

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 1 of 54

- 1- Recycling trailers
- 1- McKiver Collision Ad
- 1- Today's Schedule
- 2- Elementary Christmas Concert
- 2- Redfield GBB Holiday Classic pairings
- 2- Bowling Scores
- 3- Boys beat Britton-Hecla story
- 4- Final day for viewing Capitol trees
- 4- Church Service schedule
- 5- Friends Near and Far - Gatlin Johnson
- 6- Dr. Holm's Column
- 6- Groton Chamber Holiday Boxes
- 7- Winter Storm Watch for Christmas Day
- 8- Today in Weather History
- 9 - Local Weather Forecast
- 10- Yesterday's Groton Weather
- 10- Today's Weather Climate
- 10- National Weather map
- 11 - Daily Devotional
- 12 - AP News

## Thursday's Information

No School

Senior Menu: Baked chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, winter-mix vegetables, banana pudding with bananas, whole wheat bread.

9:00 a.m.: St. John's Lutheran Quilting

## City Lighting Contest

The saga continues. Anita sent me an email last night saying it would be helpful if I read my emails as she sent one to me last week. She forwarded the email she tried to send me. Yup, all the info was in there. There was one small problem. I never got it because the email address was incorrect.

The city lighting contest was held last night. Anita said she would let me know last night who the city's winners were. No phone call, no email. Maybe she typed in the email address wrong again, I don't know. Maybe she just forgot.

So, when we do find out, we will let you know.


## 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**



**Lifetime Warranty on all Collision Work!**

13556 400th Ave., Groton SD 57445  
Allen McKiver, Owner ~ 605/397-4404

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 2 of 54



The Elementary Christmas Concert was held Wednesday with the performance, "Freeze Frame." The second graders sang "Can't Wait to Skate," the junior kindergarten sang, "Snow Angels," the first graders sang, "Sledding We Will Go," the third graders sang, "Ski with Me," the kindergarten students sang, "If I Could Fly Like A Snowflake," the fifth graders sang, "Showbiz Snowman," and the fourth graders sang, "Snow Day! Snow Day!" The event was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM as well as Facebook Live.

## Redfield GBB Holiday Classic

The schedule has been released for the girls basketball Holiday Classic in Redfield scheduled for January 7.

Noon: Langford Area vs. Redfield-Doland  
1:30 p.m.: St. Francis Indian vs. Groton AArea  
3:00 p.m.: Little Wound vs. Northwestern  
4:30 p.m.: Leola-Frederick vs. Hitchcock-Tulare  
6:00 p.m.: Sanborn Central-Woonsocket vs. Warner

## Groton Coffee Cup League

**Dec. 19 Team Standings:** James Valley 4, Jungle Lanes 3, Kens 1, Ten Pins 0

**High Games:** Vicki Walter 201, 174, 170; Joyce Walter 177, 175; Vickie Kramp 168

**High Series:** Vicki Walter 545, Joyce Walter 474, Penny Stolle 468

## Conde National League

**Dec. 19 Team Standings:** Pirates 7, raves 6, Cubs 4, Giants 3, Mets 2, Colts 2

**Men's High Games:** Lance Frohling 246, 244, 217; Justin Kesterson 180; Bryce Dagartz 173

**Men's High Series:** Lance Frohling 707, Bryce Dagartz 487, Larry Frohling 480

**Women's High Games:** Kayla Johnson 174; Joyce Walter 173, 172; Mary Larson 164

**Women's High Series:** Joyce Walter 499, Mary Larson 458, Vickie Kramp 441

## Groton Area boys run past Britton-Hecla

The Groton Area boys' basketball team posted a 52-29 Northeast Conference win over Britton-Hecla. The game was played Tuesday in Groton and was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM and Facebook Live. The game was sponsored by James Valley Seed with Doug Jorgenson, Groton Ford, Ken's Food Fair of Groton, Doug Abeln Seed Company, Blocker Construction and Hefty Seed with Justin Hanson and Kalen Kjellsen. Make sure you tell the sponsors "Thank You" and to patronize them as well.

The Tigers jumped out to a 10-0 lead, but the Braves scored 12 straight points to take a 12-10 lead. The game was tied at 10 at the end of the first quarter. Groton then scored 14 straight points to take a 24-12 lead. Groton led 18-12 at halftime and 32-17 at the end of the third quarter.

