrasound, or after the baby is born. Doctors then compare the measurement to standard sizes of other kids, based on gender and age.

The study focused on 13 babies born in Brazil late last year and earlier this year. All had heads that were a little small at birth, but within the normal range. Over the next five to 12 months, doctors

noted their heads weren't growing at normal rates. Eleven were eventually diagnosed with microcephaly. Many of the children also developed other problems that have been linked to Zika, including epilepsy, problems swallowing, muscle weakness and inflexible joints.

Dr. Peter Salama, chief of emergencies at the World Health Organization, told reporters in Geneva on Tuesday that understanding of the complications from Zika continues to evolve. "We are also learning lot every day," he said.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released the findings Tuesday. The authors were a team of researchers from Brazil and the United States.

"This is certainly the first detailed description of these kinds of cases," said Dr. Ganeshwaran Mochida, a pediatric neurologist at Boston Children's Hospital.

The study confirms that the absence of microcephaly at birth doesn't mean there are no abnormalities in the children of Zika-infected mothers, CDC officials said.

The findings, while discouraging, are not a surprise to scientists. A study out of Brazil earlier this year suggested that one in five cases of microcephaly likely had head sizes in the normal range at birth.

And microcephaly has also been diagnosed months after birth in cases caused by other germs.

Still, it is likely to further worry potentially infected parents who may grow alarmed by signs that their newborn's head is a little small, said Dr. Thierry Huisman, a Johns Hopkins University professor of radiology who has studied Zika-affected children.

The CDC now recommends monitoring babies born to Zika-infected women after birth, but the agency is looking at whether additional imaging should be recommended, said CDC Director Dr. Tom Frieden.

Investigators are working to determine what proportion of Zika-infected women have babies with birth defects, and how the risk varies based on when during the pregnancy the infection occurred. Earlier research has suggested that 1 percent to 14 percent of Brazilian mothers infected in the first three months of pregnancy had babies with microcephaly and that the risk falls when infections happens later in the pregnancy.

WHO's Salama called the risk "small but significant, but it's definitely a moving target as well."

Associated Press writer Jamey Keaten contributed from Geneva.

Online:

CDC report: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr> .

Iraqi forces move to retake another Mosul neighborhood

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA, Associated Press

IRBIL, Iraq (AP) — Iraqi troops gained a foothold Tuesday in another neighborhood in the northern city of Mosul after fierce battles against Islamic State militants dug in behind heavy fortifications, according to a top Iraqi commander.

A new analysis, meanwhile, has found that there is a high risk that IS will deploy chemical weapons against Mosul civilians or Iraqi troops fighting to retake the city. According to IHS Markit, the extremist group has used chemical weapons at least 52 times in Iraq and Syria since 2014, including 19 times in the Mosul area alone.

Brig. Gen. Haider Fadhil, of the Iraqi special forces, told The Associated Press that IS fighters were firing rockets and mortars as his forces "cautiously" advanced in the densely populated Zohour neighborhood. "There are too many civilians still living there," he said.

Iraqi troops began their siege of Zohour on Sunday as they fortified their positions in neighborhoods already retaken in eastern Mosul. Suicide bombings, sniper fire and concerns over the safety of civilians — there are 1 million still in Mosul — have combined to slow down progress in the campaign to liberate the city, which began Oct. 17.

Mosul is Iraq's second-largest city and the largest to have fallen to the militants. Most gains in the

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campaign so far have been made by the special forces operating east of the Tigris River. Other forces, including the Kurdish peshmerga and volunteer Sunni militiamen, are advancing on the city from different directions, and the U.S.-led coalition is providing airstrikes and other support.

A coalition airstrike on Monday destroyed a major bridge over the Tigris in the southern part of Mosul, cutting IS supply lines to the east bank, where most of the fighting is taking place. The coalition has destroyed three bridges in Mosul, and Iraqi officers said the two remaining bridges in the city are also likely to be hit. They spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief reporters.

The Iraqi troops are expected to use U.S.-made pontoon bridges when they need to cross the Tigris later in the campaign.

IS captured Mosul in a matter of days in the summer of 2014, when it swept across northern and central Iraq. IHS Markit, a London-based intelligence analysis firm, says the extremists later used the city as a center for the production of chemical weapons.

