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Friday, Dec. 16

Senior Menu: Spanish rice with hamburger, green beans, Mandarin oranges, chocolate pudding, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Cereal, yogurt, fruit, juice, milk.

School Lunch: Chicken sandwich, French fries, carrots and dip, fruit.

Debate at Brookings

4 p.m.: Groton girls host Redfield-Doland (7th at 4:00, 8th at 5:00, JV at 6:30, Varsity at 8:00)

Death Notice: Ed Fordham

Edward Fordham, 69, of Groton passed away December 15, 2016 at Avera St. Luke's Hospital in Aberdeen. Services are pending with Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

**Missing North of Groton, a black
600 lb. Heifer Calf.
Yellow Ear Tag #955
If found or seen,
call 605/290-1019.**

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 **Closed**

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**Hanlon Brothers
Gravel Hauling**

New & Cleaning of
Stockdams with our
60' reach trackhoe

605/395-6531

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		REBOUNDS	ASSISTS	TURNOVERS	STEALS	FOULS	2PT'S	3PT'S	FTA	FTM	TOTAL POINTS
3	Anthony Sippel	4							1	0	
4	Bennett Shabazz	4	3	2	3	4	9	4	1	0	30
10	Marshall Lane	1	1			2					
11	Tre'von Tuggles	1				1					
12	Sean Schuring	8	1	1	3	3	2	2			10
14	Treyton Diegel										
20	Brandon Keith	2	1	1	2	2					
22	Cade Guthmiller										
24	Frankie Wuestewald	1					2				4
30	Jonny Doeden										
32	Mitch Thurston										
34	Austin Jones										
40	Peyton Johnson	8				3	2		7	6	10
42	Seric Shabazz	2	1	2	3	1	4		1	0	8
50	Luke Thorson		1						2	2	2
		31	8	6	11	16			12	8	64

Groton Area hands Redfield-Doland first loss

It was the battle of the unbeaten Thursday as the Tiger boys' basketball team traveled to Redfield to hand the Pheasants a 64-43 loss. The win moves Groton Area to 4-0 while Redfield-Doland drops to 3-1.

The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Hefty Seed with Justin Hanson and Kalen Kjellsen, Treeline Tree Service, Ken's Food Fair of Groton, James Valley Seed with Doug Jorgenson, Groton Ford, Doug Abeln Seed Company, Blocker Construction, Producer's Hybrids with John Wheeting, Patios Plus with Joe Foertsch and Harr Motors.

The Groton win was sparked by a season high of 30 points by Bennett Shabazz, making four three-pointers. Seric Shabazz and Sean Schuring each had 10 points, Petyon Johnson had eight, Frankie Wuestewald had four points and Luke Thorson two.

The Pheasants were led by Dalton Howe and Alan Masat with 12 points apiece followed by Zach Jordan and Micaiah Utecht with eight each, Drew Rozell had five and Max Baloun added three points.

Groton Area made 25 of 57 field goals for 44 percent while Redfield-Doland made 14 of 47 for 29 percent. The Tigers were eight of 12 from the line while the Pheasants were 12 of 15.

The first half was close until the end of the half as there were six lead changes and the game was tied five times. Redfield-Doland held a 9-8 lead at the end of the first quarter and the Tigers led 21-16 at half time and 36-30 at the end of the third quarter. Groton outscored Redfield, 28-13 in the fourth quarter to pull away with the win.

Groton C (2-0) won 36-34 lead by Darian Shabazz with 13, Cade Guthmiller with 7 and Hunter Schaller with 6.

Groton JV (3-1) lost 25-29 lead by Treyton Diegel and Marshall Lane both with 6 and Anthony Sippel added 5.



Santa will be coming to Groton's Subway on Saturday, Dec. 17, 1-4 p.m.

Cookies for all the kids



At the mini mall in north Groton

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Left: Sean Schuring is being guarded by Zach Jordan and ends up passing off the ball to teammate Anthony Sippel. (Photo by Julianna Kosel)



Bennett Shabazz passes the ball to Seric Shabazz. (Photo by Julianna Kosel)



Left: Bennett Shabazz drives to the basket as he had a season high 30 points at Redfield. (Photo by Julianna Kosel)

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Winter Weather Advisory

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE ABERDEEN SD

337 AM CST FRI DEC 16 2016

...MODERATE TO HEAVY SNOW IS EXPECTED THROUGH EARLY SATURDAY...DANGEROUSLY LOW WIND CHILLS OVERNIGHT TONIGHT THROUGH SUNDAY MORNING...

.AN AREA OF LOW PRESSURE SHIFTING ACROSS THE CENTRAL PLAINS STATES WILL BRING MODERATE TO HEAVY SNOW THROUGH EARLY SATURDAY.

VERY COLD HIGH PRESSURE WILL THEN BUILD ACROSS THE REGION SATURDAY INTO EARLY SUNDAY... LEADING TO DANGEROUSLY LOW WIND CHILLS.

TRAVERSE-MCPHERSON-BROWN-MARSHALL-ROBERTS-EDMUNDS-DAY-INCLUDING THE CITIES OF... WHEATON...EUREKA...ABERDEEN...BRITTON...SISSETON...IPSWICH...WEBSTER

337 AM CST FRI DEC 16 2016

...WINTER WEATHER ADVISORY REMAINS IN EFFECT FROM NOON TODAY TO NOON CST SATURDAY...

...WIND CHILL WARNING IN EFFECT FROM NOON SATURDAY TO NOON CST SUNDAY...

THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE IN ABERDEEN HAS ISSUED A WIND CHILL WARNING...WHICH IS IN EFFECT FROM NOON SATURDAY TO NOON CST SUNDAY.

* TIMING...EXPECT SNOW TO DEVELOP AND INCREASE IN COVERAGE AND INTENSITY LATE THIS MORNING...BEFORE SLOWLY DIMINISHING LATE TONIGHT INTO SATURDAY MORNING.

* PRECIPITATION RATES...THE HEAVIEST SNOWFALL RATES WILL OCCUR BETWEEN EARLY THIS AFTERNOON AND 9 PM THIS EVENING.

* SNOW ACCUMULATIONS...TOTAL SNOW ACCUMULATIONS OF 3 TO 5 INCHES ARE EXPECTED.

* WINDS / VISIBILITIES...WINDS GUSTING AS HIGH AS 35 MPH LATE THIS AFTERNOON AND THIS EVENING WILL CAUSE AREAS OF BLOWING AND DRIFTING SNOW. IN ADDITION...AREAS OF POOR VISIBILITY ARE EXPECTED.

* WIND CHILL VALUES...EXPECT WIND CHILLS TO RANGE FROM 5 BELOW ZERO TO 35 BELOW ZERO THROUGH NOON SATURDAY...THEN RANGE FROM 30 BELOW ZERO TO 45 BELOW ZERO THROUGH NOON SUNDAY. THE COLDEST WIND CHILLS ARE EXPECTED AROUND 2 AM SUNDAY.

* IMPACTS...PLAN ON SLIPPERY ROAD CONDITIONS...ESPECIALLY DURING THE EVENING COMMUTE TONIGHT. THE COLD WIND CHILLS WILL CAUSE FROSTBITE IN AS LITTLE AS 30 MINUTES TO EXPOSED SKIN THROUGH SATURDAY MORNING...AND IN AS LITTLE AS 10 MINUTES SATURDAY AFTERNOON THROUGH SUNDAY MORNING.



House for Sale

3 bedroom house for sale. Groton S. D. Detached garage. 1/2 block from high school. Call (605) 397-8405.

GROTON
Chamber Of Commerce

Sign Up for Groton Chamber Bucks at the Holiday Boxes Located This week at the Olde Bank Floral 'N More and Subway

Week of Dec. 19: Lori's Pharmacy and Groton Ford

Today in Weather History

December 16, 1967: With temperatures in the upper 20s, heavy freezing rain fell in west central and southwest Minnesota at night on the 16th, causing widespread ice accumulations on all exposed surfaces, and power and telephone poles and lines went down over a wide region. Some places were without power and phone service for three to four days. This storm was classified as the most severe ice storm in the past 20 years in some areas. Reports were received of turkeys and other poultry dying due to the cold in rural areas. 20 to 30 cars were in the ditch on one slick stretch of road in Rock County. Further west, throughout eastern South Dakota, freezing rain for most of the day formed ice from 3/8 to 3/4 inch on exposed surfaces. Extensive damage was caused to utility lines. All roads became dangerous for traveling, and one death was directly linked to the ice storm. The ice cut off a regular water supply, causing one person to attempt to get water from a cistern. She slipped on the ice into the cistern. Three deaths were indirectly related to the ice storm; two due to automobile accidents, and one due to a heart attack.

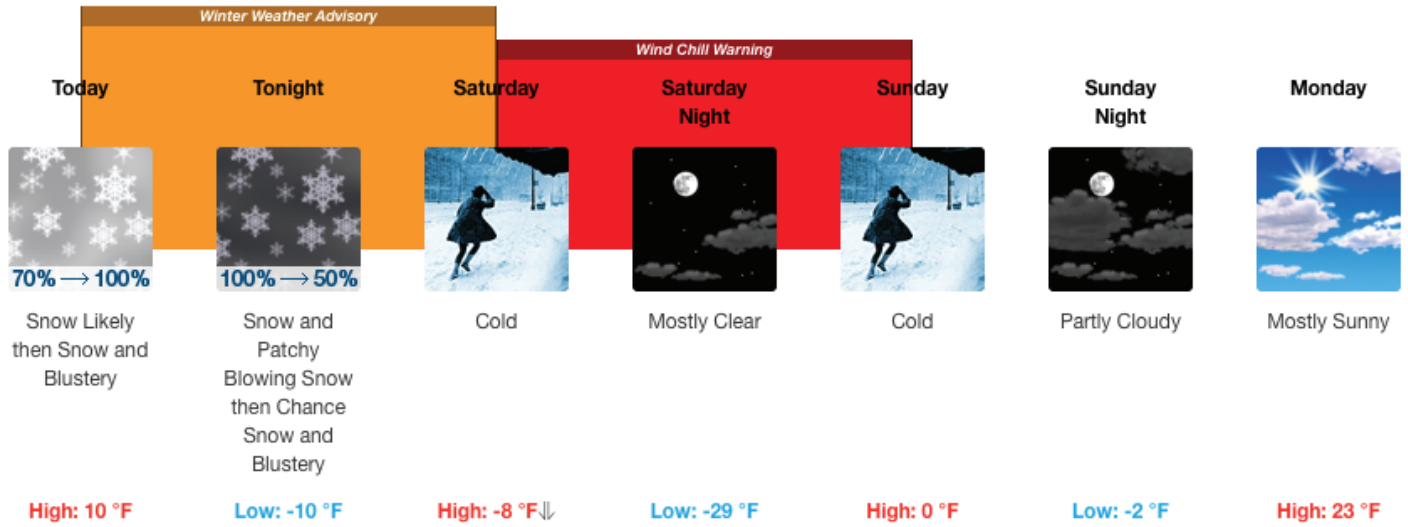
December 16, 2000: Northwest winds of 30 to 50 mph, with gusts to 60 mph, combined with newly fallen snow and arctic air to bring widespread blizzard conditions and extreme wind chills as low as 70 below zero to west central Minnesota and much of South Dakota from late on the 15th through the 16th. Events were canceled, travel was shut down, and some motorists were stranded. Both US Highway 12 and Interstate 29 in South Dakota were closed throughout the day. As an indirect result of the low visibility, a semi-truck hit and totaled a pickup truck in the snow just west of Clark.

December 16, 1811: An estimated Magnitude 7.5 earthquake struck the Mississippi Valley near the town of New Madrid in Missouri at 2:15 am local time. People were awakened by the shaking in New York City, Washington D.C., and Charleston, South Carolina. The ground motions were described as most alarming and frightening in places like Nashville, Tennessee and Louisville, Kentucky. In the epicentral area the ground surface was described as in great convulsion with sand and water ejected tens of feet into the air.

December 16, 1941: More than 900 women are employed by the Weather Bureau as observers and forecasters, as a result of filling positions of men during World War II. Eleven days after Pearl Harbor, the army requested that all weather broadcasts be discontinued. The fear was that the enemy would use this information to plan an attack on the United States.

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Moderate to Heavy Snow ending Saturday, then Dangerously Cold!



Main Travel Hazards:

Snow and blowing snow this afternoon through tonight

Check Road Conditions at www.safetravelusa.com/sd

Dangerously Low Wind Chills:

Frostbite possible within 30 minutes tonight, within 10 minutes Saturday afternoon – Sunday morning



National Weather Service – Aberdeen, SD
www.weather.gov/abr

NWSAberdeen

Created: 12/16/2016 5:55 AM

@NWSAberdeen



Published on: 12/16/2016 at 6:03AM

Snow will spread over the area and intensify this afternoon and evening. A widespread 3 to 8 inches of snow is expected, with the higher amounts south of U.S. Highway 212. Expect breezy northerly winds develop late this afternoon and continue overnight, causing blowing and drifting snow. While snow will taper off Sunday morning, dangerously cold air will take its place. Wind chill values over the weekend could result in frostbite in around 10 minutes on exposed skin.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 10.4 F at 10:40 PM

Low Outside Temp: -19.0 F at 2:29 AM

High Gust: 15.0 Mph at 11:06 AM

Snow: 1.25

Today's Info

Record High: 62° in 1962

Record Low: -28° in 1951

Average High: 25°F

Average Low: 6°F

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.27

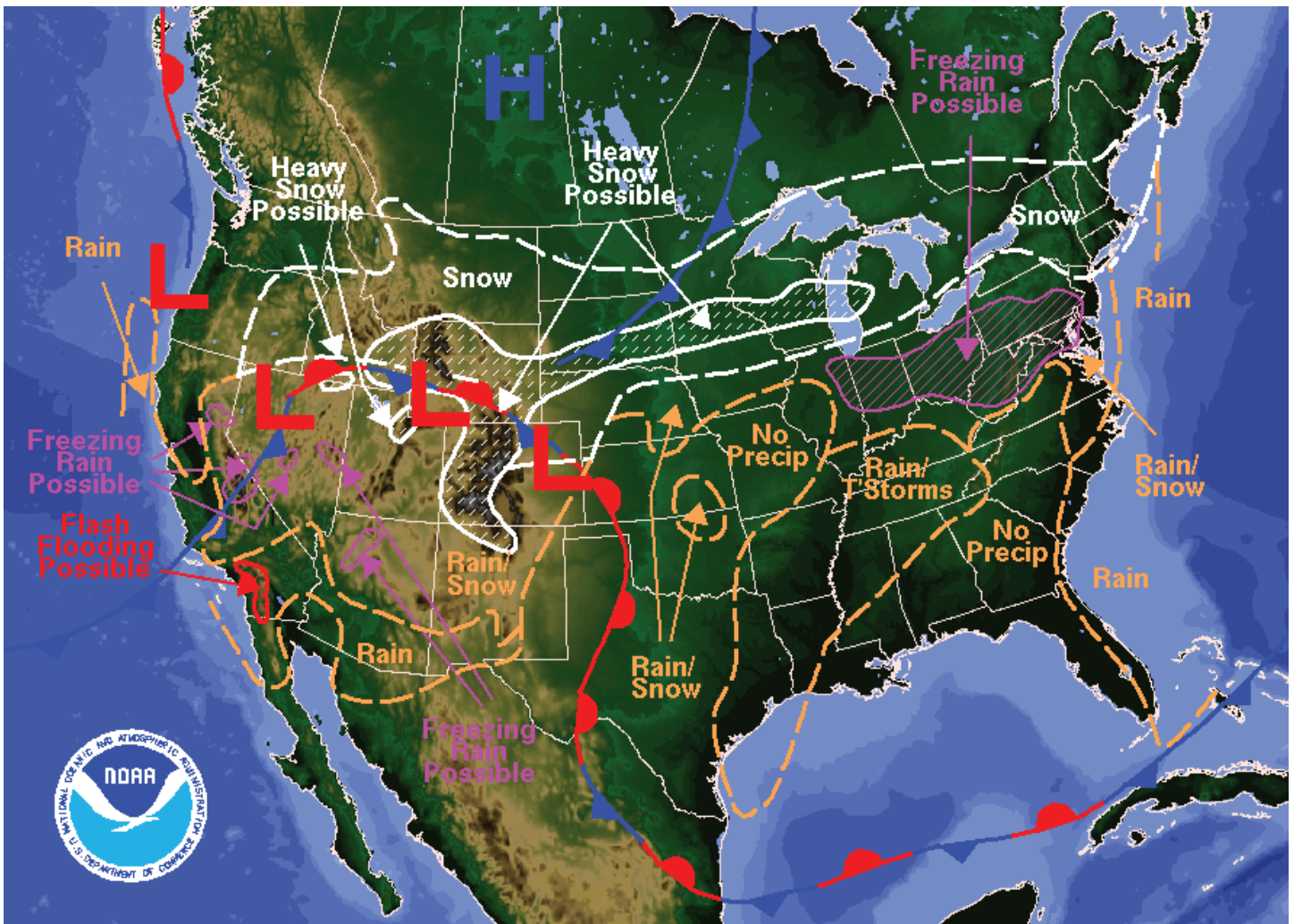
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.59

Average Precip to date: 21.47

Precip Year to Date: 17.93

Sunset Tonight: 4:51 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:08 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Fri, Dec 16, 2016, issued 4:55 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts



BACKACHE OR HEARTACHE

It had been a particularly difficult day at work. But when Jim got home, he invited his son into the yard to play catch. Looking over the fence, a neighbor called out, "Jim, aren't you tired from the day's work?" "Yes, I am," he replied.