Seric Shabazz led the Tigers with four three-pointers and had 16 points, Bennett Shabazz had four three-pointers and had 14 points, Brandon Keith made two three-pointers and had 13 points, Sean Schuring had three points, Anthony Sippel and Frankie Wuestewald had two points each and Peyton Johnson and Luke Thorson each had a free throw.

The Braves were led by Tayon Hawkins and Kyler Meyer with eight points each, Stanley Haskins Jr. had five, Skylar MacConnell had four, and Carter Deutsch and Tyler Busch each had two points.

Groton controlled the boards, 41-28, with also accounts for field goal percentage of 37 percent for Groton Area and 28 percent for Britton-Hecla. Groton Area made three of six free throws off of Britton-Hecla's seven team fouls. Britton-Hecla attempted three free throws off of Groton Area's seven team fouls. Groton Area had 16 turnovers, 11 of which were steals with Hawkins and MacConnell each having three. Britton-Hecla had 14 turnovers, 11 of which were steals with Bennett Shabazz having four and Seric Shabazz three. Groton Area had 14 assists with Bennett Shabazz having six. Britton-Hecla had two assists.

Sean Schuring had 11 rebounds for the Tigers and Hawkins had eight for the Braves.

Groton Area won the junior varsity game, 27-16. Jonny Deden led the Tigers with nine points followed by Treyton Diegel with eight, Marshall Lane had six, Cade Guthmiller three and Darian Shabazz with one.

Groton Area varsity is now 5-0 on the season and will travel to Webster on January 3, 2017.



**Brandon Keith sets to make one of his three three-pointers.** (Photo by Julianna Kosel)



**Seric Shabazz stands behind the three-point line to make one of his four three-pointers in the Britton-Hecla game on Tuesday.** (Photo by Julianna Kosel)



**Peyton Johnson looks for an open teammate as he was guarded by Skylar MacConnell.** (Photo by Julianna Kosel)

## **Final Day For Viewing Capitol Christmas Trees Dec. 26**

PIERRE, S.D. – The decorated Christmas trees in the South Dakota Capitol will only be on display through Monday.

The display is open daily to the public from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. CST through Monday, Dec. 26.

Representatives of organizations and communities who decorated the trees will return to Pierre on Tuesday, Dec. 27, and Wednesday morning, Dec. 28, to take the trees down.

For more information, find Christmas at the Capitol on Facebook.

## **Church Services**



### **Emmanuel Lutheran Church**

Christmas Eve: 7 p.m. service

Christmas Day: 9 a.m. worship with communion

### **St. John's Lutheran Church**

Christmas Eve: 5 p.m.

Christmas Day: 9 a.m.

### **First Presbyterian Church**

Christmas Eve: 6:30 p.m. service

Christmas Day: 11 a.m. service

### **Catholic Parish**

Christmas Eve: 4 p.m. Mass at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Groton, 6 p.m. at St. Joseph in Turton

Christmas Day: 9 a.m. Mass at St. Anthony in Bristol

### **Methodist Parish**

Christmas Eve: 5 p.m. in Groton, 7 p.m. in Conde

Christmas Day: 9 a.m. in Conde, 11 a.m. in Groton

### **Heaven Bound Ministries in Pierpont**

Christmas Eve: 5 p.m.

## Friends . . . Near and Far

*Editor's Note: This is the 41st in a series featuring your friends, near and far.*

### Gatlin Johnson

**Jobwise what are you doing today?** Today, I'm a freelance writer. I help businesses tell their customers who they are, what they do, and how they help their customers while showing what their values are. This allows businesses to develop deeper relationships with their audiences. I help businesses discover what difference they can make for those around them.

**How long have you been working at the current job? How did you get your current job?** I've been operating this business since May of 2016. I formed this job by continually being curious about how things work. One of my majors in college was Marketing, and I knew I wanted to have a job in that field. Starting my own business gives me the flexibility I want me to get to know my clients better help them craft their stories.

**If you have previous employments list them and how long you were there.** My employment history started at the Tigers Den on Main Street in Groton, working for Christie Swenson. (2008-2009)

I held several jobs in retail stores in Aberdeen during high school and my first couple years at Northern State University. I worked at Menards, Office Max, and Dunham's Sports. (April 2010-May 2012)

I was fortunate enough my third year in college to have two very interesting jobs. I was an intern in Senator Tim Johnson's office in Aberdeen during the summer of 2012.