The experts believe IS moved the materials and its chemical weapons specialists out of Mosul ahead of the Iraqi offensive, but may still use crude chemical weapons like chlorine and mustard agents as the troops press deeper into the city.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari meanwhile told reporters during a visit to Budapest that 1,700 militants have been killed and 120 captured since the battle for Mosul began. A third of Ninevah province, where Mosul is the capital, has been liberated so far, he said, adding that progress in the city has been slowed by the militants' use of human shields.

He said that because of Iraq's "extraordinary situation," it would need to increase its crude oil output, which provides 90 percent of state revenues, and be exempt from OPEC quotas.

Associated Press writers Lori Hinnant in Paris and Pablo Gorondi in Budapest, Hungary, contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to show that the Islamic State group is believed to have used chemical weapons 52 times in Iraq and Syria since 2014, not 71 times.

Americans who live near border say Trump's wall is unwelcome

By FRANK BAJAK, Associated Press

LOS EBANOS, Texas (AP) — All along the winding Rio Grande, the people who live in this bustling, fertile region where the U.S. border meets the Gulf of Mexico never quite understood how Donald Trump's great wall could ever be much more than campaign rhetoric.

Erecting a concrete barrier across the entire 1,954-mile frontier with Mexico, they know, collides head-on with multiple realities: the geology of the river valley, fierce local resistance and the immense cost.

An electronically fortified "virtual wall" with surveillance technology that includes night-and-day video cameras, tethered observation balloons and high-flying drones makes a lot more sense to people here. It's already in wide use and expanding.

If a 30- to 40-foot concrete wall is a panacea for illegal immigration, as Trump insisted during the campaign, the locals are not convinced. And few were surprised when the president-elect seemed to soften his position five days after the election, saying that the wall could include some fencing.

"The wall is not going to stop anyone," said Jorge Garcia, who expected to lose access to most of his 30-acre riverside ranch after the U.S. Border Fence Act was enacted a decade ago.

Under the law, 652 miles of border barrier were built, mostly in Arizona. The 110 miles of fences and fortified levees that went up in Texas are not contiguous but broken lines, some as much as a mile and a half from the river.

Eight years after government surveyors marked Garcia's land, he and his wife, Aleida, are still waiting to see if the Border Patrol will sever their property.

"This lets me know that whenever they want to build the wall, they can," said Aleida, holding up a tax

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bill that shows the nominally expropriated sliver of property.

If a fence or wall goes up, the couple will be paid \$8,300. So far, the Garcias and the rest of the village of Los Ebanos have been spared because the erosion-prone clay soil is simply too unstable, she believes.

Geology conspires against wall-building up and down the Rio Grande Valley. So does a boundary water treaty with Mexico and endangered-species laws. Catwalks and tunnels had to be built into existing fences to accommodate endangered ocelots and jaguarundi, two species of wild cat.

The gaps in the border barrier include an entire flank of the River Bend golf club and resort in Brownsville. University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley political scientist Terence Garrett calls them "gaps of privilege" because many landowners were politically connected.

Other landowners fought the Border Patrol in court.

"The wall might make mid-America feel safer, but for those of us that live on the border, it's not making us feel any safer when we know that people can go over it, around it, under it and through it," said Monica Weisberg-Stewart, security expert for the Texas Border Coalition, a consortium of regional leaders.

The coalition wants federal dollars to go instead to bolstering security at border crossings, where heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine are smuggled in. A poll conducted in Southwest border cities in May found 72 percent of residents opposed to building a wall. The Cronkite News-Univision-Dallas Morning News poll had a margin of error of 2.6 percentage points.

The wall is popular in distant cities "because you can see, feel and touch it. But politically it just doesn't make sense," said J.D. Salinas, the coalition's chairman.

As commissioner of the border county of Hidalgo from 2007 to 2009, Salinas won public backing for 20 miles of border barrier by reinforcing an existing levee with concrete and topping it with a fence. In 2010, the project paid off. The levee held back flooding from Hurricane Alex. The cost was about \$10 million a mile, though.

In the Nov. 8 election, only three Texas border counties — all sparsely populated — went for Trump. The rest are solidly Democratic, at odds with the Republicans who control most state capitals and have been demanding more border barriers.