"Then why don't you rest?" continued the neighbor.

"I'd rather have a backache tomorrow," said the dad, "than heartache later in life."

As parents we focus on the present, forgetting that what we do today affects all of our children's tomorrows. We are concerned with daily events and forget about eternity. We have homework on the refrigerator, photos on every table and clothes for every occasion. Yet what we do is far more important than how things look.

In The Message the words of Paul are translated this way: "Take them by the hand and lead them in the way of the Master." (Ephesians 6:4)

If our children do not get attention from us, they will get it from someone else. If we are not available for them, someone else will be. If we are too busy, someone else will make time available for them.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be the kind of parent You want me to be. May I love my children as You love me, guard them as You guard me, protect them as You protect me and lead them into life everlasting. Amen.

Scripture: Ephesians 6:1-10 ...Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

News from the Associated Press

Same-season home-and-home series can ease DI scheduling task

Low- and mid-major Division I basketball teams make the difficult task of scheduling home games easier by playing two nonconference games against the same opponent in the same season. Coaches say there isn't a downside and that playing the same team twice helps prepare their teams for the home-and-home structure of the conference season. Sometimes the matchups are odd, like Omaha vs. Cal State Fullerton, and Abilene Christian vs. Charleston Southern.

By **ERIC OLSON**

AP Sports Writer

Omaha-Cal State Fullerton, Abilene Christian-Charleston Southern and South Dakota State-Idaho really aren't games fans are demanding to see once, never mind twice.

But with home games hard to secure for low- and mid-major Division I teams, playing two games against the same nonconference opponent in the same season has become a viable option. More than two dozen same-season home-and-home nonconference series were scheduled for 2016-17.

"Schools have a hard time procuring home games whether because of geographic proximity or success on your home court or cost factors associated with travel," South Dakota State coach T.J. Otzelberger said. "What you're seeing are more and more teams willing to play the same team two times in a year."

Tennessee Tech actually scheduled two opponents, Lipscomb and Alabama A&M, twice, and coach Steve Payne said he would have played a third nonconference opponent twice if it had been the right fit.

"You want to win games, and it's proven 66 percent of the time the home team wins," Payne said. "Everybody has to fill out a schedule and nobody wants to be on the road the entire nonconference."

Though these matchups are largely borne out of desperation, coaches say there is no downside.

Scheduling two games for the same season instead of a home-and-home over two or more years eliminates the potentially deal-breaking back-and-forth about where the first game will be played. In a same-season two-game series, the site of the first game doesn't matter much because both games will match up the same personnel and it won't knock each school's number of home games out of balance.

Playing twice also simulates the home-and-home structure of conference play. Teams get accustomed to making adjustments based off what happens in the first meeting and try to execute them in the second.

Budgetary concerns require low- and mid-major teams to play a few road games each season against high-major opponents that pay them guarantees, with the going rate about \$90,000. After that, the low- and mid-major teams try to find opponents similar to them to round out their nonconference schedules.

The degree of difficulty is greater for teams that have knocked off bigger programs. When Omaha was transitioning from Division II to Division I, coaches from all levels of Division I called offering to play the Mavericks. After Omaha won at Marquette two years ago, the phone didn't ring nearly as much. The Mavericks are in their second season as full-fledged Division I members.

"We have to make all the phone calls now," said coach Derrin Hansen, whose team probably added to its future scheduling difficulties by winning at Iowa this month.

Omaha along with four other teams in the far-flung Summit League each have scheduled two nonconference games against the same opponent this season. The most natural of these is North Dakota State-North Dakota. The two used to be conference rivals, but North Dakota State is now in the Summit and North Dakota in the Big Sky. They are in the first season of a four-year contract that has them playing twice a season.

"When you're in Fargo, North Dakota, and you've had some success, getting home games is a difficult task," coach Dave Richman said. "From a budget standpoint, it's 75 miles (to Grand Forks), so we go up the day of the game, and the bus cost is all it entails."

And the fans?

"They probably enjoy it a little bit," Richman said. "We had 5,000 in here last Wednesday, and I would expect a good crowd up there (Friday) night."

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The oddest same-season home-and-home set might have been between Abilene Christian and Charleston Southern.

"Neither of us could finish our schedule, so we just decided to play twice," Charleston Southern coach Barclay Radebaugh said.

The teams from schools almost 1,200 miles apart put on good shows. In Abilene, Texas, Charleston Southern won 66-65 to finish a comeback from a 17-point second-half deficit. In Charleston, South Carolina, Abilene Christian rallied from seven points down in the final 19 seconds of regulation and won 85-82 in overtime.

"Sometimes guarantee games don't prepare you as much because in our league you don't face that kind of size and athleticism," said Radebaugh, whose team is in the Big South. "So games like Abilene Christian greatly benefit us with preparation for league play. While I would have preferred to win both games, looking big picture, I thought it really benefited us this year."

More AP college basketball: www.collegebasketball.ap.org

Thursday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Roncalli 68, Milbank Area 41
Canistota 79, Freeman 39
Clark 62, Hamlin 49
Colman-Egan 64, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 42
Colome 55, Gregory 40
Dell Rapids St. Mary 54, Estelline 34
Dupree 51, McIntosh 22
Florence/Henry 66, Tri-State, N.D. 58
Great Plains Lutheran 36, Wilmot 33
Groton Area 64, Redfield/Doland 43
Hanson 44, Menno 39
Herreid/Selby Area 58, Faulkton 46
Hettinger/Scranton, N.D. 52, Harding County 45
Hill City 58, New Underwood 21
Hitchcock-Tulare 43, Wessington Springs 38
Kimball/White Lake 59, Mitchell Christian 43
Langford 51, Ipswich 30
Leola/Frederick 68, Aberdeen Christian 48
Madison 56, Lennox 43
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 65, Corsica/Stickney 55
Platte-Geddes 46, Burke/South Central 31
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 58, Tripp-Delmont/Armour 35
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 48, Watertown 39
Sioux Valley 93, Baltic 36
Sisseton 68, Ortonville, Minn. 53
South Border, N.D. 47, Eureka/Bowdle 40
Vermillion 62, Irene-Wakonda 36
Waubay/Summit 47, Waverly-South Shore 44
Yankton 58, Harrisburg 51
Lakota Nation Tournament (Makosica Bracket)
Pine Ridge 70, White River 51
Red Cloud 76, Todd County 61

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Winnebago, Neb. 94, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 31
Lakota Nation Tournament (Paha Sapa Bracket)
Custer 68, Standing Rock, N.D. 52
Lower Brule 65, Tiospa Zina Tribal 58
GIRLS' BASKETBALL
Avon 59, Hartington Cedar Catholic, Neb. 46
Burke/South Central 58, Winner 51
Colman-Egan 66, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 62, OT
Dell Rapids St. Mary 34, Estelline 28
Douglas 58, Hot Springs 18
Highmore-Harrold 36, Potter County 33
Hitchcock-Tulare 51, Wessington Springs 41
Kimball 42, Mitchell Christian 16
Lennox 66, Madison 62
Leola/Frederick 52, Aberdeen Christian 15
McIntosh 43, Dupree 25
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 34, Corsica/Stickney 32
New Underwood 53, Hill City 36
Parker 41, Alcester-Hudson 35
Philip 33, Stanley County 23
Scotland 39, Bon Homme 19
Sioux County, Neb. 53, Edgemont 48
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 59, Bishop Heelan Catholic, Sioux City, Iowa 38
Sioux Valley 71, Baltic 49
St. Thomas More 59, Spearfish 30
Sully Buttes JV 60, Edmunds Central 31
Timber Lake 42, Mobridge-Pollock 30
Tripp-Delmont/Armour 49, Wolsey-Wessington 36
Vermillion 72, Irene-Wakonda 45
Warner 54, Northwestern 37
West Lyon, Inwood, Iowa 69, Canton 31
Wilmot 44, Great Plains Lutheran 29
Lakota Nation Tournament (Makosica Bracket)
Little Wound 60, Custer 52
Omaha Nation, Neb. 50, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 33
Pine Ridge 61, Red Cloud, Neb. 51
Todd County 68, McLaughlin 57
Lakota Nation Tournament (Paha Sapa Bracket)
Crow Creek 58, Lower Brule 32
Standing Rock, N.D. 63, St. Francis Indian 58
White River 62, Tiospa Zina Tribal 41

Dangerous wind chills put Northeastern US in deep freeze

By KATHY McCORMACK, Associated Press

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — Low temperatures and high winds have put the Northeastern U.S. in a deep freeze.

Dangerous wind chills of 20 to 30 below in parts of the region will make for some crippling conditions Friday.

"You are talking about 30 degrees below normal highs. That is pretty darn cold," said National Weather

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Service meteorologist James Brown in Maine. "This is pretty much a piece of Arctic air that came off the North Pole and came into New England."

Forecasters said a storm will follow the frigid weather, bringing chances for snow, sleet and freezing rain across much of the country.

Some schools closed early Thursday and others delayed opening to avoid a bone-chilling wait at the bus stop.

"We're not strangers to these sorts of bitter temperatures on Mount Washington's summit," senior weather observer Mike Carmon said in the weather observatory's blog at the highest peak in the Northeast. "However, over the last few winters, it's generally late January or February before we experience this sort of polar air outbreak."

Utility workers were prepared for power outages due to fallen trees. David Flener, field safety manager at Eversource, New Hampshire's largest utility, said workers are well-educated on how to stay warm in the coldest weather, starting before they even arrive on a job site. They are urged to make sure they carry an emergency kit with clothing and food in case they get stranded, and once they arrive, there is a discussion about on-the-job safety.

"We're oftentimes up in buckets, so you're sometimes above the trees and there's a little more wind up there," he said. "You'd be surprised how much heat you lose from the top of your head."

Sara Sankowicz, who oversees tree crews for Unitil, said workers are encouraged to watch out for one another to see if they show signs of hypothermia or frostbite. "We'll take every step to make sure they are staying safe out there and that they're not overexposing themselves to the elements," she said.

In upstate New York, along the Lake Ontario shore, wind gusts approached 70 mph and the National Weather Service issued a blizzard warning effective through early Friday morning. Lake-effect snow was accompanied by winds of up to 50 mph, causing whiteout conditions in some places.

Elsewhere in New York, parts of the Adirondack Northway, north of Albany, were closed for more than four hours after a crash involving a tractor-trailer and a snowplow. No injuries were reported.

In western Pennsylvania, lake-effect snow bands were blamed for slick roads and poor visibility. Fifty-nine vehicles crashed in a snowy pileup and three people were hurt. The crash was one of three that shut down different stretches of Interstate 80.

Below-normal temperatures are expected this weekend and into Monday across the entire northern half of the country, from the Pacific Northwest to Maine and as far south as Oklahoma, Arkansas and Virginia, according to the Climate Prediction Center.

Up to half a foot of snow could fall from the Upper Mississippi Valley to the Northeast on Friday and Saturday, and areas east of the Appalachian Mountains could see freezing rain and sleet on Saturday.

Associated Press writers Holly Ramer and Michael Casey in Concord, New Hampshire, and David Sharp in Portland, Maine, contributed to this story.

Snow guards winter wheat against South Dakota cold snap

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The recent cold snap with temperatures 15-20 degrees below normal likely hasn't hurt South Dakota's fledgling winter wheat crop.

Experts told the Capital Journal (<http://bit.ly/2gVkJQxX>) that the snow cover will help protect the crop as it provides insulation from the cold air and moisture for next spring. Another positive is that the wheat was planted earlier than usual in September and emerged ahead of its typical pace, with a stronger stand by the time killing temperatures stopped the growing season.

As temperatures have struggled to approach 30 degrees during the past three weeks, Pierre has received about a foot of snow.

Ruth Beck, agronomy field specialist with the South Dakota State University regional extension office in Pierre, said winter wheat is usually hurt over multiple cycles of freezing and thawing.

Beck said it's best that winter wheat grow enough before winter to show "a couple of tillers and a nice crown."

"I think most of our winter wheat had a chance to get to that stage," she said.

Beck said farmers and other agriculture experts won't know for certain whether the crop is hurt until spring.

In the spring of 2016, 1.08 million acres of wheat were planted, which was down 19 percent from the spring of 2015.

Reid Christopherson, spokesman for the South Dakota Wheat Commission in Pierre, said there are no official estimates of this fall's winter wheat plantings available yet.

"But there's a pretty good chance they slipped down below a million acres," he said.

Information from: Pierre Capital Journal, <http://www.capjournal.com>

Man known as last fluent speaker of the Mandan language dies

TWIN BUTTES, N.D. (AP) — An 85-year-old man said to be the last fluent speaker of the Mandan language has died.

Edwin Benson was remembered this week with a traditional wake, The Bismarck Tribune (<http://bit.ly/2hKGyZs>) reported. His death brings the possible extinction of a language that expressed the unique experiences and perceptions of a once-thriving American Indian tribe.

For decades, Benson worked with various linguists and others to document the language. Heidi Hernandez, Benson's daughter, said her father's efforts to give his knowledge was becoming too much for him.

"He said he'd done enough now and he was tired," she said. "This language which made Dad so well-known across the world, I'm afraid it's extinct."

None of Benson's daughters learned to speak their native languages. Their mother spoke Lakota and their father spoke Mandan, but the daughters were only taught English.

"They didn't want to confuse us, so they just spoke English," Hernandez said.

Three Affiliated Tribes Councilman Cory Spotted Bear has been working on a two-year, \$1 million project funded by the tribe to collect and document all known records of the language. He said that even with the money invested in the language, it's possible there may never be another fluent speaker.

"He never asked to be the teacher of the language; he was more called to be. He was a simple rancher at heart," Spotted Bear said.

Indrek Park, a linguistics researcher who worked for more than two years with Benson to preserve the language up until a month before he died, said Benson was a living anachronism, a 19th century man living in the 21st century.

Park said he has compiled a 2,000-page dictionary of Hidatsa words and grammar. Parks said he continues to work on pulling together 100 years' worth of various writings and recordings of Mandan, including Benson's many contributions.

Information from: Bismarck Tribune, <http://www.bismarcktribune.com>

Plunging temperatures, powerful winds reach Northeast US

By KATHY McCORMACK, Associated Press

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — Plunging temperatures and gusty winds made their way Thursday into the Northeastern U.S., the next victim in the path of dangerously cold temperatures to hit the country.

A strong Arctic cold front moved across the region with temperatures falling throughout the day and commuters, schools and outdoor workers slowing down, girding up, and taking precautions.

Vermont public safety officials warned residents to limit their time outdoors at least through Friday with dangerous wind chills of minus-35 in the forecast. Some schools and government offices closed early in upstate New York ahead of lake-effect snow expected to bring 1 to 2 feet.

In western Pennsylvania, lake-effect snow bands were blamed for slick roads and poor visibility. Fifty-nine vehicles crashed in a snowy pileup and three people were hurt. The crash was one of three that shut

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down different stretches of Interstate 80.

Blowing snow in Syracuse, New York, slowed the morning commute on Interstate 81 to a crawl.

"It doesn't bother me as long as I go slow," commuter Dawn Coyer, who lives north of Syracuse, told Time Warner Cable News. "But I wasn't driving and she (a friend) said 'No, we're not doing this.'"

Parts of the Adirondack Northway, north of Albany, were closed for more than four hours after a crash involving a tractor-trailer and a snowplow. No injuries were reported.

Elsewhere in upstate New York, along the Lake Ontario shore, wind gusts approached 70 mph and the National Weather Service issued a blizzard warning effective through early Friday morning. Lake-effect snow was accompanied by winds up to 50 mph causing whiteout conditions in some places.

In parts of Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine overnight, the frigid weather and wind will cause temperatures to dip below zero as winds gust up to 30 mph and chills near minus-20.

"You are talking about 30 degrees below normal highs. That is pretty darn cold," said weather service meteorologist James Brown in Maine. "This is pretty much a piece of Arctic air that came off the North Pole and came into New England."

Forecasters said a storm will follow the frigid temperatures, bringing chances for snow, sleet and freezing rain across much of the U.S.

While it sounded pretty grim, some winter weather veterans took it all in stride.

Jon Asmund, a state bridge construction superintendent in New Hampshire, swears by fleece-lined pants. "They do wonders," he said.

He and his crew were working on a bridge not far from Hampton Beach along the seacoast, dealing with 50 mph wind. "It's still painful, but we make it through the day."

Some 90 miles north, Will Irvine was hoping to finish up inspection work on a covered bridge in Conway and avoid the low temperatures and strong wind coming Friday. Some of his crew members were suspended underneath the structure for several hours.

"You manipulate your work schedule for whatever Mother Nature's going to give you, because you're not going to change her," he said.

As the arctic air tracked northeast, Connecticut Gov. Dannel P. Malloy planned to activate the state's severe cold-weather protocol Thursday night, calling for state police and other agencies to work with shelters and community groups to protect vulnerable residents. Malloy also encouraged communities to open warming centers.

Wind chill advisories enveloped much of the Midwest and Northeast on Thursday. And the winter weather conditions claimed at least two lives earlier in the week. A snow and ice-covered road was a factor in a crash Wednesday night that killed a 22-year-old man in a car that lost control and spun into a snowplow in Springport, New York. A 34-year-old woman died of hypothermia in St. Paul, Minnesota. She was found Monday, when temperatures dropped to 3 below zero and wind chills were minus 19.

Maine State Police said a malfunctioning kerosene heater played a role in the death of a man in Turner. The man was found dead Thursday morning in a camper trailer, heated by two kerosene heaters. There was thick smoke and soot in the camper.

Below-normal temperatures are expected this weekend and into Monday across the entire northern half of the country, from the Pacific Northwest to Maine and as far south as Oklahoma, Arkansas and Virginia, according to the Climate Prediction Center.