That fall I worked as a technology fellow fixing student and staff computers at Northern State University. (August 2012-December 2014)

After graduation, I worked tech support for Northern Valley Communications. (August 2014-February 2015)

Lastly, I had the honor of helping the educators of the Aberdeen School District as a tech support specialist. (February 2015-April 2016)

**What year did you graduate from high school and name of high school?** Groton Area High School Class of 2010

**Where did you attend college and what was your degree?** Northern State University; Marketing and Political Science

**What advice would you give the high school students today?** Do more things that make YOU great, don't worry about how others look at it, and lead by example.

**List your major accomplishments that you have had so far in life.**

Graduating high school and college with honors.

Having so many great relationships with friends and family.

Helping others when I can.

Starting a scholarship in memory of my grandpa for seniors at Groton Area High School.

Starting my business and doing what I'm passionate about and learning new things every day.

**Do you feel that your high school and college education prepared you adequately for post education life?** I think the greatest thing my education has given me is perspective. It's shown me that there are always different things to learn about and everything is something that can and should be explored if it interests you. So, yes I do believe I've been very well equipped for post education life.



From left to right are his parents, Arlyn and Christy Johnson, Gatlin, my sister Carly Johnson and his soon-to-be brother-in-law Brandon Bierman

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 6 of 54



**By Richard P. Holm M.D.**

## How should I pray for you?

Early October, my belly started aching. Over a week, with good local care and after extensive testing, the diagnosis of cancer of the bile duct and pancreas came down upon me.

A large team of multi-specialists met to discuss my options. They think I might have a chance at a surgical cure, but have recommended pre-surgery chemo-therapy, which has been started. When they go in surgically to remove the tumor, we will learn if it has spread or not.

So I am facing a formidable challenge, and as an experienced Internist, I probably understand this process more than almost anyone. I should add here that I have explored every option, including the Mayo and elsewhere, nutritional alternatives, everything. I am very comfortable with my recognized and experienced surgeon in Sioux Falls and his partner the oncologist. I also realize there is a significant chance that the tumor has spread, and long-term chemo may be my option.

A dear psychologist-minister friend from afar wrote and asked how my soul is with all this, and how should he pray for us. My answer was as follows:

"Dear Steve,

I was 16 when I faced the sudden accidental death of my older sister. Add to that, I've been a geriatrician for 38 years and hospice director for more than 20, so you know I've been living with the reality of my own death for a long time. My faith surrounds and envelops me. I'm okay with dying. I am trying to put it off as long as I can, but I'm okay if it happens sooner.

I have had an absolutely great life, loved and played with gusto, gathered all the fun I could have at every juncture. I have done my level best to help people with the tools of water." I love it—humor even unto death.

So, you asked how I want you to pray? I would ask you pray that all of us see and accept our own dying process. Pray that we learn to savor every moment, every friend, and every grandeur/smudge/scent/or splash of the world around us. And pray that we find a way to open our hearts to others, walk in another's moccasins, and find compassion, even for our enemies."

That is my prayer for all of you...

A promotional graphic for the Groton Chamber of Commerce. It features a background of green pine branches with red and gold Christmas ornaments. In the center, there is a white rectangular box with a black border containing the text:

**GROTON**  
Chamber Of Commerce

**Sign Up for Groton Chamber  
Bucks at the Holiday Boxes  
Located This week at the  
Lori's Pharmacy and  
Groton Ford**

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 7 of 54

## Winter Storm Watch

**URGENT - WINTER WEATHER MESSAGE  
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE ABERDEEN SD  
453 AM CST THU DEC 22 2016**

...SIGNIFICANT CHRISTMAS STORM MOVING IN...

.A STRONG LOW PRESSURE AREA WILL MOVE NORTHEAST ACROSS THE CENTRAL AND NORTHERN PLAINS CHRISTMAS DAY THROUGH MONDAY. THIS WILL BRING EVERYTHING FROM RAIN TO FREEZING RAIN, SLEET, SNOW, ALONG WITH VERY STRONG NORTHWEST WINDS CAUSING BLIZZARD TO NEAR BLIZZARD CONDITIONS.

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/O.NEW.KABR.WS.A.0004.161225T1200Z-161226T1800Z/  
MCPHERSON-BROWN-EDMUNDS-POTTER-FAULK-SULLY-HUGHES-HYDE-HAND-LYMAN-BUFFALO-INCLUD-  
ING THE CITIES OF...EUREKA...ABERDEEN...IPSWICH...GETTYSBURG...FAULKTON...ONIDA...PIERRE...  
HIGHMORE...MILLER...KENNEBEC...FORT THOMPSON  
453 AM CST THU DEC 22 2016

...WINTER STORM WATCH IN EFFECT FROM SUNDAY MORNING THROUGH MONDAY MORNING...

THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE IN ABERDEEN HAS ISSUED A WINTER STORM WATCH...WHICH IS IN EFFECT FROM SUNDAY MORNING THROUGH MONDAY MORNING.

\* TIMING...A FREEZING RAIN/SLEET/SNOW MIX WILL CHANGE OVER TO ALL SNOW LATE SUNDAY AFTERNOON AND EVENING CONTINUING INTO MONDAY MORNING BEFORE ENDING.

\* SNOW AND ICE ACCUMULATIONS...TOTAL SNOW ACCUMULATIONS OF 2 TO 6 INCHES WITH SIGNIFICANT ICE ACCUMULATIONS POSSIBLE.

\* WINDS / VISIBILITIES...SIGNIFICANT REDUCTIONS IN VISIBILITY ARE EXPECTED AS NORTHWEST WINDS INCREASE TO 30 TO 45 MPH INTO SUNDAY NIGHT.

\* IMPACTS...THE ICE AND SNOW WOULD RESULT IN DIFFICULT TRAVEL CONDITIONS ALONG WITH SOME FALLING TREE BRANCHES AND POWER OUTAGES POSSIBLE.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

A WINTER STORM WATCH MEANS THERE IS POTENTIAL FOR SIGNIFICANT SNOW...SLEET OR ICE ACCUMULATIONS THAT MAY IMPACT TRAVEL.  
CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE LATEST FORECASTS.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 8 of 54

## Today in Weather History

December 22, 1990: Strong northwest winds, combined with air temperatures below zero, created wind chills from -40 to -65 degrees over west central Minnesota early in the day on the 22nd. Air temperatures were generally in the -20 to -25 degree range, with afternoon highs around 15 below zero.

December 22, 1990: Strong northwest winds gusted to 35 miles per hour and caused near-whiteout conditions over a wide area of southwest and west central Minnesota during the late afternoon on the 21st into the early morning of the 22nd. Several car accidents ensued. A 30-year old man was killed when he lost control of his truck and slid into a ditch in the near-blizzard conditions.

December 22, 1989: The most significant cold spell of the century for the Deep South occurred from the 22 to the 26. New Orleans experienced 64 consecutive hours at or below 32 degrees Fahrenheit and a total of 81 out of 82 hours below freezing. A total of 15 hours were below 15 degrees with the lowest reading of 11 degrees on the morning of the 23rd. A low temperature of 8 degrees was recorded at Baton Rouge. Snow and sleet paralyzed transportation systems where as much as two to four inches of snow accumulated in Lafourche and Terrebonne Parishes. Snow and ice covered the ground in New Orleans. The greatest impact was on breakage of water pipes in homes and businesses. Over 100 fires resulted in the New Orleans area within a 24 hour period due to a loss of water pressure and improperly utilized heating sources. Ice formed over shallow lakes and waterways where commercial fishing took heavy losses. Five weather related deaths occurred in the service area during this rare Arctic outbreak.

December 22, 2002: Heavy rains prompted flooding in the mountain city of Teresopolis, located about 90 km north of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. A mudslide was responsible for 9 deaths and 50 injuries.

1839 - The second of triple December storms hit the northeastern U.S. The storm produced 25 inches of snow at Gettysburg, PA, and gales in New England, but only produced light snow along the coast. (David Ludlum)

1961 - Holiday travel was paralyzed over extreme northeastern Kansas, and adjacent parts of Missouri, Iowa and Nebraska. The storm produced 5 to 15 inches of snow, with drifts up to ten feet high. (22nd-23rd) (The Weather Channel)

1983 - On the first day of winter 75 cities reported record low temperatures for the date, with twelve of those cities reporting record low temperatures for the month as a whole. The mercury plunged to 51 degrees below zero at Wisdom MT, and Waco TX set an all-time record low a reading of 12 above zero. (The National Weather Summary)

1987 - The first day of winter was a relatively tranquil one for much of the nation, but heralded a winter storm in the Central Rockies. The storm produced 40 inches of snow at the top of the Pomerelle Ski Resort, south of Burley ID, the heaviest snow of record for that location. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)