Rural ranchers worried about drug traffickers and other criminals are less likely to benefit from border walls and fences than city-dwellers, said Adam Isacson, a security expert with the nonprofit advocacy group Washington Office on Latin America.

"What a wall ultimately does is slow a border crosser for 10 to 15 minutes," Isacson said. "In an urban area, that 15 minutes is crucial." Border patrol agents can arrive quickly. In rural areas, they may be an hour or more away.

The U.S. side of the border is quite safe, said Weisberg-Stewart. "We are not in a war zone."

In fact, cross-border trade has been booming. In 2014, more than \$246 billion worth of goods and 3.7 million trucks crossed the Texas-Mexico border, according to coalition figures.

Trump needs to remember that Mexico is the second-largest U.S. export market, said Rep. Filemon Vela, a Texas Democrat whose district includes most of the valley. Only Canada buys more American goods.

"There's no way in hell he's going to see his great wall," Vela said.

The region bears the usual hallmarks of American prosperity: strip malls, well-maintained interstates, prosperous gated communities with hacienda-style McMansions. Cold-storage warehouses proliferate for northbound Mexican okra, avocados and tomatoes while other warehouses brim with southbound used clothing. Cotton, grapefruit and corn fields abound.

Much of the Mexican side of the border has been afflicted by drug cartel-related violence, but crime in the Rio Grande Valley, which is home to 1.3 million people, has been consistently lower than other Texas cities.

If lots of "bad hombres" are crossing the border, as Trump has claimed, they are mostly taking their lawbreaking elsewhere. Further, there's no record of anyone sneaking across the border to commit acts of terrorism.

The Border Patrol's buildup after 9/11 is one reason, argues David Aguilar, who was named to the agency's top job in 2004 by a fellow Texan, then-President George W. Bush, and is now a private consultant. Since

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then, the number of agents has climbed from 9,500 on the southwest border to 17,500 in 2015.

Meanwhile, the number of apprehensions along the border is down from a peak of 1.6 million in 2000 — when Aguilar said at least as many got away — to 409,000 in the year ended in September. Nearly half were caught in the Rio Grande Valley.

Many analysts believe the Great Recession was a bigger factor than Border Patrol enforcement in making the U.S. less attractive to Mexican migrants in particular.

Since tower-mounted video surveillance cameras began going up in 1999 in the Brownsville area, illegal cross-border traffic in the area “dried up by 85 to 90 percent,” said Johnny Meadors, the sector’s assistant chief for technology. He said the traffic moved west, where there were no cameras.

Seventy-two more of the towers, which are 80 to 120 feet tall, are to be installed in the valley by 2021, and could include motion sensors and laser pointers, Meadors said.

Since 2013, the Border Patrol has also had five blimp-like aerostats that float from 1,000 to 5,000 feet above the valley on tethers. High-flying Predator drones have patrolled vast areas of southwest borderlands since 2011. The agency also has underground sensors along the border. How many, Meadors wouldn’t say.

All the gadgetry has been a bonanza for defense contractors. The government spent \$450 million last fiscal year on border security fencing, infrastructure and technology.

“If you had a sensible immigration policy, there would be no need for all this,” said Garrett, the political scientist.

What Trump’s policy will be remains a mystery.

During the campaign, he said he would deport all the estimated 11 million immigrants living illegally in the United States. Days after the election, he appeared to back down somewhat, saying he would expel the criminals among them.

Whether fear of a Trump victory has anything to do with a recent spike in arrivals from violence-wracked Central America isn’t clear. They account for more than half of Border Patrol apprehensions in the Rio Grande Valley, where many migrants turn themselves in at frontier bridges.

After processing, released migrants are given court dates in destination cities where relatives typically await. Others are sent to detention centers.

An average of 350 migrants, some adults wearing ankle monitors, now arrive daily at the Sacred Heart parish community center in the border city of McAllen, up from 100 a day in August, said Gaby Lopez, a volunteer at the makeshift shelter that opened in June 2014.

New arrivals get a shower, a hot meal and can pick through donated clothing.

Ingrid Guerra, 21, a Guatemalan who is eight months’ pregnant and bound for Kansas, said she was fleeing an abusive relationship and didn’t tell the father. The father of her other child, a 2-year-old who stayed behind with Guerra’s mother, was killed in a drunken brawl, she said.