Up to half a foot of snow could fall from the Upper Mississippi Valley to the Northeast on Friday and Saturday, and areas east of the Appalachian Mountains could see freezing rain and sleet on Saturday.

The Latest: Maine man found dead; faulty heater suspected

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — The Latest on the dangerously cold temperatures and strong winds that have moved into the Northeast U.S. (all times local):

4 p.m.

State police in Maine say a malfunctioning kerosene heater played a role in the death of a man in Turner.

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Police say the body of 52-year-old Craig Gordon was discovered in a camper trailer on Thursday morning. They say the camper was being heated by two kerosene heaters.

Investigators are still looking into what kind of malfunction contributed to Gordon's death. They say there was thick smoke and soot in the camper, and carbon monoxide poisoning is another possibility.

The state medical examiner is to determine how Gordon died.

Plunging temperatures and gusty winds have made their way into the Northeastern U.S., the next victim in the path of dangerously cold temperatures to hit the country.

12:45 p.m.

A blizzard warning has been issued for parts of upstate New York along Lake Ontario, as dangerously cold temperatures move to the Northeast from across the Upper Midwest.

Arctic air and wind gusts approaching 70 mph threatened the New York region with dangerous cold. The National Weather Service said blizzard warnings were in effect Thursday until 1 a.m. Friday.

Forecasters said lake-effect snow was accompanied by winds of 30 mph to 50 mph, causing whiteout conditions in some places.

Storms that began Wednesday dumped a foot of snow on parts of the Buffalo area, where dozens of schools south and east of the city canceled classes Thursday.

1:40 a.m.

Dangerously cold temperatures gripped the Upper Midwest ahead of a storm that's expected to bring heavy snow in coming days, while schools and officials in the Northeast braced for their own wintry blast.

Many areas from North Dakota to Pennsylvania are under a wind chill advisory Thursday.

The National Weather Service said that in western Wisconsin, Thursday morning's wind chills could get as low as minus 30.

The cold has claimed at least one life: A 34-year-old woman died of hypothermia in St. Paul, Minnesota. She was found Monday, when temperatures dropped to 3 below zero and wind chills were minus 19.

Officials in Connecticut, Vermont and New York were also bracing for an arctic blast.

Governor's group charts course to fight growing meth use

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The fight against growing methamphetamine use and mounting drug arrests in South Dakota should include a new interstate drug trafficking task force, law changes to allow authorities to wiretap cellphones and a range of other efforts, a state workgroup recommended Thursday.

The group formed by Gov. Dennis Daugaard also recommended boosting incentives for offenders to complete treatment and coordinating meth-prevention programs. The proposals arrive against the backdrop of "unprecedented stress" on South Dakota's criminal justice system because of methamphetamine use, according to the group's report.

It said that between fiscal years 2014 and 2015, drug arrests grew 20 percent, while meth-related arrests jumped 40 percent. Officials also found that drug crimes accounted for 41 percent of prison admissions in fiscal year 2016, up from 35 percent the previous year.

"The policy recommendations within the report represent the state's next steps to fight the meth epidemic," Daugaard said in a statement. Officials must concentrate on stopping meth from entering the state, keeping people from using it and helping those who are addicted become sober, he said.

The governor is taking the recommendations under consideration and will address the issue in his State of the State address next month, spokeswoman Kelsey Pritchard said in an email.

Under the recommendations, offenders who undergo a court-ordered clinical assessment and complete the requirements imposed within a year would have a one-time opportunity to drop a possession or ingestion charge from a felony to a misdemeanor.

The group also suggested that people on probation or parole be subjected to mandatory incarceration

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for positive drug tests. Officials proposed adding crimes including public corruption, possession of a firearm by a felon, assault by a prisoner in a county jail and promoting the prostitution of a minor to a list of crimes that don't receive the presumption of probation at sentencing.

The report suggests revising probation and parole laws so that authorities can focus on high-risk offenders. Under the proposal, officials would end supervision and discharge well-behaved offenders if they have been under supervision for at least a year; have finished required treatment programs; and are under supervision for a presumed probation crime, among other requirements.

Hughes County Sheriff Mike Leidholt, a member of the task force, said he hopes the recommendations would spur a reduction in meth use, which he called "a huge problem."

In Minnehaha County, authorities saw a nearly 70 percent increase in robberies during the first six months of this year. Sheriff Mike Milstead attributed the jump largely to meth users and traffickers. Milstead, who wasn't on the task force, pushed back against reducing penalties for drug offenders, saying that people who are addicted to meth and other drugs can be dangerous.

The group's report said that as interstate trafficking replaces home production of meth, law enforcement needs to be able to gather the intelligence necessary to combat criminal organizations of increasing complexity. That means changing state law to allow authorities to wiretap cellphones — not just landlines, according to the recommendations.

"I, quite frankly, don't know any drug dealers that are sitting at home on their rotary phone," said Milstead, who noted that wiretaps are extremely rare.

The Latest: New North Dakota governor in favor of pipeline

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — The Latest on the Dakota Access pipeline (all times local):

3:20 p.m.

New North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum says he supports completion of the Dakota Access oil pipeline.

The Republican took office Thursday. He said in a Facebook video that the four-state, \$3.8 billion pipeline is a "legally permitted project" that has been stalled by the Obama administration.

The pipeline is on hold while developer Energy Transfer Partners and the Army battle in court over permission to cross under the Missouri River. Opponents who've protested for months have been leaving their main camp in southern North Dakota.

Burgum said the pipeline is good for the North Dakota economy and is the safest method to move oil.

He also said he will seek reimbursement from the federal government to cover the \$17 million it has cost the state to date in protest-related law enforcement costs.

Online:

Burgum's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/dougfordakota/>

12:25 p.m.

A Native American tribe's water source is one of a few critical sources that could be affected if there was a breach in the Dakota Access oil pipeline.

The four-state, \$3.8 billion pipeline crosses more than 200 water bodies, including the Des Moines and Raccoon rivers, which are water sources for a half-million customers in the Des Moines, Iowa, area.

The CEO of the area's utility says he has emergency plans to deal leaks and he will review pipeline inspection reports regularly.

It also crosses the Mississippi River, which is a water source for 4,000 people in southeast Iowa.

Pipeline builder Energy Transfer Partners says the project will be constantly monitored and can shut off emergency valves remotely at any time.

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Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press

Capital Journal, Pierre, Dec. 14

Tis the season for giving anonymously

On Monday the Capital Journal received a money order for \$35 dollars. We receive money all the time either from subscribers, advertisers or the folks who are buying our new book *Storied Land*, so getting a check in the mail is nothing new. But this one stood out.

There was no name on the order, no return address, no request to send a book, just a note asking that we give the money to someone who needs it. That was something we hadn't seen before and we've committed to do just that.

We're not going to say who's going to get the money but we'll make sure they need it.

There are, apparently, a lot of folks out there who have committed to giving anonymously. Just last week the Mitchell Police Division reportedly got an anonymous check for \$10,000. Attached to that check were instructions much like the ones we got — give the money to people who need it.

Every Christmas there are stories of gold coins showing up in Salvation Army kettles all over the country. Where those coins came from often is a mystery.

That there are people in this country still willing to give without thought of reward is a testament to the American spirit. It's been a rough year for a lot of folks in America. The country suffered through one of the more divisive presidential campaigns in modern history, the prices for grain and cattle are down and the Midwest economy, at least, is slowing.

So, to those men and women, who give freely without thought of recognition or reward, we say well done. We know you didn't ask for a thank you but that makes you all the more deserving of it.

American News, Aberdeen, Dec. 15

Small acts of kindness can make a big difference

This is the time of year to take some time and think about those who deserve to be recognized for their good work and kind acts.

There have been several examples in news stories in just the past few days.

The valets who help patients at Avera St. Luke's Hospital sure deserve a pat on the back, especially for the way they treated 90-year-old cancer center patient Millie Lockington, who showed up for treatment last month with a flat tire.

Valet Todd Koller not only got Lockington and her car to the shop, he stopped to have a sandwich with her. That's going above and beyond.

Then there's Melanie Lundquist. She's the Aberdeen speech pathologist who, with the help of friends, assembled and gave away what she calls Sweet Dreams Care Packs to Aberdeen Head Start students.

Lundquist has been involved with the project for six years, though this will be her last. Through the years, she estimates that about 2,000 care packs have been given away. Each has a pillow, a pillow case, a pair of winter pajamas, a blanket, a stuffed animal, a toothbrush and toothpaste.

What a thoughtful and generous act. And we're sure that the Head Start students across the region — who sometimes come from families that can't afford many extras — appreciated the gesture.

Again this year, officers at the Aberdeen Police Department hosted Shop With A Cop.

Not only does the program provide presents for kids who might not get lavish gifts at Christmas, but it builds positive relationships and trust with young people and their families who live in our community.

The police have worked hard in recent months at outreach and trying to get to know the residents of Aberdeen. That's to their credit and benefit.

If you were at Runnings Saturday afternoon, you might have noticed the Rev. Harold Salem was ringing bells for The Salvation Army's Red Kettle Campaign.

That's a kind act more of us could take time to do. If arguably the best-known pastor in the region, who is in his 90s, can face the bitter cold to volunteer for a good cause, the rest of us can, too.

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At the Eureka school, students of shop teacher Ray Tracy are building mini structures of the buildings you'd see in most any town — a bank, a store, a post office, a school and more.

Sure, the buildings will be nice features on the school's playground, but there's a bigger upside. The building, electrical and landscaping skills the students are learning will benefit them for life.

All of these efforts are worth recognizing.

And that's to say nothing of those who shovel their neighbor's driveway and sidewalk, help with holiday programs or at church or just buy a coffee for a friend.

Follow the lead of these examples and take a little time to help somebody out, especially if you're feeling fortunate at this time of year.

A small act can make a big difference.

Rapid City Journal, Rapid City, Dec. 15

LNI's 40th anniversary an impressive feat

As we all know or will know someday, turning 40 is a big deal and worthy of a special celebration. This applies to events as well, including one that is occurring this week in Rapid City.

The Lakota National Invitational started Wednesday and continues through Saturday primarily at the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center. The four-day event is expected to attract more than 2,500 Native American students alone, who will participate in basketball tournaments, an archery competition, wrestling, hand games, a Lakota Language Bowl, a ROTC competition, a Song Fest and other competitions.

According to Mayor Steven Allender, the event — one of the largest held in the community — will pump an estimated \$3.5 million into the local economy as Native Americans from throughout the area, the state and the region flock here.

What makes the 40th anniversary of the LNI particularly impressive is how far it has come since it was founded in 1976 by Brian Brewer of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, which is where it was held for the first two years.

In 1977, a total of eight schools participated in what was then known as the All-Indian Tournament. This year's event will host 16 girls' and boys' basketball teams. The hand-game tournament will feature 40 teams. Last year's archery tournament attracted 18 teams.

It is an event that continues to grow and flourish.

When you consider all the competitions, contests, art shows, pow wows and the event's focus on Lakota youth, it is apparent that Rapid City hosts one of the most unique cultural events in the entire nation.

It is something that we all should be proud of in this community. City officials and organizations like the Rapid City Convention & Visitors Bureau are going all out to welcome the LNI attendees. On Wednesday, law enforcement escorted a caravan of athletes, students, coaches and LNI Board members into town. Later, they were treated to a dinner hosted by the Hotel BID Board.

Mayor Allender also has proclaimed Friday "Lakota National Invitational Day." In doing so, he said the LNI "has provided countless opportunities for lasting and valuable working relationships and friendships between Native and non-Native people."

Race relations are challenging at times in Rapid City, but this event continues to demonstrate that we all can work together to improve the relationship while appreciating the culture of the Native Americans who are our neighbors.

In the meantime, congratulations to all those involved in putting on and participating in the 40th anniversary of the LNI. We hope there are many more to come.

Not just Standing Rock: Water sources along pipeline at risk

By DAVID PITT, Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — A Native American tribe's fight over its water source has grown into an international cause, with all attention focused on the Dakota Access pipeline's route in southern North Dakota. But contractors on the project, which passes through three other states, have been drilling under and through rivers that are equally critical water sources for hundreds of thousands of people.

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One city managed to avoid the situation — Bismarck, North Dakota, the center of government in the oil-rich state and home to 67,000 people. Others, including Des Moines, Iowa, didn't, despite protests that led to arrests.

At issue is whether a breach in the \$3.8 billion project, being built by Dallas-based parent company Energy Transfer Partners, will affect drinking water, given that it crosses more than 200 water bodies, including the Des Moines and Raccoon rivers. While utility officials in Iowa acknowledge it's likely there'll be an issue in the future, they're confident a leak won't affect the quality of the water.

"I think it's important to note that it isn't a matter of if there'll be eventually some kind of leak or rupture of the pipeline it's a matter of when and so we certainly want to be vigilant and have measures in place," Des Moines Water Works CEO Bill Stowe said.

Energy Transfer Partners counters that the 1,170-mile pipeline will be safe, with devices placed throughout to track pressure, temperature, density and flow that'll be monitored around the clock by people who can remotely shut off oil flow. Such emergency valves are on either side of the Des Moines and Raccoon rivers, ETP spokeswoman Vicki Granado said.

Pipe was laid early this month under the Des Moines River, and the route also crosses the Raccoon or its tributaries at three locations upstream from Des Moines, a city of more than 200,000 residents.

Stowe, whose utility has a half-million customers, said there is a plan to deal with an oil leak, and he works with the U.S. Department of Transportation to ensure regular inspections and appropriate flow-stopping measures. He's more concerned about more commonplace water threats: spills from tanker trucks carrying anhydrous ammonia or petroleum products, as well as farm wastewater spills, sewage leaks and other contaminants.

The Dakota Access pipeline also crosses underneath the Mississippi River, which is a source of water for about 4,000 people in the southeast corner of Iowa and close to a water-treatment plant for the city of Keokuk. The utility's officials voiced concerns to the Iowa Utilities Board, telling them that a preferred route would be south of the city's intake, but the route wasn't changed. A leak could reach the intake within an hour.

Up in North Dakota, an early plan had the Dakota Access pipeline crossing the Missouri River 10 miles north of Bismarck, but the government rejected it in September 2014 because of the potential drinking water supply threat, the number of water and wetland crossings and proximity to homes, documents show.

Instead, it was run near the Standing Rock Sioux reservation, which depends on water from Lake Oahe, a Missouri River reservoir. The tribe took ETP to court over the water threat as well as threats to cultural artifacts, and an encampment protest on federal land swelled to thousands at one point.

On Dec. 4, the Army decided to keep ETP from drilling under the river and look at alternate routes — preventing the completion of the pipeline for now.

Protesters also tried to stop the pipeline from crossing the Des Moines River, confronting workers. But they weren't successful.

Carolyn Raffensperger, executive director for the Iowa-based environmental group Science and Environmental Health Network, noted the frustration she felt while watching the drilling and pipe installation. She has filed legal challenges and criticized the regulatory process for pipeline permitting, saying the layers of bureaucracy makes it difficult for citizens to be heard in any significant way.

"The problem is a very little bit of oil can make a very big mess," she said. "We don't want to drink any oil."

Economy improves but still weak in rural parts of 10 states

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A monthly survey of bankers suggests the economy has improved in rural parts of 10 Plains and Western states, but it's still weak because crop prices remain low.

The overall economic index for the region remained in negative territory 42.9 in December even after improving significantly from November's 36.6.

Creighton University economist Ernie Goss says weaker crop and meat prices continue to slow business in rural areas.

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Survey officials say any score below 50 on any of the survey's indexes suggests a decline in that area. Bankers from Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming were surveyed.

Goss says the economy is improving in Iowa, Nebraska and South Dakota while all the other states are trending lower.

Opponents ask judge to keep entire ethics overhaul on hold

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Foes of a government ethics overhaul are asking a South Dakota judge not to salvage parts of the law he put on hold while a court challenge moves forward.

A group of Republican lawmakers and others asked the court in a legal filing this week to keep the entire law on hold. The attorney general's office and the law's sponsors previously asked the court to reinstate provisions including lower campaign contribution caps.

Circuit Judge Mark Barnett last week issued a preliminary injunction, ruling that an ethics commission, public campaign funding appropriation and legislator gift limitations may be unconstitutional.

But he also invited input on portions that could be "saved."

The challengers argue in part that the provisions supporters are trying to save can't function effectively without the ethics commission.

2016 AP FCS All-America Team, List

Eastern Washington receiver Cooper Kupp a four-time AP FCS All-American; Sam Houston State QB Jeremiah Briscoe also selected first-team along with two North Dakota State offensive linemen.

By The Associated Press

The 2016 Associated Press FCS All-America team:

FIRST TEAM

OFFENSE

Quarterback — Jeremiah Briscoe, junior, 6-foot-3, 209 pounds, Sam Houston State.

Running backs — Chase Edmonds, junior, 5-9, 205, Fordham; Tarik Cohen, senior, 5-6, 170, North Carolina A&T State.

Linemen — Julie'n Davenport, senior, 6-7, 315, Bucknell; Jessamen Dunker, senior, 6-5, 290, Tennessee State; Zach Johnson, senior, 6-4, 331, North Dakota State; Landon Lechler, senior, 6-7, 298, North Dakota State; Mitchell Kirsch, 6-6, 300, senior, James Madison.

Tight end — Dallas Goedert, junior, 6-4, 250, South Dakota State.

Wide receivers — Cooper Kupp, senior, 6-2, 215, Eastern Washington; Karel Hamilton, senior, 6-1, 205, Samford.

All-purpose player — Detrez Newsome, junior, 5-10, 210, Western Carolina.