Sitting with her is Erika Machuca, a 19-year-old Salvadoran.

Machuca, also eight months’ pregnant, is bound for Dallas, where her husband lives. She says two of her brothers and three uncles were killed in El Salvador in violence she did not understand.

Both women said they merely want to earn a living and raise families in peace.

“Back there,” Guerra said of Guatemala, “they kill at the drop of a hat.”

Follow Frank Bajak on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/fbajak> .

Trump wants Farage to represent UK in US but May says no

By GREGORY KATZ, Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Donald Trump has a plan for making the vaunted relationship between Britain and the U.S. even more special: Make the impish acting leader of the UK Independence Party, Nigel Farage, British ambassador in Washington.

Prime Minister Theresa May has another idea — leave British appointments to the government, thank you very much.

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Her representatives Tuesday quickly shot down Trump's extraordinarily undiplomatic initiative, which was expressed in a tweet the night before by the U.S. president-elect.

"Many people would like to see @Nigel_Farage represent Great Britain as their Ambassador to the United States. He would do a great job!" Trump said.

But the Farage farrago suggests that Trump and the British prime minister aren't off to a warm start, and that, in the Trump era, Farage will be a force to be reckoned with.

Trump's unusual effort to pressure the British government into naming Farage to what is widely viewed as its most prestigious diplomatic post focused new attention on the unorthodox UKIP figure who played a key role in convincing British voters to leave the European Union in the June referendum.

Foreign Minister Boris Johnson and others said there was no way Farage would be chosen — and some in Parliament had a few laughs at the prospect — prompting a wounded Farage to accuse May and her Cabinet of living in the past and slowing down the Brexit process. He said their personal dislike for him was hurting Britain.

"The world has changed and it's time that Downing Street did too," Farage said on the pro-Trump Breitbart website.

Farage's words had a hard edge. He said "a new order" is taking over in Washington, while in Britain the top players remain the same. He complained that politicians who had favored keeping Britain inside the EU bloc — a position favored by May before the referendum — remain in charge of U.K. policies.

Taking an apparent swipe at the tousle-haired Johnson, who in the past called Trump "out of his mind," Farage said politicians who once denounced Trump "now pretend" to be his friend.

There is little question that Trump sees Farage as a potential friend. Trump endorsed the Brexit movement even as it was opposed by President Barack Obama and other global leaders.

Farage returned the favor by campaigning for Trump in Mississippi, and he became the first foreign politician invited to Trump Tower after Trump's victory over Hillary Clinton.

The two wealthy men, both with entrepreneurial backgrounds, share an anti-establishment mentality.

By contrast, Trump doesn't seem anxious to develop a personal relationship with May. She was the tenth foreign leader he spoke to after his victory, and he casually asked her to let him know if she was traveling to the United States — far short of a formal invitation to the White House.

Jacob Parakilas, assistant head of the U.S. and Americas Program at the Chatham House think tank, said Trump's actions suggests problems ahead in his dealings with May.

"I think this is an indication that the relationship between Trump and Prime Minister May is going to be off to a rocky start," he said, suggesting that Farage might well work closely with Trump even without British government backing.

Parakilas said Trump's comments show a willingness to flout the conventions of international diplomacy. "This type of public intervention is really unprecedented in modern American history," he said.

It wasn't well received in Parliament.

Tim Farron, leader of the Liberal Democrats, said Trump's proposal wasn't helpful.

"Farage as ambassador is a frankly stupid idea," he said. "I have more diplomacy in my little finger."

British ambassadors usually serve four years or longer. The current ambassador to Washington, former national security adviser Kim Darroch, took up his post in January.

The high status posting traditionally goes to one of Britain's most experienced diplomats and carries substantial social clout.

No one from UKIP has ever held an ambassadorial post in Britain. The often fractious party has but one member in Parliament, and Farage's own bid for a seat fell short last year when voters rejected him.

He is a member of the European Parliament — despite his constant criticism of the institution.

Farage stepped down as party leader after the Brexit victory, saying he wanted his life back, but he returned to the fold when his disillusioned successor, Diane James, resigned after just 18 days. She has since left the party.