Kicker — Griffin Trau, sophomore, 5-8, 180, Richmond.

DEFENSE

Linemen — P.J. Hall, junior, 6-1, 280, Sam Houston State; Karter Schult, senior, 6-4, 269, Northern Iowa; Tanoh Kpassagnon, senior, 6-7, 290, Villanova; Darius Jackson, junior, 6-3, 237, Jacksonville State

Linebackers — Dylan Cole, senior, 6-1, 240, Missouri State; Alex Searce, senior, 6-3, 220, Coastal Carolina; Darius Leonard, junior, 6-3, 220, South Carolina State.

Defensive backs — Donald Payne, senior, 6-0, 223, Stetson; Cole Reyes, junior, 6-2, 215, North Dakota; Lorenzo Jerome, senior, 6-0, 195, Saint Francis (Pa.); Dee Delaney, junior, 6-1, 193, The Citadel.

Punter — Miles Bergner, senior, 6-0, 225, South Dakota.

SECOND TEAM

OFFENSE

Quarterback — Gage Gubrud, sophomore, Eastern Washington.

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Running backs — Khalid Abdullah, senior, James Madison; Jonah Hodges, senior, San Diego.
Linemen — Corey Levin, senior, Chattanooga; Erik Austell, senior, Charleston Southern; Brandon Parker, junior, North Carolina A&T State; Casey Dunn, senior, Jacksonville State; Nick Demes, senior, Penn.
Tight end — Eric Saubert, senior, Drake.
Wide receivers — Brian Brown, senior, Richmond; Kamron Lewis, sophomore, St. Francis (Pa.).
All-purpose player — Rashard Davis, senior, James Madison.
Kicker — Lane Clark, sophomore, Tennessee State.
DEFENSE
Linemen — Donovan McCray, senior, Grambling State; Keionta Davis, senior, Chattanooga; Anthony Ellis, junior, Charleston Southern; Derek Rivers, senior, Youngstown State.
Linebackers — Christian Kuntz, senior, Duquesne; Folarin Orimolade, senior, Dartmouth; Brett Taylor, junior, Western Illinois
Defensive backs — Mike Basile, junior, Monmouth; Casey DeAndrade, senior, New Hampshire; Deion Harris, junior, North Dakota; LeRoy Alexander, senior, Youngstown State.
Punter — Jake Ryder, senior, Towson.

THIRD TEAM

OFFENSE

Quarterback — Devlin Hodges, sophomore, Samford.
Running backs — Lenard Tillery, senior, Southern; Lorenzo Long, senior, Wofford.
Linemen — Taylor Gadbois, senior, Southeastern Louisiana; Anton Wahrby, senior, Wofford; Mark Spelman, senior, Illinois State; Jerry Ugokwe, senior, William & Mary; Max Rich, senior, Harvard.
Tight end — Andrew Vollert, junior, Weber State.
Wide receivers — Jake Wieneke, junior, South Dakota State; Troy Pelletier, junior, Lehigh.
All-purpose player — Jody Webb, senior, Youngstown State.
Kicker — Erik Medina, senior, Texas Southern.

DEFENSE

Linemen — Pat Afriyie, junior, Colgate; Samson Ebukam, senior, Eastern Washington; Greg Menard, junior, North Dakota State; Winston Craig, senior, Richmond.
Linebackers — Garrett Dolan, junior, Houston Baptist; Darien Anderson, senior, Alcorn State; Chad Geter, senior, Gardner-Webb.
Defensive backs — Nick Gesualdi, junior, Cornell; Danny Johnson, junior, Southern; Xavier Coleman, senior, Portland State; Jaylen Hill, senior, Jacksonville State.
Punter — Tate Lewis, senior, Southern Utah.

More AP college football: www.collegefootball.ap.org

Ranchers hurt by Cottonwood Fire to get some aid this week

PHILIP, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Stockgrowers Association and a charity in Philip are working together to help ranch families hurt by the devastating Cottonwood Fire west of Phillip in October.

The human-caused prairie fire burned 64 square miles of grassland, killed nearly 300 cattle and destroyed numerous rural buildings. No one was hurt.

KCCR radio reports that Philip Charities will be sending out \$125,000 this week to help ranchers in need. Stockgrowers Executive Director Silvia Christen says disbursements will be based on criteria including fence and grazing losses.

Christen says people who want to donate hay should contact the rancher association. Philip Charities will accept donations up until Friday.

The Latest: Russia claims Aleppo evacuations are 'completed'

BEIRUT (AP) — The Latest on the conflict in Syria where thousands more civilians and rebels are expected to leave the eastern part of the city of Aleppo under a key cease-fire deal (all times local):

1:45 p.m.

Russia is claiming that all women and children have been taken out of eastern Aleppo and that a final sweep by the Syrian military is underway to clear out the last remaining rebels in the city — though there is no evidence on the ground of this.

A statement on Friday from the Russian military's Center for Reconciliation in Syria says the evacuations have been "completed." It came shortly after the Syrian government said it was suspending the evacuations because a convoy leaving Aleppo was fired on by the rebels.

The U.N. and international aid agencies insist there are still people in eastern Aleppo waiting to be evacuated.

The Russian statement claims Russia said that over 9,500 people, including more than 4,500 rebels and 337 wounded, have been taken out of the rebel-held districts in eastern Aleppo.

The Russian military also says some die-hard militants have stayed behind and are firing on the Syrian government troops.

1:05 p.m.

An official with the International Committee of the Red Cross is urging all parties in Syria to ensure that the evacuations from Aleppo resume.

ICRC's regional director Robert Mardini posted on Twitter that, "Regretfully, the operation was put on hold. We urge the parties to ensure it can be relaunched & proceed in the right conditions."

The Syrian government suspended evacuations from eastern Aleppo hours after they resumed on Friday, saying that rebels opened fire on a convoy with evacuees at a crossing point with the enclave.

A Syrian rebel spokesman, Yasser al-Youssef of the Nour el-Din el-Zinki rebel group, claimed pro-government forces had opened fire on the convoy and also confiscated 25 private cars belonging to the Aleppo evacuees.

Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency says "pro-regime terrorists groups" had opened fire on the convoy in Aleppo.

1 p.m.

A Syrian rebel spokesman says government forces opened fire on the road used for evacuations from eastern Aleppo, leading to the suspension in the process.

Yasser al-Youssef, a spokesman for the Nour el-Din el-Zinki rebel group, says the government forces also confiscated 25 private cars belonging to Aleppo residents on Friday.

He says he is convinced the government is trying to link the Aleppo evacuations to those from two Shiite villages in the country's northwest besieged by rebels

Syrian state TV blamed opposition fighters, saying they opened fire on a convoy on the road evacuating people from eastern Aleppo.

Hezbollah's Military Media says government supporters had blocked a road used by evacuees from Aleppo, demanding the wounded in the Shiite villages of Foua and Kfarya be allowed to leave.

12:45 p.m.

Turkey's state-run news agency claims forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar Assad attacked a convoy of people being evacuated from the rebel enclave in eastern Aleppo, which led to the suspension of evacuations.

That claim is contrary to Damascus' statement that rebels opened fire on a convoy with evacuees on Friday, forcing the government to suspend the evacuations.

Anadolu Agency says "pro-regime terrorists groups" had opened fire on the convoy, adding that a "pro-regime crowd gathering on the road is also preventing the passage of vehicles."

Turkey, which helped broker the evacuation deal, has been a main supporter of armed opposition groups

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fighting to topple Assad. Ankara, with Moscow, helped negotiate a cease-fire between the warring parties in Syria to allow the evacuations from eastern Aleppo.

Moscow, along with Tehran, has given critical military support to the Damascus government and helped turn the course of the war in Assad's favor.

12:35 p.m.

The World Health Organization's top representative in Syria says she hopes the suspension of evacuations of civilians and rebels from eastern Aleppo is only temporary and that the process would resume soon.

Elizabeth Hoff says WHO staffers at the Ramouseh crossing point with the rebel enclave who were assisting in the operation were told "without explanation" to leave the area.

Hoff spoke to reporters at U.N. offices in Geneva by phone from western, government-controlled part of the city of Aleppo.

She says many women and children in eastern Aleppo had gathered to wait for buses and ambulances to return and take them out on Friday, but were now compelled to go back home.

Hoff says that "this is a great concern to us because we know that they are desperate to get out."

11:35 a.m.

Syrian state TV says evacuations of civilians and opposition fighters from eastern Aleppo have been suspended after rebels opened fire on a convoy at one of the crossing points of the rebel-held enclave.

It wasn't immediately clear how long the suspension, which was announced within a couple of hours after the evacuations resumed on Friday, would last.

The Syrian state TV also claims the rebels tried to take with them captive they had seized and were holding in the rebel enclave.

Lebanon's Al-Manar Hezbollah TV says the Syrian army stopped the process because the rebels had violated the cease-fire deal. Hezbollah militiamen are fighting in the Syrian civil war alongside President Bashar Assad's forces.

The Lebanon-based Al-Mayadeen TV says buses that were parked at the Ramouseh crossing point left the area after it was targeted by gunmen.

11:05 a.m.

A Turkish official says Turkey's aid organizations are helping Syrians who have been evacuated from the city of Aleppo to a border area held by the opposition in Syria's Idlib province.

Deputy Prime Minister Veysi Kaynak said on Friday that "20 buses from Aleppo have reached the safe zone under control of the Free Syrian Army in Idlib." He says about 30-35 wounded people being treated at the Sahra hospital just on the other side of the border.

Kaynak said there had been a discussion with Syrian opposition forces over the possibility of establishing a center "within a security zone in Syria." He told the private Dogan news agency that "Idlib has no physical capacity to accommodate so many people."

Kaynak estimated there are 80,000 to 100,000 individuals who would like to leave Aleppo under the cease-fire deal that Turkey helped broker.

He added that Turkey is willing to provide assistance to "legitimate" Syrian opposition groups to help meet their needs. The minister spoke after visiting the Cilvegozu border crossing with Syria in southern Turkey

10:55 a.m.

Syrian state TV says that evacuations of civilians and rebels from the last rebel-held territory in eastern Aleppo have resumed for the second day.

Ikhbariya TV is reporting that four convoys with fighters and civilians departed from the rebel enclave on Friday.

The TV has shown dozens of green public buses and ambulances parked in the southern Aleppo neighbor-

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hood of Ramouseh to help in the evacuation. It then showed trucks and other vehicles ferrying residents of eastern Aleppo and driving through the corridor leading to rebel-controlled areas in the countryside.

Meanwhile, in the central province of Hama, buses and ambulances are waiting to evacuate thousands of people from two Shiite villages besieged by rebels, a last-minute condition that became part of the cease-fire deal for Aleppo. Iran had demanded that the evacuations from Foua and Kefraya be tied with the mass movement out of eastern Aleppo.

9:35 a.m.

Russian President Vladimir Putin says that he and his Turkish counterpart are working to launch a new round of peace talks between the Syrian government and the opposition — negotiations that would take place in Kazakhstan's capital, Astana.

Putin, who spoke on a visit to Japan on Friday, says that Ankara had helped broker the rebel exit from Aleppo that is currently underway. He says he and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan are also working for an overall truce in Syria.

The Russian leader says that once the Syrian army secures control of all of Aleppo, civilians will be able to return to their homes.

It wasn't immediately clear if western-backed Syrian opposition would accept such a location for peace talks with President Bashar Assad's government.

9:20 a.m.

Thousands more are expected to leave eastern Aleppo in the coming hours under a cease-fire deal that effectively surrendered the last rebel-held part of the city to Syrian government control. There are conflicting numbers on how many have been evacuated from Aleppo so far as part of a Turkey- and Russia-brokered cease-fire deal to transfer all still in the rebel enclave to rebel-held areas in the countryside.

The International Committee of the Red Cross says about 4,000 civilians were taken out on Thursday. Syrian state news agency says 2,300 opposition fighters and their families left Aleppo the previous night.

Russia, a key ally of Syrian President Bashar Assad, says that more than 6,462 people, including more than 3,000 rebels and 301 wounded, have been taken out.

Obama vows retaliation for suspected Russian hacking

By **BRADLEY KLAPPER** and **JOSH LEDERMAN**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama is promising that the U.S. will retaliate against Russia for its suspected meddling in America's election process, an accusation the Kremlin has vehemently denied.

Amid calls on both sides of the political aisle on Capitol Hill for a full-bore congressional investigation, including assertions President Vladimir Putin was personally involved, Obama said in an interview that anytime a foreign government tries to interfere in U.S. elections, the nation must take action "and we will at a time and place of our own choosing."

"Some of it may be explicit and publicized, some of it may not be," he told NPR News Thursday. "But Mr. Putin is well aware of my feelings about this, because I spoke to him directly about it."

White House officials said it was "fact" that Russian hacking helped Donald Trump's campaign against Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton. Administration officials on Thursday also assailed Trump himself, saying he must have known of Russia's interference. Obama was to hold a news conference at the White House on Friday afternoon.

No proof was offered for any of the accusations, the latest to unsettle America's uneasy transition from eight years under Obama to a new Republican administration led by Trump. The claims of Russian meddling in the election also have heightened already debilitating tensions between Washington and Moscow over Syria, Ukraine and a host of other disagreements.

In the NPR interview, Obama sought to contrast the current incident with "a traditional understanding that everybody's trying to gather intelligence on everybody else."

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"One of the things we're going to have to do over the next decade," he said, is find an international understanding on rules involving what has become "a new game." Obama said that U.S. officials should not let "the inter-family argument between Americans" obscure the need for people to "stand together" on this issue.

"My view is that this is not a partisan issue," the president said, exhorting people to "take it out of election season and move it into governing season."

Speaking to reporters earlier Thursday, presidential spokesman Josh Earnest said that "only Russia's senior-most officials could have authorized these activities."

Obama's deputy national security adviser, Ben Rhodes, connected the dots further, saying it was Putin who was responsible for the Russian government's actions.

"I don't think things happen in the Russian government of this consequence without Vladimir Putin knowing about it," he told MSNBC.

The explosive accusation paints Putin, the leader of perhaps America's greatest geopolitical foe, as having directly undermined U.S. democracy. U.S. officials have not contended, however, that Trump would have been defeated by Clinton on Nov. 8 if not for Russia's assistance. Nor has there been any indication of tampering with the vote-counting.

The Kremlin rejected the claim of Putin's involvement, with Putin spokesman Dmitry Peskov dismissing it as "laughable nonsense."

There has been no specific, persuasive evidence shared publicly about the extent of Putin's role or knowledge of the hackings. That lack of proof undercuts Democrats' strategy to portray Putin's involvement as irrefutable evidence of a directed Russian government plot to undermine America's democratic system.

The dispute over Russia's role is fueling an increasingly public spat between Obama's White House and Trump's team that is threatening to spoil the delicate truce that Obama and Trump have forged since Election Day to smooth the billionaire businessman's move to the White House in little over a month.

Kellyanne Conway, Trump's senior transition adviser, said it was "breathtaking" and irresponsible that the White House had suggested Trump knew Russia was interfering to help his campaign.

That led Earnest to unload from the White House, arguing that Trump, who has dismissed the CIA's assessment of Russian interference, should spend less time attacking the intelligence community and more time supporting the investigation that Obama has ordered.

Earnest said it was "obvious" Trump knew what Russia was doing during the campaign, pointing out that Trump had encouraged Moscow during a news conference to find Clinton's missing emails, repeating the assertion Obama made in "The Daily Show" appearance.

Trump has said he was joking.

"I don't think anybody at the White House thinks it's funny that an adversary of the United States engaged in malicious cyber activity to destabilize our democracy," Earnest said. "That's not a joke."

Trump struck back Friday morning, saying in a Twitter post, "Are we talking about the same cyberattack where it was revealed that head of DNC (Democratic National Committee) illegally gave Hillary the questions to the debate?" He was referring to a controversy centering on now-acting DNC chair Donna Brazile, who was accused of tipping off Clinton to questions that were to be asked in a debate hosted by CNN earlier this year. Brazile at the time was a CNN political analyst.

Japan, Russia agree on economic ties; stalemate on territory

By MARI YAMAGUCHI, Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Russia and Japan agreed Friday to hold talks on joint economic development of four islands at the center of a decades-old territorial dispute between the countries.

It was a small step forward that fell far short of breaking the stalemate in a dispute that has prevented Russia and Japan from signing a peace treaty formally ending their World War II hostilities.

Joint development "would help foster trust toward a peace treaty," Russian President Vladimir Putin said at a news conference with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe after two days of meetings in Japan.

Asked about developments in Syria, Putin said he and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan are work-

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ing to launch a new round of peace talks in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan.

For Putin, the summit meeting was his first official visit to a G-7 country since Russia annexed Crimea in 2014. Abe, eager for progress on the territorial issue, invited Putin even though Japan and the other G-7 nations still have sanctions on Russia.

The dispute centers on four southern Kuril islands, which Japan calls the Northern Territories. The former Soviet Union took the islands in the closing days of World War II, expelling 17,000 Japanese to nearby Hokkaido, the northernmost of Japan's four main islands.

Abe said Friday that he has his own idea of what is right for the islands, as does Putin.

"If we just insist on our own justice, we can never resolve the problem," he said. "We must make an effort to open a new future in Japan-Russia relations for the new generation."

Putin said he did not know how the dispute could be resolved, but that the islands should be seen not as a point of contention but "a place that brings Japan and Russia together."

Former island resident Koichi Iwata, 87, told Japanese public broadcaster NHK that change won't come easily.

"We are different people. We lost the war, and we feel that we were taken advantage of," he said. "But there is hope. They say win-win, which means that it is good for both peoples, right?"

In a statement, Japan and Russia said they will explore joint projects in fisheries, tourism, health and environment on the disputed islands, though details are yet to be worked out.

An agreement on joint economic development is far from a given because of the dispute over sovereignty. Similar ideas in the past have failed because of that. Russia says any development should be governed by Russian laws, while Japan is pushing for a special framework that in Abe's words would not "infringe on the sovereignty positions of either side."

"It's a huge problem," said James Brown, a Japan-Russia expert at Temple University's Japan campus in Tokyo. "There is every chance it will never happen."

The two countries also exchanged a number of broader economic, cultural, science and sports cooperation agreements.

Russia wants to attract Japanese investment, and Japan hopes that stronger ties through joint economic projects will help resolve the thorny territorial issue over time.

Putin said Japanese involvement will be crucial to development of Russia's far east.

"Russia and Japan haven't had very much economic cooperation," Putin said earlier Friday. "It is necessary to expand the potential of our economic ties."

The talks began Thursday evening at a hot springs resort in western Japan. On Friday, Putin arrived about 45 minutes late in Tokyo because of a mechanical problem with his presidential aircraft. He used a backup plane, according to Japanese media.

After the news conference, Abe and Putin spoke at a Japan-Russia business forum and visited a judo center before Putin's departure. Putin is well-known for practicing judo.

Putin refuted suggestions that he is using the territorial issue to wrest economic cooperation from Japan with no intention of making any concessions on the dispute.

"I believe, from a long-term prospect, that we could achieve a historic resolution," he said.

Abe said he and Putin also agreed to start discussing ways for former Japanese residents of the islands to visit their hometowns freely. Up until now, they have been allowed to go to the islands only under special arrangements.

Associated Press writers Ken Moritsugu in Tokyo and Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to show that the ex-islander's name is Koichi Iwata instead of Koiichi Iwata.

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. OBAMA PROMISES PAYBACK FOR HACKING

The president says the U.S. will retaliate against Russia for its suspected meddling in the U.S. election process — an accusation the Kremlin has vehemently denied.

2. EVACUATIONS FROM WAR-TORN SYRIAN CITY HALTED

The flight of civilians and opposition fighters from eastern Aleppo is reportedly suspended after rebels open fire on a convoy at one of the crossing points of the rebel-held enclave.

3. JURY TO WEIGH DEATH PENALTY IN CHARLESTON CHURCH MASSACRE

Dylann Roof is found guilty of killing nine black worshippers, but whether he'll face lethal injection has yet to be determined.

4. ABORIGINAL WOMAN'S SLAYING EXPOSES AUSTRALIA'S RACIAL DIVIDE

For five years, despite the urgings of the coroner and police, prosecutors refused to try the two white men charged with the woman's death.

5. WHICH ALLY PUTIN IS SEEKING

The Russian Orthodox Church is expanding its influence in what was once an officially godless state — and the Russian leader appears eager to align himself with church interests to promote his own agenda.

6. FACEBOOK TAKING NEW TACK AGAINST FAKE NEWS

The social media network will focus on the "worst of the worst" offenders and partner with outside fact-checkers including the AP.

7. WHERE WINTER IS ARRIVING WITH ALL ITS MIGHT

Low temperatures and high winds have put the Northeastern U.S. in a deep freeze.

8. FAREWELL, JOHN GLENN

His home state and the nation will begin saying goodbye to the famed astronaut as he lies in state at Ohio's capitol building.

9. HOW ONE COLLEGE HOPES TO SAVE STUDENTS MONEY

As a way to save thousands of dollars on housing costs, New York University is offering to put students up nearby in elderly people's spare bedrooms.

10. CRAIG SAGER DIES AFTER FIGHT WITH CANCER

The 65-year-old TV reporter was known nearly as much for his colorful wardrobe as his top-flight work on the NBA sidelines.

Syrian TV: Aleppo evacuation halted, rebels fired on convoy

By BASSEM MROUE, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — The Syrian government suspended evacuations from eastern Aleppo just hours after they resumed on Friday, saying that rebels had opened fire on a convoy of evacuees at a crossing point with the enclave, state TV reported.

It wasn't immediately clear how long the suspension would last or whether it would delay the cease-fire deal under which tens of thousands of residents and rebel fighters are being evacuated to opposition-controlled areas in the surrounding countryside, a process likely to take several days.

Earlier on Friday, as the evacuations resumed for a second day, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a major new Syria peace initiative, saying he and his Turkish counterpart are working to set up peace talks between Damascus and the opposition in Kazakhstan.

The evacuations seal the end of the Syrian rebels' most important stronghold — the eastern part of the city of Aleppo — and mark a watershed moment in the country's civil war, now in its sixth year.

In announcing the suspensions, the Syrian TV also claimed that the rebels had tried to take with them captives they had seized and were holding in the rebel enclave during bitter battles to defend their terri-

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tory from a ferocious, weeks-long onslaught by Syrian President Bashar Assad's troops.

Lebanon's Al-Manar Hezbollah TV said the Syrian army stopped the evacuation process because the rebels had violated the cease-fire deal. Hezbollah militiamen are fighting in the Syrian conflict alongside Assad's forces.

The Lebanon-based Al-Mayadeen TV said buses that were parked at the Ramouseh crossing point had left the area after it was targeted by gunmen.

Speaking on a visit to Japan, Putin said that the negotiations would take place in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan, and that he and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan are also working for an overall truce in Syria. Putin said Ankara had helped broker the rebel exit from Aleppo that is currently underway.

However, the Western-backed Syrian opposition is unlikely to accept the location Putting had proposed for negotiations.

On Friday morning, dozens of green public buses and ambulances were parked in the southern Aleppo neighborhood of Ramouseh to evacuate more people from eastern Aleppo. Syrian state TV showed a truck with dozens of men, driving through the corridor leading the rebel-held parts of the surrounding provinces.

The TV said that since the early hours of the day, four convoys have left Aleppo. It said some of the evacuees were using their own vehicles to leave.

There have been contradicting numbers of how many people have been evacuated from Aleppo on Thursday. Syrian state TV reported that more than 9,000 people were evacuated on Thursday alone in Aleppo. The TV said the evacuees included 3,475 men, 3,137 women, 2,359 children and 108 wounded people.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said about 4,000 civilians were taken out on Thursday. Syrian state news agency says 2,300 opposition fighters and their families left Aleppo the previous night.

Russia, a key Assad ally, says that more than 6,462 people, including more than 3,000 rebels and 301 wounded, have been taken out.

For the opposition, the evacuation was a humiliating defeat. A smiling Assad called it a historic event comparable to the birth of Christ and the revelation of the Quran.

The Lebanon-based pan-Arab TV stations Al-Mayadeen interviewed an official with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent in the central province of Hama who said that buses and ambulances are waiting to evacuate thousands of people from two Shiite villages besieged by rebels — a last-minute condition that became part of the cease-fire deal for Aleppo.

The SARC official said they will likely begin the evacuation of 15,000 people from Foua and Kefraya adding that the priority will be for the wounded, elderly people, women, children and those with chronic illnesses.

State TV said 110 buses and 19 medical teams were being ready to take those being evacuated from the two Shiite villages. Iran had demanded to tie the evacuations from Foua and Kefraya with Aleppo's.

Separately, Hezbollah's media arm said Syrian government supporters closed the road used by evacuees from Aleppo, demanding the wounded from the two villages be allowed to leave.

Associated Press writer Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow contributed to this report.

Dems to use hearings on Trump picks to court working class

By MARY CLARE JALONICK, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Determined to hold around two dozen Senate seats in 2018, Democrats will use the coming series of confirmation hearings to try to distinguish themselves from President-elect Donald Trump's billionaire nominees and convince working-class voters who elected him that he's not on their side.

While Democrats have little leverage to stop the Republican's picks in the Senate, they still plan a fight. To highlight what they say is the hypocrisy of Trump's campaign promise to be a champion for the economically struggling little guy, they'll focus on the nominees' wealth, ties to Wall Street and willingness to privatize Medicare, among other issues. In some cases, they'll seek to drag out the process by demanding

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more information and ensuring a full airing of potential conflicts of interest.

"We're going to give each of them a thorough examination to determine whether they'll actually stand up for workers against the special interests or rig the system even more," said incoming Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer of New York, echoing some of Trump's own campaign rhetoric.

Democrats gave up their ability to block Trump's nominees in 2013, when then-Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid changed Senate rules and reduced the number of votes needed to end filibusters, or procedural roadblocks, on nominations from 60 to a simple majority, usually 51. Republicans, now in the majority, will hold 52 seats when the new session convenes next month.

The limits of the Democratic minority have already been tested, as California Sen. Dianne Feinstein, who will be the top Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee in the new session, has repeatedly asked Judiciary Chairman Charles Grassley for more time to review documents ahead of Jan. 10-11 hearings for Sen. Jeff Sessions, Trump's choice for attorney general. Grassley, an Iowa Republican, has declined to delay the hearings.

Still, Democrats are hoping a populist message will resonate outside of Washington, where in the 2018 elections the party faces multiple tough races in deep red states full of white, working-class voters who overwhelmingly supported Trump over Democrat Hillary Clinton this year. Democrats are defending 23 seats, including in states such as North Dakota, Montana, Indiana and West Virginia that went overwhelmingly for Trump and also in once traditional Democratic states that flipped, like Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Much of their focus will be on the wealthy business executives whom Trump has tapped for his Cabinet — notably Steve Mnuchin, a former Goldman Sachs executive picked to head the Treasury Department.

Other wealthy executives chosen by Trump include Exxon Mobil CEO Rex Tillerson for secretary of state and billionaire investor Wilbur Ross for Commerce. To head the Labor Department, Trump turned to Andrew Puzder, the head of fast food chain CKE Restaurants Holdings who has drawn the ire of labor leaders.

Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, a contender for the Democratic presidential nomination whose populist message resonated in some Republican-leaning states, has criticized almost all of Trump's picks, saying they signal he will do the opposite of what he told voters during the campaign.

"That is not the type of change that Donald Trump promised to bring to Washington — that is hypocrisy at its worst," Sanders said of Mnuchin's nomination in a joint statement with Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren.

On policy, Democrats will highlight the fault lines between the nominee and Trump. Georgia Rep. Tom Price, the president-elect's choice to head the Department of Health and Human Services, strongly favors privatizing Medicare, arguing that a voucher system is necessary to ensure its long-term solvency. But Trump repeatedly promised his supporters he wouldn't cut entitlements like Medicare and Social Security.

But Democrats won't fight Trump on every nominee. Many senators up for re-election in 2018 from Trump states say they will pick their battles carefully.

"I think I'll be supporting some of his nominees, I don't think there's any doubt about that," said Democratic Sen. Jon Tester of Montana, who faces re-election in a state Trump won by 20 percentage points over Clinton.

Tester said he'd support nominees whom he believes know rural America and "understand what's going on in my neck of the woods."

West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin, another Democrat up in 2018, says he plans to be generally supportive of Trump's nominees because he believes an executive should have to answer for his own staff. That is, he said, "unless there's just something scathing coming out that I don't know about."

Unlike liberal stalwarts Sanders and Warren, the more moderate Senate Democrats are likely to focus their criticism more narrowly. And because Democratic support isn't necessary to confirm Trump's nominees, the senators are freer to choose whom to support without the added pressure of being a needed vote for confirmation.

Democratic Sens. Joe Donnelly of Indiana and Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota, for example, have expressed concerns about particular nominees. Both are up in 2018.

Donnelly said he will oppose Price because of potential cuts to Medicare.

Heitkamp said she has concerns about Trump's pick to head the Environmental Protection Agency: Scott Pruitt, Oklahoma's attorney general and a frequent critic of environmental regulations and the agency he is tapped to lead. Heitkamp is concerned that Pruitt won't support corn-based ethanol fuel, which is big business in North Dakota.

"If we're going to have an EPA administrator who understands rural America, that means they also have to understand the needs of farmers and want to support those farmers," she said.

Life in prison or death only options for Dylann Roof

By JEFFREY COLLINS and MEG KINNARD, Associated Press

CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) — The Confederate flag is gone from South Carolina's Statehouse. The bullet holes have been patched in Emanuel AME's fellowship hall. And now Dylann Roof will almost certainly spend the rest of his days in prison for killing nine black worshippers at the Charleston church.

A federal jury convicted Roof on all 33 counts Thursday. Those same jurors will decide in another phase of the trial starting Jan. 3 whether he faces the death penalty or life in prison for hate crimes at a historic African-American church whose founder led a failed slave revolt.

When that testimony starts, Roof will be his own attorney, having again fired defense lawyers who fear Roof is taking over because he doesn't want them to present embarrassing evidence in their efforts to spare his life.

A stunning crime when it happened on June 17, 2015, became more revolting during six days of testimony. Roof fired 77 shots in the fellowship hall. More than 50 hit someone. Each of the nine people killed were struck at least five times. The medical examiner said the angles of some of the bullets seemed to show someone was holding a gun over victims who were lying still with their arms pulled against them. A prosecutor said they were executed like animals.

Roof didn't hesitate to explain his racist beliefs during his confession to FBI agents and left a handwritten journal full of his views, such as blacks being inferior to whites. He also left behind carefully chosen pictures of himself holding the .45-caliber Glock he used in the killings, posing at historic Civil War and African-American sites and holding the Confederate flag.

As the verdict was read, Roof just stared ahead, much as he did the entire trial. Family members of victims held hands and squeezed one another's arms. One woman nodded her head every time the clerk said "guilty."

Roof's lawyers presented no witnesses and tried in vain to introduce evidence that problems with Roof's mental health led to the killings. But U.S. Judge Richard Gergel said that kind of evidence is only permissible in the upcoming penalty phase, when Roof will represent himself.

In his closing argument, Assistant U.S. Attorney Nathan Williams mocked Roof for calling himself brave, saying the real bravery came from the victims who tried to stop him.

"Those people couldn't see the hatred in his heart any more than they could see the .45-caliber handgun and the eight magazines concealed around his waist," Williams said.

Williams' 50-minute closing argument filled the court with tension. At times, the prosecutor raised his voice, saying Roof was a cold, calculated killer. Some family members of victims dabbed their eyes with tissues, and jurors appeared emotional when Williams, after apologizing to them, showed crime scene photos of each person killed alongside a small picture of them while alive.

Those pictures included the Rev. Clementa Pinckney, 41, Emanuel AME's pastor and a state senator; Myra Thompson, 59, who taught Bible study that night — the same night she was licensed to preach; Cynthia Hurd, 54, a librarian who stayed to support Thompson; Depayne Middleton-Doctor, 49, who friends said sang like an angel and was also licensed to preach the day of the shootings; Daniel "Dapper Dan" Simmons, 74, nicknamed for his shiny shoes and fine hats; Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, 45, a high school track coach heavily involved in the church's youth programs; Ethel Lance, 70, the church sexton who kept the bathrooms and building immaculately clean; Susie Jackson, 87, who sang in the choir and sent

generations through the church; and Tywanza Sanders, 26, Jackson's nephew and an aspiring poet who wanted to work with children.

Defense lawyer David Bruck conceded Roof committed the slayings, but he asked jurors to look into his head and see what caused him to become so full of hatred, calling him a suicidal loner who never grasped the gravity of what he did.

Survivor Felicia Sanders has her own theory. She thinks Roof is a coward, too, because he refused to look at her as she testified. She refused to say after the verdicts were read Thursday whether she wants Roof to die for his crimes.

But she left a news conference with reporters smiling. It's her way to honor her nine friends killed in their church.

"I wear a smile, because if you look at the pictures of all nine, they're smiling," Sanders said.

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Follow Meg Kinnard on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/MegKinnardAP> . Read more of her work at <http://bigstory.ap.org/content/meg-kinnard/> .

White House suggests Putin was involved in US hacking

By **BRADLEY KLAPPER** and **JOSH LEDERMAN**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Obama administration suggested Thursday that Russian President Vladimir Putin personally authorized the hacking of Democratic officials' email accounts in the run-up to the presidential election and said it was "fact" that such actions helped Donald Trump's campaign. The White House also assailed Trump himself, saying he must have known of Russia's interference.

No proof was offered for any of the accusations, the latest to unsettle America's uneasy transition from eight years under Democratic President Barack Obama to a new Republican administration led by Trump. The claims of Russian meddling in the election also have heightened already debilitating tensions between Washington and Moscow over Syria, Ukraine and a host of other disagreements.

"Only Russia's senior-most officials could have authorized these activities," White House spokesman Josh Earnest said, repeating the words from an October U.S. intelligence assessment.

Obama's deputy national security adviser, Ben Rhodes, connected the dots further, saying it was Putin who was responsible for the Russian government's actions.

"I don't think things happen in the Russian government of this consequence without Vladimir Putin knowing about it," Rhodes said on MSNBC.

The explosive accusation paints Putin, the leader of perhaps the nation's greatest geopolitical foe, as having directly undermined U.S. democracy. U.S. officials have not contended, however, that Trump would have been defeated by Hillary Clinton on Nov. 8 if not for Russia's assistance. Nor has there been any indication of tampering with the vote-counting.

The Kremlin flatly rejected the claim of Putin's involvement, with Putin spokesman Dmitry Peskov dismissing it Thursday as "laughable nonsense."

The dispute over Russia's role is fueling an increasingly public spat between Obama's White House and Trump's team that is threatening to spoil the delicate truce that Obama and Trump have forged since Election Day.

Although the president and president-elect have avoided criticizing each other publicly since Trump's win, their aides have been more openly antagonistic. Kellyanne Conway, Trump's senior transition adviser, said it was "breathtaking" and irresponsible that the White House had suggested Trump knew Russia was interfering to help his campaign.