Farage has said he will not be competing for the party leadership and is only serving in an interim capacity, but some observers expect him to remain in the top job.

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Britain's Electoral Commission started an investigation Tuesday into whether UKIP violated fundraising laws.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Nov. 23, the 328th day of 2016. There are 38 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 23, 1936, *Life*, the photojournalism magazine created by Henry R. Luce (loos), was first published.

On this date:

In 1765, Frederick County, Maryland, became the first colonial American entity to repudiate the British Stamp Act.

In 1804, the 14th president of the United States, Franklin Pierce (puhrs), was born in Hillsboro, New Hampshire.

In 1889, the first jukebox made its debut in San Francisco, at the Palais Royale Saloon. (The coin-operated device consisted of four listening tubes attached to an Edison phonograph.)

In 1903, Enrico Caruso made his American debut at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, appearing in "Rigoletto."

In 1910, American-born physician Hawley Harvey Crippen was hanged at Pentonville Prison in London for murdering his wife, Cora. (Crippen's mistress, Ethel Le Neve, was acquitted in a separate trial of being an accessory.)

In 1914, the seven-month U.S. military occupation of Veracruz, Mexico, ended.

In 1945, most U.S. wartime rationing of foods, including meat and butter, was set to expire by day's end.

In 1959, the musical "Fiorello!" starring Tom Bosley as legendary New York Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, opened on Broadway.

In 1963, President Lyndon B. Johnson proclaimed Nov. 25 a day of national mourning following the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

In 1971, the People's Republic of China was seated in the U.N. Security Council.

In 1980, some 2,600 people were killed by a series of earthquakes that devastated southern Italy.

In 1996, a commandeered Ethiopian Airlines Boeing 767 crashed into the water off the Comoros Islands, killing 125 of the 175 people on board, including all three hijackers.

Ten years ago: Car bombs and mortar rounds struck a Shiite slum in Baghdad, killing 215 people. Former KGB spy Alexander Litvinenko (leet-vee-NYEN'-koh) died in London from radiation poisoning after making a deathbed statement blaming Russian President Vladimir Putin. Death claimed Broadway librettist Betty Comden at age 89; jazz vocalist Anita O'Day at age 87; and French actor Philippe Noiret at age 76.

Five years ago: Yemen's authoritarian President Ali Abdullah Saleh (AH'-lee ahb-DUH'-luh sah-LEH') agreed to step down amid a fierce uprising to oust him after 33 years in power.

One year ago: The White House urged its allies to step up their contributions to the campaign against the Islamic State, as President Barack Obama faced pressure to show the U.S.-led coalition would intensify efforts even without a major shift in strategy. Blue Origin, a private space company, landed a rocket called New Shepard upright and gently enough to be used again, a milestone in commercial aeronautics. Cynthia Robinson, 71, a trumpeter and vocalist who was a key member of Sly and the Family Stone, died in Carmichael, California.

Today's Birthdays: Former Labor Secretary William E. Brock is 86. Actress Elmarie Wendel is 88. Actor Franco Nero is 75. Actress Susan Anspach is 74. Screenwriter Joe Eszterhas is 72. Actor-comedy writer Bruce Vilanch is 69. Sen. Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., is 66. Singer Bruce Hornsby is 62. Former Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-La., is 61. Actor Maxwell Caulfield is 57. Actor John Henton is 56. TV personality Robin Roberts ("Good Morning America") is 56. Rock singer-musician Ken Block (Sister Hazel) is 50. Rock musician Charlie Grover is 50. Actress Salli Richardson-Whitfield is 49. Actor Oded Fehr (OH'-dehd fayr) is 46. Rapper-actor

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Kurupt (Tha Dogg Pound) is 44. Actor Page Kennedy is 40. Actress Kelly Brook is 37. Actor Lucas Grabeel (GRAY'-beel) is 32. TV personality Nicole "Snooki" Polizzi is 29. Actress-singer Miley Cyrus is 24. Actor Austin Majors is 21.

Thought for Today: "I'm a realist and so I think regretting is a useless occupation. You help no one with it. But you can't live without illusions even if you must fight for them, such as 'love conquers all.' It isn't true, but I would like it to be." — Marlene Dietrich, German-born actress (1901-1992).