That led Obama spokesman Josh Earnest on Thursday to unload, arguing that Trump, who has dismissed the CIA's assessment of Russian interference, should spend less time attacking the intelligence community and more time supporting the investigation that Obama has ordered.

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Earnest said it was "obvious" Trump knew what Russia was doing during the campaign, pointing out that Trump had encouraged Moscow during a news conference to find Clinton's missing emails. Trump has said he was joking.

"I don't think anybody at the White House thinks it's funny that an adversary of the United States engaged in malicious cyber activity to destabilize our democracy," Earnest said. "That's not a joke."

U.S. intelligence officials have linked the hacking to Russia's intelligence agency and its military intelligence division. Moscow has denied all accusations that it orchestrated the hacking of email accounts of Democratic Party officials and Clinton's campaign chief, John Podesta, and then leaked them to the anti-secrecy website WikiLeaks.

Obama said Thursday that anytime a foreign government tries to interfere in U.S. elections, the nation must take action — "and we will."

"Some of it may be explicit and publicized, some of it may not be," Obama told NPR News. "But Mr. Putin is well aware of my feelings about this, because I spoke to him directly about it."

Trump and his supporters insist the Democrats' outrage about Russia is really an attempt to undermine the validity of his election victory. Rep. Peter King, a Trump ally and New York Republican, called it "disgraceful" as he spoke to reporters amassed in Trump Tower after meeting with the president-elect.

"Right now, certain elements of the media, certain elements of the intelligence community and certain politicians are really doing the work of the Russians," King said.

Still, Democrats pounced on the latest suggestions of Putin being connected to the daily drip of emails during the presidential race from some of Clinton's closest advisers.

Putin was "clearly involved," said outgoing Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid.

"Having been the former head of the KGB, does that surprise you?" Reid said. "And does it surprise anybody today when he denied it?"

Reid's comments echoed those of Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California, the top Democrat on the Senate intelligence committee, who said Wednesday it's hard to think that Putin didn't know about the operation. She called suggestions that he was aware of the hacking "very credible."

There has been no specific, persuasive evidence shared publicly about the extent of Putin's role or knowledge of the hackings. That lack of proof undercuts Democrats' strategy to portray Putin's involvement as irrefutable evidence of a directed Russian government plot to undermine America's democratic system.

Secretary of State John Kerry defended Obama's handling of the issue during the heat of the presidential campaign — a stance now criticized by some Democrats as too weak — but said he wouldn't comment on whether Putin was involved.

"People need to remember that the president issued a warning," Kerry said. "But he had to be obviously sensitive to not being viewed as interfering on behalf of a candidate or against a candidate or in a way that promoted unrealistic assessments about what was happening."

Cheerful, colorful NBA reporter Craig Sager dies at 65

By KRISTIE RIEKEN, AP Sports Writer

HOUSTON (AP) — Craig Sager never once thought about giving up as he battled cancer for more than two years.

"Man, life is too beautiful, too wonderful, there's just too many things," he said in late August. "It's not just you. It's your family and kids and all. Fight. Fight until the end. Fight as hard as you can."

The end for the beloved TNT broadcaster came Thursday when the man known as much for his outrageous wardrobe as his relationships with the NBA's elite succumbed to the disease he fought so hard to overcome. Turner Sports announced his death without disclosing details. He was 65 and had worked basketball games for TNT for nearly a quarter-century.

"There will never be another Craig Sager," Turner President David Levy said. "His incredible talent, tireless work ethic and commitment to his craft took him all over the world covering sports."

His son, Craig Jr., posted a loving video tribute to his father, tweeting: "We packed a lifetime and then some into these 28 years together."

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Sager's passing brought out condolences from every corner of the NBA and Hall of Famer Larry Bird expressed what many were feeling.

"He was as identifiable with the NBA as any player or coach," Bird said. "The league will not be the same without him."

Magic Johnson echoed those sentiments on Twitter.

"The NBA family lost a legend who changed the way sideline reporters did their job. RIP Craig Sager," Johnson said.

It wasn't just the NBA community that mourned his passing, with Vice President Joe Biden and Drake expressing sadness at the loss.

Sager had two bone marrow transplants with his son as the donor before undergoing a third one from an anonymous donor at the end of August in Houston to fight an aggressive form of leukemia. To no one's surprise, he was characteristically cheerful.

"It really isn't all that painful, not physically," he said then. "I think the hardest toll is mentally and emotionally. I have this thing of positive thinking. I think if you think something is going to be right and you think positive then you feel that way and if you feel that way you'll act that way. I try not to get down."

Sager announced in April 2014 that he had been diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia, and he missed the playoffs and much of the following season as he underwent the first two transplants. Sager revealed in March 2016 that his leukemia was no longer in remission. He said doctors told him the typical prognosis was three to six months to live.

He was overwhelmed by how news of his fight spread and people across the world started talking about the Sager Strong campaign.

"At first was our family's fight," Sager said. "Then because of TV and TNT and people seeing me in the stands and I talk to people and then it got bigger and then that inner circle became an endless world to tell you the truth."

Sager then started gaining inspiration from everyone who shared their story or reached out to show support.

"They saw that I refused to give up and I refused to give in and that I'm still fighting it and they saw a lot of inspiration in what I was doing," he said. "Now I feel I'm not only fighting for what I want and what my family wants, but for everybody out there who has cancer or will."

His battle brought out the soft side of Gregg Popovich, the prickly San Antonio Spurs coach with whom he had many memorable exchanges during in-game interviews.

Sager never faulted Popovich for his gruff attitude during those interviews, saying "he's trying to win a game. He doesn't want to talk to some reporter."

"Later, he said, 'You're still going to be media on the court, but off the court can I call you and see how you're doing?' I said: 'Heck yes,'" Sager recalled in August. "Just keep treating me the way on the court you always do. He said: 'I wouldn't want it any other way.'"

After learning Sager had died, Popovich spoke somberly for close to two minutes before a game in Phoenix.

"A day like this, basketball has to take a back seat, as we all think about somebody who was very unique, very special," Popovich said. "Whether you really knew Craig or not, you got the feeling that he was a very special person in a lot of different ways, and right now I just feel for his family."

"He was a way better person than he was a worker, even though he was amazing in that regard. He loved all the people around him and everybody felt that," he said. "The most amazing part of him is his courage ... if any of us can display half the courage he has to stay on this planet, to live every life as if it's his last, we'd be well off."

Sager sported suits in every color of the rainbow and plenty of shades not found in nature, from teal to fuchsia to magenta. He would match plaid blazers with paisley ties or striped shirts — all in bold hues.

Kevin Garnett once told him to burn an entire outfit. In a 2016 interview with HBO's "Real Sports," Sager recalled how Popovich reproached him for trying to stand out. Sager explained to him: "Coach, you don't understand. If I'm not wearing bright colors and if I don't feel lively, it's not me."

Sometimes lost in the glare of his wardrobe was Sager's relentless nature as a reporter. Every time

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Popovich would give a terse non-answer, an unfazed Sager would pepper him with another question.

Sager's persistence was on display at the start of his career, when the 22-year-old found himself in the middle of one of the most famous moments in sports history. Making \$95 a week in 1974 as the news director at WSPB — a Braves-affiliated AM radio station in Sarasota, Florida — Sager risked getting fired by deciding to hop a flight to Atlanta for a game with Hank Aaron a home run away from breaking Babe Ruth's career record.

With a last-minute credential, Sager was stuck in the third-base photographers' well. As the historic homer sailed out of the park, Sager, without thinking, sprinted onto the field and wound up chasing Aaron down the third-base line. When Aaron's teammates mobbed him at home plate, Sager can be seen in his trench coat in the middle of the scrum.

The next day, Sager caught a 5 a.m. flight to Sarasota to be back for his morning drive responsibilities, and his tapes from the game wound up in Cooperstown.

Sager worked as a reporter on the Olympics, Major League Baseball playoffs, the NFL and the NCAA Tournament, among other sports. But he was indelibly connected to the NBA and Commissioner Adam Silver said the "true original" was respected for his reporting — and his inspiring fight. Bulls star Dwyane Wade sold paisley ties during the 2016 playoffs to raise money to combat blood cancers.

"Craig was as vital to the NBA as the players and coaches," Silver said. "Craig earned widespread respect for his insightful reporting and inspired so many most recently with his courage."

Sager got to cover his first NBA Finals in 2016 through an unusual arrangement between TNT and ESPN, which invited him to join its coverage. He marked the occasion by wearing a blazer with a royal blue floral print. In an interview with LeBron James after Game 6, the Cavaliers star turned the tables to giddily ask Sager a question: "How in the hell do you go 30-plus years without getting a Finals game?"

He was self-deprecating when asked what the outpouring of support from across the NBA meant to him.

"It means that I'm not just the nuisance that they see on the court when I'm trying to talk to them when they want to be somewhere else," he said in August.

And Sager loved everything about his job.

"I try to get there three hours before the game, talk with the ushers and the security guards, the coaches and the fans," Sager said in 2015.

A native of Batavia, Illinois, Sager attended Northwestern, where he walked onto the football and basketball teams, and served as the school's "Willie the Wildcat" mascot for three years.

He worked at several TV and radio stations in Florida after college before spending two years in Kansas City. Sager joined CNN in 1981 after handling the network's first live remote report during the 1980 baseball playoffs.

Sager was in Dallas for a game in April 2014 when he felt ill and sought treatment from Mavericks team physician Dr. Tarek Souryal, who had previously performed Sager's knee surgery. With a dangerously low hemoglobin count, Sager had six blood transfusions over a 24-hour period before returning to Atlanta. After that came the treatments and his public battle with leukemia.

Earlier this year, Sager was involved in the television coverage of the NCAA Final Four and had a memorable postgame interview with Syracuse coach Jim Boeheim.

"I'm proud of you," Boeheim told Sager on air after the Orange lost in the national semifinals. "I'm really proud of you and what you're doing. You're a fighter and that's something we all should really aspire to be. You're setting an example that we all should be really happy to try to follow."

Sager replied, "Well, thank you very much."

And then the professional broadcaster did what professional broadcasters do - he went to his next question, one about Syracuse's famed 2-3 zone, without missing a beat.

AP Basketball Writer Tim Reynolds and AP freelance writer Jose M. Romero contributed to this report.

Putin-Abe talks move to Tokyo; territory, economy on agenda

By **EMILY WANG** and **MARI YAMAGUCHI**, Associated Press

NAGATO, Japan (AP) — The leaders of Russia and Japan move to Tokyo on Friday to wrap up a two-day summit on an economic cooperation agreement and a protracted territorial dispute that has prevented their countries from signing a peace treaty to end World War II.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Russian President Vladimir Putin spent much of their first round at a hot springs resort in western Japan on Thursday discussing small steps to move forward on the dispute over four small islands.

"We had in-depth discussions on a peace treaty," Abe told reporters afterward.

He said they discussed possible joint economic projects on the disputed islands. A sticking point: Japan says they should be operated under a special legal status that does not raise sovereignty issues. Russia, which governs the islands, wants them to be run under its law.

Japanese media reports say Japan and Russia may ink a broader economic cooperation agreement Friday that the two sides have been negotiating for several months.

For Putin, the summit meeting marks his first official visit to a G-7 country since Russia annexed Crimea in 2014.

Abe invited Putin even though the G-7 nations, including Japan, still have sanctions on Russia.

Abe said the two leaders talked for three hours Thursday, spending about half of the time on the dispute over the southern Kuril islands seized by the former Soviet Union in the closing days of World War II, and a peace treaty. Japan calls the islands the Northern Territories.

Japan says the Soviet Union took the islands illegally, expelling 17,000 Japanese to nearby Hokkaido, the northernmost of Japan's four main islands.

Putin expressed concern about the deployment of U.S. missile defense systems in Japan, calling them an overreaction to North Korea's missile program, Japanese media reported. Abe assured him that they are limited to self-defense and do not pose a threat to neighboring countries, while stressing the importance of discussing defense issues amid growing security concerns in the region, they said.

To that end, the two leaders agreed to resume "2+2" talks among the countries' foreign and defense ministers, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said. Lavrov, who is accompanying Putin, attended the first and last "2+2" meeting three years ago.

Russia wants to attract Japanese investment, particularly to its far east. Japan hopes that stronger ties through joint economic projects will help resolve the thorny territorial issue over time.

Yamaguchi reported from Tokyo. Associated Press writer Nataliya Vasilyeva in Moscow and videojournalist Kaori Hitomi in Tokyo contributed to this story.

Don't look to the Electoral College to upend Trump victory

By **CALVIN WOODWARD** and **RACHEL LA CORTE**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — There's more hustle than hope behind an effort to derail Donald Trump's presidency in the Electoral College.

Republican electors are being swamped with pleas to buck tradition and cast ballots for someone else at meetings across the country Monday that are on course to ratify Trump as the winner. AP interviews with more than 330 electors from both parties found little appetite for a revolt.

Whether they like Trump or not, and some plainly don't, scores of the Republicans chosen to cast votes in the state-capital meetings told AP they feel bound by history, duty, party loyalty or the law to rubber-stamp their state's results and make him president. Appeals numbering in the tens of thousands — drowning inboxes, ringing cellphones, stuffing home and office mailboxes with actual handwritten letters — have not swayed them.

The interviews found widespread Democratic aggravation with the electoral process but little expectation that the rush of anti-Trump maneuvering can stop him. For that to happen, Republican-appointed electors

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would have to stage an unprecedented defection.

Still, people going to the typically ho-hum electoral gatherings have been drawn into the rough and tumble of campaign-season politics. Republicans are being beseeched to revolt in a torrent of lobbying, centered on the arguments that Clinton won the popular vote and that Trump is unsuited to the presidency. Most of it is falling on deaf ears, but it has also led to some acquaintances being made across the great political divide.

"Let me give you the total as of right now: 48,324 emails about my role as an elector," said Brian Westrate, a small-business owner and GOP district chairman in Fall Creek, Wisconsin. "I have a Twitter debate with a former porn star from California asking me to change my vote. It's been fascinating."

Similarly deluged, Republican elector Hector Maldonado, a Missouri National Guardsman, has taken the time to console one correspondent, a single mother and Air Force veteran who is beside herself with worry about what a Trump presidency will mean.

"Everything's going to be OK," he said he told her. "I know you're scared, but don't worry. Everything's going to be OK. And I know that it will be."

Maldonado, a Mexican immigrant and medical-equipment seller in Sullivan, Missouri, backed Ted Cruz in the primaries but will cast his vote for Trump with conviction. "I took an oath once to become a U.S. citizen," he said, "and on Aug. 14, 1995, that was the first oath that I've taken to support the U.S. Constitution. A year later I took the oath again, to support the duties of being an officer in the U.S. Army. This was the third oath that I've taken to execute what I promised to do."

Even a leader of the anti-Trump effort, Bret Chifafalo of Everett, Washington, calls it a "losing bet" — but one he says the republic's founders would want him to make. "I believe that Donald Trump is a unique danger to our country and the Founding Fathers put the Electoral College in place to, among other things, stop that from happening," said Chifafalo, 38, an Xbox network engineer who backed Bernie Sanders in the Democratic primaries.

It takes 270 electoral votes to make a president. Despite losing the national popular vote, Trump won enough states to total 306 electoral votes. He would need to see three dozen fall away for him to lose his majority. Only one Republican elector told AP he won't vote for Trump.

Over the sweep of history, so-called faithless electors — those who vote for someone other than their state's popular-vote winner — have been exceptionally rare.

Nashville attorney Tom Lawless, who chose Marco Rubio in the primaries, described his vow to cast his electoral vote for Trump in blunt terms. "Hell will freeze and we will be skating on the lava before I change," he said. "He won the state and I've pledged and gave my word that that's what I would do. And I won't break it."

Nor will Jim Skaggs, 78, a developer from Bowling Green, Kentucky, despite deep concern about Trump. "His personality worries me," Skaggs said. "He is not open-minded." Skaggs knew Trump's father through the construction business, met the son in his 20s, and "I wasn't impressed."

"I hope he is far better than I think he is," Skaggs said. Even so, "I fully intend to vote for Donald Trump," he said. "I think it's a duty."

State law and practices vary for electors, but even in states where electors don't take an oath to vote a certain way or don't face legal ramifications for stepping out of line, the heavy expectation is for them to ratify the results. As much as they don't want Trump in office, some Democrats are as reluctant as Republicans to go rogue.

"We lost the election," said John Padilla of Albuquerque, New Mexico, a Democratic ward chairman. "That's how elections are and you shake hands with your opponent and you get on with what you have to do and support your candidate."

Yet Democratic electors, stung by losing an election to a Republican who trails Clinton by more than 2.6 million votes nationwide, spoke strongly in the interviews in favor of overhauling or throwing out the electoral system. Republican electors generally supported it, reasoning that it provides a counterweight to political dominance by coastal states with huge, and largely Democratic, populations, like California and New York.

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Chiafalo is a co-founder of the Hamilton Electors, a group formed to steer other electors from both parties to a third candidate. "We've stated from Day 1 this is a long shot, this is a Hail Mary," he said.

But if the effort fails, it won't be from lack of trying. Most of the pleas to reject Trump are coordinated, automated, professionally generated and, for those reasons, none too persuasive.

"We got a stack of letters from idiots," said Republican elector Edward Robson, 86, a Phoenix, Arizona, homebuilder.

Fellow elector Carole Joyce, 72, a state committeewoman in Phoenix and retired public health nurse, was more charitable.

"They've caused me great distress on my computer, that's for sure," she said. "I average anywhere from a thousand to 3,000 emails a day. And I'm getting inundated in my regular mailbox out front — anywhere from 17 to 35 letters a day coming from Washington state, Oregon, all around the country. Hand-written, some of them five or six pages long, quoting me the Federalist Papers, the Constitution, asking me again out of desperation not to vote for Donald Trump.

"And that's their right," she said. "I've had nothing threatening, I'm happy to say. The election is over. They need to move on."

This item has been corrected to specify that if enough Republicans did not vote for Trump, he would not win in the Electoral College.

La Corte reported from Olympia, Washington. Associated Press writers who contributed: Scott Bauer in Madison, Wisconsin; Summer Ballentine in Jefferson City, Missouri; Erik Schelzig in Nashville, Tennessee; Morgan Lee in Santa Fe, New Mexico; Bob Christie in Phoenix, Arizona; and Michael Biesecker, Emily Swanson and Monika Mathur in Washington.

Trump keeps reveling in election win at Pennsylvania rally

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press

HERSHEY, Pa. (AP) — Donald Trump's barnstorming tour across the states that won him the White House continues to feature far more taunts of triumph than notes of healing after a bruising election.

Thursday's rally in Hershey, Pennsylvania, found the president-elect calling for the mostly white crowd to cheer for African-Americans who were "smart" to heed his message and therefore "didn't come out to vote" for his Democratic opponent Hillary Clinton.

"That was the big thing, so thank you to the African-American community," Trump said.

He also edged closer Thursday to completing his Cabinet, announcing his choice for interior secretary: Montana Rep. Ryan Zinke, who should fit smoothly into an administration favoring more energy drilling and less regulation.

The president-elect — who also found time to hit Twitter, playing media critic and then stating anew his doubts about charges that Russia hackers tried to disrupt the U.S. election — boasted to the crowd in Pennsylvania that he captured a state that for many Republicans was "the bride that got away."

"Everyone leaves Pennsylvania, Republicans, thinking they won Pennsylvania. And they never do. They just don't win Pennsylvania," said Trump.

Pennsylvania had not gone for a Republican candidate since 1988. But the Trump campaign staff long thought that the state, rich in white working-class voters, would be receptive to his populist message and not be part of Clinton's hoped-for firewall.

Trump repeatedly campaigned there, drawing some of the largest and loudest crowds of the campaign. He won the state by less than 1 percentage point, giving him a vital 20 electoral college votes.

The evening rally in Hershey also featured a nearly 20-minute recap of Trump's election night win with the crowd cheering as the president-elect slowly ticked off his victories state by state, mixing in rambling criticisms of incorrect pundits and politicians from both sides of the aisle.

Trump earlier praised Zinke, a former Navy SEAL, as having "built one of the strongest track records

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on championing regulatory relief, forest management, responsible energy development and public land issues." Zinke, 55, was an early supporter of the president-elect and publicly expressed his interest in a Cabinet post when Trump visited Montana in May.

As with several other Cabinet selections, Zinke has advocated increased drilling and mining on public lands and has expressed skepticism about the urgency of climate change. House Speaker Paul Ryan praised the pick, saying Zinke "has been an ardent supporter of all-of-the-above energy policies and responsible land management."

But his nomination could have a ripple effect on control of the Senate, since Zinke now may forgo what was once a near-certain challenge to Democratic Sen. Jon Tester in 2018.

The president-elect also tapped attorney Daniel Friedman, his adviser on Israeli affairs, to be U.S. Ambassador to Israel. Friedman, in a statement, said he would help fulfill Trump's promise to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Many Republican presidents have made a similar vow without success.

Trump also added to his national security team by announcing the appointments of retired Lt. Gen. Keith Kellogg as chief of staff of the National Security Council and Monica Crowley, a Fox News analyst, as the organization's director of communications. Kellogg spent more than 35 years in the Army and, in 2003, oversaw the efforts to form the new Iraqi military after it was disbanded. Crowley and Fox ended their relationship on Thursday.

Trump has two Cabinet selections yet to make though he also needs to fill out much of his White House staff. And he was busy on Twitter Thursday morning.

He again cast doubt on U.S. intelligence assertions about Russia election hacking, writing: "If Russia, or some other entity, was hacking, why did the White House wait so long to act? Why did they only complain after Hillary lost?"

That assertion is untrue. A month before the election, the Obama administration bluntly accused Russia of hacking American political sites and email accounts to interfere.

Trump has repeatedly said he'd like to improve ties with Russia, a hope that has been echoed in Moscow. Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev on Thursday lauded Trump's Cabinet selections, and particularly Exxon Mobil CEO Rex Tillerson for Secretary of State, as people with no "anti-Russian stereotypes."

The Kremlin has cheered Trump's victory although some Russian officials have recently said they are not expecting relations between Russia and the U.S., which were battered after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, to improve overnight.

Trump also tweeted, "The media tries so hard to make my move to the White House, as it pertains to my business, so complex - when actually it isn't!" His declaration came on the day he was supposed to hold a news conference, now postponed until January, to reveal how he plans to distance himself from his business. Aides said more time was needed to finalize the complicated arrangement.

AP Congressional Correspondent Erica Werner in Washington contributed to this report..

Reach Lemire on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/@JonLemire>

North Carolina upheaval: GOP bids to limit next gov's power

By GARY D. ROBERTSON and EMERY P. DALESIO, Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — North Carolina's Republican-dominated legislature took extraordinary steps Thursday to reduce the powers of a Democratic governor-elect, defying raucous protests and threatened legal challenges days before he takes office.

GOP lawmakers ignored protesters disrupting House and Senate floor debate and advanced legislation on the second day of their surprise session, which Democrats angrily called a power grab to weaken Roy Cooper once he becomes governor Jan. 1. The state's attorney general, Cooper beat Republican Gov. Pat McCrory by barely 10,000 votes and vowed to fight back against GOP initiatives of recent years, particularly a law McCrory signed last March limiting LGBT rights.

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"It appears the sole purpose is to undercut the power and authority of Gov.-elect Roy Cooper before he takes the oath of office," said Sen. Floyd McKissick, a Democrat representing Durham.

GOP lawmakers sought to scale back the team Cooper can bring into office, require their approval for top administrators at state agencies and erase the governor's ability to shape elections boards statewide, which under current law would become controlled by Democrats in 2017.

On a day when hundreds protested, at least 16 arrests were reported when Speaker Tim Moore ordered the gallery cleared. Those arrested were led away in plastic handcuffs, with supporters in the nearby rotunda chanting, "this is what democracy looks like."

Any notion Cooper would get a honeymoon period with the legislature was swiftly dashed this week. Lawmakers began the surprise session Wednesday within minutes of adjourning another special session called by McCrory to approve a disaster relief package.

The General Assembly has veto-proof GOP majorities in both House and Senate, meaning Cooper will be hamstrung to push any agenda without some Republican support.

Bills that cleared one chamber of the legislature by party lines by Thursday evening would reduce the number of political appointees that Cooper could make to shape his policies. Less than four years ago, lawmakers gave McCrory the power to hire hundreds of additional at-will workers.

Legislation also would require Cooper to send his choices for Cabinet secretaries to the Senate for confirmation. The state Constitution allows the Senate to confirm a governor's appointments, but that power largely hasn't been used for at least decades.

"This bill is a good step forward in reasserting legislative authority vested by the constitution and entrusted to the members of this body," said Rep. David Lewis, R-Harnett, on the House floor.

Democrats and their allies said GOP lawmakers were simply sore losers after McCrory conceded last week. House Democrats lodged formal protests that the special session is unconstitutional.

"Things are happening because you can do it, not because you should do it," said 86-year-old Rep. Mickey Michaux, D-Durham, the longest-serving House member.

Thronges of protesters rallied inside the Legislative Building, chanting and disturbing both House and Senate galleries. General Assembly Police Chief Martin Brock said the 16 arrested would be charged with two misdemeanors, including trespassing.

Protesters led by the state NAACP chapter loudly demanded that Republicans accept the will of the voters from last month's election and leave Cooper's authority alone.

"I believe fervently in democracy. I'm watching it be undermined right beneath by people who seem unwilling to consider or to listen," said one 71-year-old protester Margaret Toman, speaking earlier in the day.

Any legislation likely to pass Friday would go to McCrory, whose signature is required for it to become law. McCrory has not commented publicly on the legislation or how he might act.

Cooper said Thursday he will fight any bill he considers unconstitutional and perhaps even sue to prevent it taking effect.

"If I believe that laws passed by the legislature hurt working families and are unconstitutional, they will see me in court," Cooper told reporters.

Republicans flexing their muscle against Cooper have recalled past sessions of the General Assembly, when it was dominated by Democrats. Democrats stripped the powers of the first and only GOP lieutenant governor of the 20th Century in the late 1980s. But Democrats said there's been no such widespread effort to limit the power of an incoming executive before he took office.

Cooper attacked Republican leaders for once again rushing through big changes with little public disclosure or discussion, much as lawmakers in March adopted House Bill 2. That law limited protections to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people. Major companies, conventions, musicians and sports leagues reacted by shunning North Carolina, costing jobs and millions of dollars in revenues.

Republican legislation also would erase Cooper's ability to appoint a Democratic majority on the five-member State Board of Elections. A new, eight-member state board would be evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans, with legislators choosing half the members.

Follow Emery P. Dalesio at <http://twitter.com/emerydalesio>. His work can be found at <http://bigstory.ap.org/content/emery-p-dalesio>.

Global warming's fingerprints seen in 24 weird weather cases

By **SETH BORENSTEIN**, AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A new scientific report finds man-made climate change played some role in two dozen extreme weather events last year but not in a few other weird weather instances around the world.

An annual report released Thursday by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration found climate change was a factor, however small or large, in 24 of 30 strange weather events. They include 11 cases of high heat, as well as unusual winter sunshine in the United Kingdom, Alaskan wildfires and odd "sunny day" flooding in Miami.

The study documented climate change-goosed weather in Alaska, Washington state, the southeastern United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, China, Japan, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, the western north Pacific cyclone region, India, Pakistan, Egypt, Ethiopia and southern Africa.

"It has to be measureable. It has to be detectable. There has to be evidence for it and that's what these papers do," said NOAA scientist Stephanie Herring, co-editor of the report.

In six cases — including cold snaps in the United States and downpours in Nigeria and India — the scientists could not detect climate change's effects. Other scientists, though, disputed that finding for the cold snap that hit the Northeast.

Herring highlighted the Miami flooding in September 2015. Because of rising sea levels and sinking land, extremely high tides flooded the streets with 22 inches of water.

"This one is just very remarkable because truly, not a cloud in the sky, and these types of tidal nuisance flooding events are clearly become more frequent," she said.

The report also found an increase in tropical cyclone activity and strength in the western Pacific can be blamed partly on climate change and partly on El Niño, the now-gone natural weather phenomenon. But similar storm strengthening hasn't increased noticeably around the United States yet, said study co-editor Martin Hoerling, a NOAA scientist.

The report was published in the Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society. Using accepted scientific techniques, 116 scientists from around the world calculated whether the odds of the extreme weather events were increased by global warming. They based their calculations on observed data, understanding of the physics of the climate and computer simulations — techniques that the National Academy of Sciences said were valid earlier this year.

Columbia University meteorology professor Adam Sobel, who was on the national academy panel but not part of this report, praised the NOAA study but noted it wasn't comprehensive. It picked only certain but not all weather extremes to study.

For the February 2015 Northeast cold snap, other scientists have connected the polar vortex pushing south to shrinking ice in the Arctic Ocean.

Judah Cohen, seasonal forecasting chief at Atmospheric Environmental Research in Lexington, Massachusetts, said he even predicted the 2015 polar vortex because of the low sea ice. He said the same thing is happening with the bitter cold hitting the U.S. this week.

NOAA's Hoerling said the research found a connection between the shrinking ice and the polar vortex but didn't see one causing the other.

Online:

Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society: <http://journals.ametsoc.org/toc/bams/current>

Follow Seth Borenstein at <http://twitter.com/borenbears> and his work can be found at <http://bigstory.ap.org/content/seth-borenstein>

Yahoo's mega breach shows how just how vulnerable data is

By BREE FOWLER, AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The revelation of Yahoo's latest hack underscores what many Americans have known for years: All those emails, photos and other personal files stored online can easily be stolen, and there's little anyone can do about it.

The only saving grace is that the attackers apparently did not exploit the information for fraud. But their true motives remain a mystery.

While there are a number of straightforward measures all users should take to protect themselves, relatively few people actually do. And in this case, doing so wouldn't really have mattered. Even the most scrupulous individual countermeasures could only limit the damage.

"Yahoo users could have had immaculate computer security and still been the victim here," said Will Ackerly, chief technology officer at Virtru, a computer security firm he co-founded after working for eight years at the National Security Agency.

"Short of using encryption, there's no way to keep your email from being compromised in this kind of hack."

The mega breach disclosed Wednesday exposed more than a billion user accounts, the largest such attack in history. The company said the attack happened in August 2013, although Yahoo only discovered it recently. Worse, the company's announcement followed a similar announcement in September about a 2014 hack that Yahoo ascribed to an unnamed foreign government. That breach affected 500 million accounts.

Some experts believe the record-breaking amount of data stolen in the breach announced Wednesday also points to state-sponsored hackers in search of a specific target, which could be why three years later the data still hasn't been spotted for sale on the web. And neither Yahoo breach has yet been linked to online fraud or any specific repercussions for Yahoo users.

But their disclosure closely follows U.S. intelligence concerns about Russian hacking of Democratic emails during the presidential campaign — not to mention recent attacks on a major health insurer, a medical lab-test company and the government office that manages millions of federal employees.

"The lesson is clear: No organization is immune to compromise," said Jeff Hill, director of product management for cybersecurity consultant Prevalent. And since most of us are dependent on big organizations that hold our digital lives in their hands, in a broad sense that means no one is safe.

The hacks represent yet another stumble for the struggling Sunnyvale, California, company as it tries to reinvent itself. The breaches occurred during the reign of Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer, a once-lauded leader who has been unable to turn around the company in the four years since she arrived.

Earlier this year, Yahoo agreed to sell its digital operations to Verizon Communications for \$4.8 billion — a deal that may now be jeopardized by the hacking revelations.

Meanwhile, it's clear that Yahoo didn't do enough to protect its users. For example, the company acknowledges using MD5, a password-storage method considered by many experts to be inadequate and inferior to others available at the time of the hack.

One of Yahoo's priorities will now need to be keeping its users updated as its investigation progresses, said Jeremiah Grossman, chief of security strategy for SentinelOne.

"I think that would go a long way to assuring users and everybody that they're doing the right things," said Grossman, who worked in security at Yahoo from 1999 to 2001. "The best peace of mind in cybersecurity is transparency."

There's only so much a company like Yahoo can do to protect its users without damaging its business model, which involves selling advertising based on data gleaned from its users, Grossman noted.

As a result, it can't do things like encrypt user data, which would make the information useless to hackers. Other companies that don't sell advertising, such as Apple, are able to encrypt. And some, such as Google, do so too but not in a way that would have protected against this type of hack. They also hold the keys to that encryption, giving them the access they need for advertising sales.

"If you take a step back, the 1 billion people aren't Yahoo's customers, they're its product," Grossman said.

For Yahoo users, experts say, there's little to do except for changing their passwords if they haven't done so in the past three years. And it's tough to protect against future hacks at Yahoo or other companies that hold personal information.

Changing email providers is, at the very least, a pain for most people. Experts say picking a tough password is a must, though they are divided on exactly how important it is to change it frequently.

The same password should not be used for multiple sites, and the questions and answers needed to reset it should be unique as well.

While perfect security doesn't exist, no one wants to be an easy target either. Cybersecurity experts like to compare the hacker threat to running from a bear: You don't have to be the fastest runner — just not the slowest.

The Yahoo breach should serve as a lesson to users that they can't assume that companies, even large multi-national tech companies, are doing security right, said John Shier, senior security adviser at Sophos.

"Hopefully this is the one that wakes everybody up, although I doubt it will be," Shier said. "It's frustrating to see this happen over and over again when for many years we've known how to better protect systems."

AP technology writers Michael Liedtke in San Francisco and Mae Anderson in Atlanta contributed to this report.

Follow Bree Fowler at <http://twitter.com/APBreeFowler>. Her work can be found at <http://bigstory.ap.org/author/bree-fowler>.

Trump lags predecessors on diversity as he picks Cabinet

By LISA LERER and JULIE PACE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As Donald Trump fills out his Cabinet, it's looking less like America's population and more like the world Trump has always orbited: wealthy, white, male-dominated and business-minded.

Trump, who railed against what he called "politically correct crap" during his no-holds-barred presidential campaign, is on track to create the least diverse Cabinet in a quarter-century.

The uniformity is particularly striking in the president-elect's picks for the highest-profile Cabinet and White House jobs. While he has selected a handful of women and minorities for lower-profile posts, his choices for the big four Cabinet slots — Treasury, State, Defense and Justice — and his top White House jobs — chief of staff, national security adviser and senior adviser — are all white men.

So, too, will white men run the departments of Commerce, Energy, Homeland Security and Health and Human Services as well as the Environmental Protection Agency.

Should Trump be unable to complete his term as president, the top eight people in the line of succession are white men from the Cabinet and Congress. That number could grow to 12 if he picks a white man for Agriculture secretary. North Dakota Sen. Heidi Heitkamp, a Democrat, is the only woman believed to be in the mix.

Unlike recent predecessors in both parties, Trump so far has no Hispanics in the most prominent positions. Based on the current top contenders for remaining jobs, it appears unlikely he'll have a Hispanic in his Cabinet or in any top White House job.

Trump spokesman Jason Miller has pledged that the president-elect's team will be "very broad and diverse, both with the Cabinet and the administration."

But Trump himself seems to have different priorities: "I want people that made a fortune! Because now they're negotiating for you, OK?" he said, at a rally in Des Moines, Iowa, last week.

Even if he appoints women or minorities to three remaining Cabinet-level posts — Veterans Affairs, Agriculture and the Office of Management and Budget — Trump will lag behind the past three administrations in creating a demographically diverse White House.

President Bill Clinton installed 10 women and minorities into Cabinet-level jobs during his first term, part of an effort to create an inclusive image for his new administration. Other presidents have followed suit:

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George W. Bush had nine in his first term, and Barack Obama broke records with 13, according to an analysis of data compiled by University of California at Berkeley law school professor Anne Joseph O'Connell.

So far, Trump has selected five non-white men or women for the 16 posts he's filled: Neurosurgeon Ben Carson for secretary of Housing and Urban Development, South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley as U.N. ambassador, former Bush administration Labor Secretary Elaine Chao for Transportation, activist Betsy DeVos as Education secretary and World Wrestling executive Linda McMahon to head the Small Business Administration.

"The Cabinet choices are the most visible. And, consequently, to the extent that he faces pressure on diversity, it plays out here," said O'Connell, who added that she expects even less diversity in lower-level government posts.

Republicans say it's important to consider the entirety of Trump's government, not just the roles at the top. For example, the president-elect has included several women and minorities on his list of candidates for the Supreme Court.

"It matters that government as a whole is representative of America," said Republican strategist Sara Fagen, former White House political director for George W. Bush. "I don't think this says something about him and his values."

Raw numbers don't tell the whole story when it comes to diversity in government and who wields influence in an administration. While Obama put together the most diverse Cabinet ever, some women in his White House still felt marginalized. The concerns reached the president himself during his first year in office, leading him to hold a dinner with senior female advisers to discuss his administration's boys-club image.

Some of Trump's most powerful aides are women. Kellyanne Conway served as his third and final campaign manager and remains a senior adviser. Trump's daughter Ivanka consults on most major decisions and is expected to continue doing so once her father is in the White House.

Shortly after the election, Trump met with BET founder Robert Johnson, who suggested the White House create an office of minority and urban affairs. Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and influential adviser, was in the meeting and told Johnson it was something the transition team was already considering.

"It ended with me telling him, 'I want to be helpful to you if I've got an open door to make my case that I think are in the best interests of African-Americans,' Johnson said. "Everyone nodded they were willing to listen."

Earlier this year, an Associated Press review of the upper ranks of the Trump Organization revealed few, if any, black executives. Other minorities were also scarce at that level.

Trump had a rocky relationship with women and minorities during his presidential campaign. His victory over Democrat Hillary Clinton hinged almost entirely on white voters. Only about 2 percent of Trump voters were black and about 7 percent were Hispanic, according to exit polls conducted by Edison Research for the AP and television networks. Nearly 9 in 10 were white.

Less than half of Trump voters — about 47 percent — were female, the exit polls show, compared with 59 percent of Clinton voters.

AP Polling Director Emily Swanson and AP writer Ken Thomas contributed to this report.

Follow Lisa Lerer at <http://twitter.com/llderer> and Julie Pace at <http://twitter.com/jpaceDC>

Donald Trump and Paul Ryan learn how to get along _ for now

By ERICA WERNER, AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump and House Speaker Paul Ryan have put their rocky start behind them and are learning how to get along — for now.

One key to their blossoming new friendship: Along with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, they are mapping out an agenda for 2017 that focuses on broad areas of agreement, putting off thorny policy issues that are likely to invite clashes until a later date.

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Even so, Trump made clear this week that the warm embrace he now bestows on Ryan can be revoked at any time.

"Every day goes by, I get to appreciate his genius more and more," Trump told a crowd in Ryan's home state of Wisconsin, comparing the speaker to a "fine wine" before adding a warning: "Now, if he ever goes against me, I'm not going to say that."

For his part, Ryan, who initially refused to endorse Trump, now brims with enthusiasm at the opportunities afforded by unified GOP control of Washington next year.

"We're working on an aggressive timetable for 2017," the speaker said Thursday at a forum on poverty hosted by Opportunity America think tank. "We're right now sitting down with Sen. McConnell and the Trump administration, the transition team, to try and flesh out what we think is a realistic timetable so that we get the legislation prepped and ready to go."

Trump and congressional Republicans plan to start the year by repealing President Barack Obama's health care law, and then move to reform the loophole-cluttered U.S. tax code. Trump wants huge tax cuts and has largely embraced a blueprint devised by the House GOP, which envisions lower rates on corporations, individuals and investments.

The issues where Trump and Ryan may be more likely to disagree — like an enormous infrastructure bill, an overhaul of Medicare, or immigration — have been pushed to the back burner. Health care and taxes alone are likely to consume the first year of Trump's administration and are certain to involve plenty of complications themselves, but at least Republicans start out generally in the same place.

"I think the important thing to do is focus on what we agree on, get that moving, and then make the others a work in progress," GOP Rep. Peter King of New York said Thursday after meeting with Trump at Trump Tower. "Generally if you're doing well and if it is moving along, some of the other issues have a way of working themselves out."

Ryan and Trump come from vastly different political orientations. Ryan, 46, is an earnest conservative wonk, schooled in the nitty-gritty of tax and budget policy, who's committed to core GOP principles like free trade. Trump, 70, has deviated from Republican dogma on any number of issues, went back and forth on others, opposed cutting programs like Medicare, denounced trade deals, and took stances such as barring Muslims and rounding up immigrants that Ryan repudiated.

Ryan withheld his endorsement for weeks, then bestowed it on Trump only to announce, after the release of audio of Trump bragging about groping women, that he would no longer defend Trump or campaign with him. Trump, in return, attacked Ryan over Twitter as a "weak and ineffective leader" and accused him of "disloyalty."

Since Trump's convincing Election Day victory the two have, by all accounts, put their disagreements behind them. They now speak on the phone multiple times weekly, calling each other directly on their cellphones to talk for anywhere from a couple minutes to closer to an hour, according to Ryan allies. They discuss personnel picks, though Trump hasn't taken all of Ryan's recommendations, as well as policy and plans.

They focus on what they want to get done and how to do it, not the areas where they've parted ways, like Trump's recent call for steep tariffs on imports. And despite their differences on policy and in lifestyle, the two share an energetic approach, a desire to get things done, even a tendency to be overly optimistic about what can be accomplished.

Brandon Scholz, a longtime Wisconsin Republican operative who has known Ryan since he was elected to Congress in 1998, said Ryan and Trump quickly realized it was mutually beneficial for them to work together.

"There's just not another path," Scholz said. "It's about the agenda now."

Ryan has told Trump he will need to use the bully pulpit of the presidency to promote the House agenda. But Trump could also use that perch to prod or punish lawmakers who stray. Before the election, Ryan faced grumbles from conservatives unhappy over his criticism of Trump. As much as the two men need each other to get things done, Ryan may also need to stay in Trump's good graces to maintain his perch atop the GOP conference.

For now Trump's allies in the House say discontent over Ryan's initial opposition to Trump has quieted. "I think much of that has subsided, because we have watched Paul Ryan, who is an upstanding, honorable guy, move forward and say we are all on one team, and we have a heavy lift and we don't have time for minutiae and petty differences," said GOP Rep. Marsha Blackburn of Tennessee. "We have a country to save."

Associated Press writer Scott Bauer contributed to this report from Madison, Wisconsin.

Facebook gets serious about fighting fake news

By BARBARA ORTUTAY, AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Facebook is taking new measures to curb the spread of fake news on its huge and influential social network. It will focus on the "worst of the worst" offenders and partner with outside fact-checkers and news organizations to sort honest news reports from made-up stories that play to people's passions and preconceived notions.

The social network will make it easier for users to report fake news when they see it, which they'll be able to do in two steps, not three. If enough people report a story as fake, Facebook will pass it to third-party fact-checking organizations that are part of the nonprofit Poynter Institute's International Fact-Checking Network.

Five fact-checking and news organizations are working with Facebook on this: ABC News, The Associated Press, FactCheck.org, Politifact and Snopes. Facebook says this group is likely to expand.

Stories that flunk the fact check won't be removed from Facebook. But they'll be publicly flagged as "disputed," which will force them to appear lower down in people's news feed. Users can click on a link to learn why that is. And if people decide they want to share the story with friends anyway, they can — but they'll get another warning.

WHY FAKE NEWS MATTERS

"We do believe that we have an obligation to combat the spread of fake news," said John Hegeman, vice president of product management on news feed, in an interview. But he added that Facebook also takes its role to provide people an open platform seriously, and that it is not the company's place to decide what is true or false.

Fake news stories touch on a broad range of subjects, from unproven cancer cures to celebrity hoaxes and backyard Bigfoot sightings. But fake political stories have drawn outsized attention because of the possibility that they influenced public perceptions and could have swayed the U.S. presidential election.

There have been dangerous real-world consequences. A fake story about a child sex ring at a Washington, D.C., pizza joint prompted a man to fire an assault rifle inside the restaurant.

By partnering with respected outside organizations and flagging, rather than removing, fake stories, Facebook is sidestepping some of the biggest concerns experts had raised about it exercising its considerable power in this area. For instance, some worried that Facebook might act as a censor — and not a skillful one, either, being an engineer-led company with little experience making complex media ethics decisions.

"They definitely don't have the expertise," said Robyn Caplan, researcher at Data & Society, a nonprofit research institute funded in part by Microsoft and the National Science Foundation. In an interview before Facebook's announcement, she urged the company to "engage media professionals and organizations that are working on these issues."

FACEBOOK AND FAKE NEWS

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg has said that fake news constitutes less than 1 percent of what's on Facebook, but critics say that's wildly misleading. For a site with nearly 2 billion users tapping out posts by the millisecond, even 1 percent is a huge number, especially since the total includes everything that's posted on Facebook — photos, videos and daily updates in addition to news articles.

In a study released Thursday, the Pew Research Center found that nearly a quarter of Americans say they have shared a made-up news story, either knowingly or unknowingly. Forty-five percent said that

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the government, politicians and elected officials bear responsibility for preventing made-up stories from gaining attention. Forty-two percent put this responsibility on social networking sites and search engines, and a similar percentage on the public itself.

Fake news stories can be quicker to go viral than news stories from traditional sources. That's because they were created for sharing — they are clickable, often inflammatory and pander to emotional responses. Mike Caufield, director of blended and networked learning at Washington State University Vancouver, tracked whether real or fake news is more likely to be shared on Facebook.

He compared a made-up story from a fake outlet with articles in local newspapers. The fake story, headlined "FBI Agent Suspected In Hillary Leaks Found Dead In Apparent Murder-Suicide" from the nonexistent Denver Guardian, was shared 1,000 times more than material from the real newspapers.

"To put this in perspective, if you combined the top stories from the Boston Globe, Washington Post, Chicago Tribune, and LA Times, they still had only 5% the viewership of an article from a fake news," he wrote in a blog post .

Facebook is emphasizing that it's only going after the most egregious fake news creators and sites, the "the clear hoaxes spread by spammers for their own gain," wrote Adam Mosseri , vice president of product for Facebook's news feed, in a blog post Thursday.

FOLLOW THE MONEY

The social network's first public step toward fixing the fake-news problem since the election was a statement barring fake-news sites from using its lucrative ad network. But it wasn't much more than rhetorical. Facebook's policies already blocked sites that spread misleading information from its ad network, an automated system that places ads on sites across the internet.

Now, Facebook says it has also eliminated the ability for spammers to masquerade as real news organizations by spoofing domains. And it says it's weighing a crackdown on publishers of fake news as well.

Depriving scammers of money could be effective.

"Google and Facebook are the single two biggest engines for monetization," said Susan Bidel, a senior analyst at Forrester Research focusing on digital publishers. "I don't think you are ever going to completely eradicate it. But it could get down to a manageable level."

Facebook will not allow publishers to promote any story flagged as disputed. If this works, users should not see fake news stories in Facebook advertisements.

ROBOTS VS. FALSEHOOD

Facebook's main approach to problems has been to tackle them with studying its vast troves of user data, with algorithms that can be more effective at things than humans, and to favor engineers over editors. Data rules all else at the Menlo Park, California, company.

Beyond the human fact-checkers, Facebook is also using its algorithms to de-emphasize fake news stories. For example, if people are significantly less likely to share an article after they have read it, it's a "really good sign that the article was misleading or not informative in some way," Hegeman said — sort of like when you try a cereal sample at the grocery store, then decide not to buy it.

Fake news stories won't disappear from Facebook, not the way child porn and spam and various illegal stuff does. That is not Facebook's goal.

"We believe providing more context can help people decide for themselves what to trust and what to share," Mosseri wrote.

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Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, Dec. 16, the 351st day of 2016. There are 15 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 16, 1991, the U.N. General Assembly rescinded its 1975 resolution equating Zionism with racism by a vote of 111-25.

On this date:

In 1653, Oliver Cromwell became lord protector of England, Scotland and Ireland.

In 1773, the Boston Tea Party took place as American colonists boarded a British ship and dumped more than 300 chests of tea into Boston Harbor to protest tea taxes.

In 1809, the French Senate granted a divorce decree to Emperor Napoleon I and Empress Josephine (the dissolution was made final the following month).

In 1811, the first of the powerful New Madrid earthquakes struck the central Mississippi Valley with an estimated magnitude of 7.7.

In 1907, 16 U.S. Navy battleships, which came to be known as the "Great White Fleet," set sail on a 14-month round-the-world voyage to demonstrate American sea power.

In 1930, golfer Bobby Jones became the first recipient of the James E. Sullivan Award honoring outstanding amateur athletes.

In 1944, the World War II Battle of the Bulge began as German forces launched a surprise attack against Allied forces through the Ardennes Forest in Belgium and Luxembourg (the Allies were eventually able to turn the Germans back).

In 1950, President Harry S. Truman proclaimed a national state of emergency in order to fight "world conquest by Communist imperialism."

In 1956, Francis Cardinal Spellman, the Archbishop of New York, personally denounced the about-to-be released movie "Baby Doll" starring Carroll Baker, saying Catholics would be committing a sin if they saw it.

In 1960, 134 people were killed when a United Air Lines DC-8 and a TWA Super Constellation collided over New York City.

In 1976, the government halted its swine flu vaccination program following reports of paralysis apparently linked to the vaccine.

In 1985, at services in Fort Campbell, Kentucky, President Ronald Reagan and his wife, Nancy, offered condolences to families of 248 soldiers killed in the crash of a chartered plane in Newfoundland.

Ten years ago: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas (mahk-MOOD' ah-BAHS') called for early elections to end his violent standoff with Hamas. Ten players, including NBA scoring leader Carmelo Anthony, were ejected for fighting during a wild brawl near the end of a game between the Denver Nuggets and the New York Knicks. (Denver won, 123-100.) Terrell Owens spat in the face of Atlanta cornerback DeAngelo Hall during the Cowboys' 38-28 victory over the Falcons. (Owens was fined \$35,000 by the NFL.) Time magazine named everyone using or creating content on the World Wide Web its "Person of the Year."

Five years ago: Former Penn State graduate assistant Mike McQueary testified that he believed he saw ex-assistant coach Jerry Sandusky molesting a boy and that he fully conveyed what he had seen to two Penn State administrators; a judge sent the cases of Tim Curley and Gary Schultz, accused of lying to a grand jury, to trial. (The perjury charges were dismissed by a Pennsylvania appeals court in Jan. 2016.) An investigative report showed that thousands of children suffered sexual abuse in Dutch Roman Catholic institutions over the previous 65 years, and that church officials failed to adequately address the abuse or help the victims. In San Francisco, eight years of being investigated for steroid allegations ended for home run king Barry Bonds with a 30-day sentence to be served at home. (Bonds never served the sentence; his conviction for obstruction of justice was overturned.) British actor Nicol Williamson, 75, died in Amsterdam.

One year ago: The Federal Reserve raised interest rates for the first time in nearly a decade, lifting its key rate by a quarter-point to a range of 0.25 percent to 0.5 percent. The first attempt to find a Baltimore

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police officer criminally responsible for Freddie Gray's death from a broken neck in a police van ended with a hung jury and a mistrial in the case of William Porter.

Today's Birthdays: Civil rights attorney Morris Dees is 80. Actress Joyce Bulifant is 79. Actress Liv Ullmann is 78. CBS news correspondent Lesley Stahl is 75. TV producer Steven Bochco is 73. Former Nevada Gov. Jim Gibbons is 72. Pop musician Tony Hicks (The Hollies) is 71. Pop singer Benny Andersson (ABBA) is 70. Actor Ben Cross is 69. Rock singer-musician Billy Gibbons (ZZ Top) is 67. Rock musician Bill Bateman (The Blasters) is 65. Actor Xander Berkeley is 61. Actress Alison LaPlaca is 57. Actor Sam Robards is 55. Actor Jon Tenney is 55. Actor Benjamin Bratt is 53. Country singer-songwriter Jeff Carson is 53. Actor-comedian JB Smoove is 51. Actress Miranda Otto is 49. Actor Daniel Cosgrove is 46. Rhythm-and-blues singer Michael McCary is 45. Actor Jonathan Scarfe is 41. Actress Krysten Ritter is 35. Actress Zoe Jarman is 34. Country musician Chris Scruggs is 34. Actor Theo James is 32. Actress Amanda Setton is 31. Rock musician Dave Rublin (American Authors) is 30. Actress Hallee Hirsh is 29. Actress Anna Popplewell is 28. Actor Stephan James is 23.

Thought for Today: "Somewhere in the world there is an epigram for every dilemma." — Hendrik Willem Van Loon, Dutch-born journalist and lecturer (1882-1944).