1988 - Strong winds prevailed in the foothills of Wyoming and Colorado. Winds gusted to 123 mph southwest of Fort Collins CO, and reached 141 mph at the summit of Mount Evans. An ice storm paralyzed parts of Upper Michigan during the day. The freezing rain left roads around Marquette MI blocked by cars and semi- trucks. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A total of 137 cities across the central and eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. Thirty-five of those cities established record lows for the month of December. Morning lows of 23 degrees below zero at Kansas City MO, 26 degrees below zero at Concordia KS, and 27 degrees below zero at Goodland KS established all-time records for those three locations. Unofficial morning lows included 50 degrees below zero at Recluse WY and 60 degrees below zero at Rochford SD. Broadus MT and Hardin MT tied for honors as the official cold spot in the nation with morning lows of 47 degrees below zero. Chinook winds at Cutbank MT helped warm the temperature 74 degrees, from a morning low of 34 degrees below zero to an afternoon high of 40 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 9 of 54

Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Christmas Day
						
Sunny	Mostly Clear then Slight Chance Snow	Partly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy then Chance Wintry Mix	Wintry Mix and Patchy Blowing Snow
High: 34 °F	Low: 20 °F↑	High: 32 °F	Low: 9 °F	High: 26 °F	Low: 19 °F	High: 33 °F



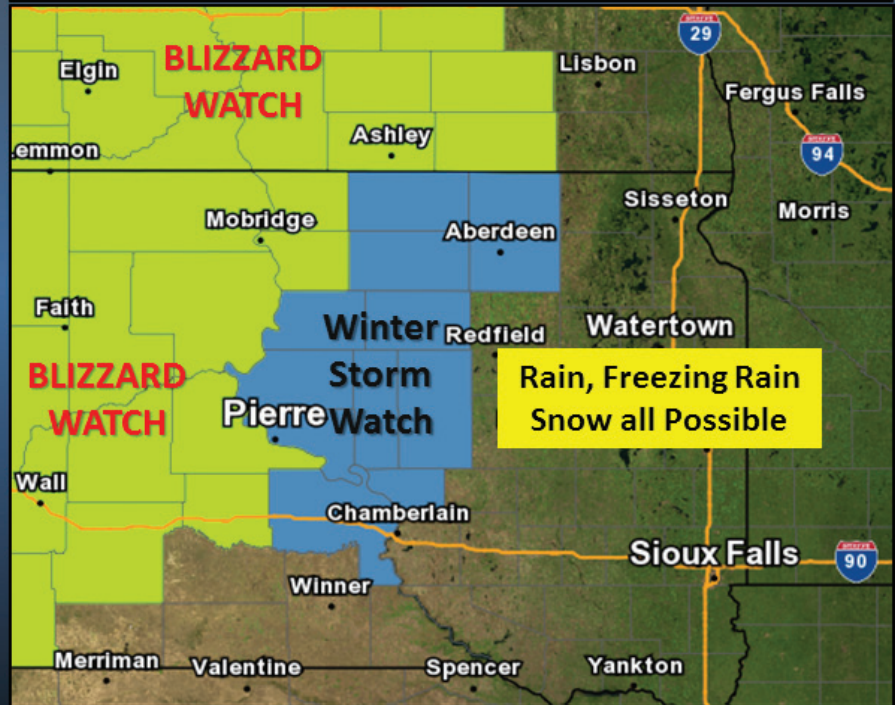
## Hazardous Travel for Christmas



No significant travel hazards in the area now through Saturday

**Christmas – Monday**  
Reduced Visibility, Heavy Snow, Strong Winds Possible in **Blizzard Watch**

Icy Roads, Strong Winds Possible in **Winter Storm Watch**



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD



12/22/2016 5:26 AM Central

Published on: 12/22/2016 at 5:33AM

Hazardous travel is expected Christmas Day through Monday. A significant winter storms will impact the Northern Plains with rain, freezing rain, sleet, and snow. Reduced visibilities, heavy snow, and strong winds are possible in western and central South Dakota. Areas under a winter storm watch could see rain, freezing rain and snow which would cause icy roadways. Other areas should stay tuned as we refine the forecast for this potentially dangerous system.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 10 of 54

## Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 37.2

Low Outside Temp: 12.2

High Gust: 36

Snow:

## Today's Info

Record High: 59° in 1893

Record Low: -28° in 1990

Average High: 24°F

Average Low: 4°F

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.36

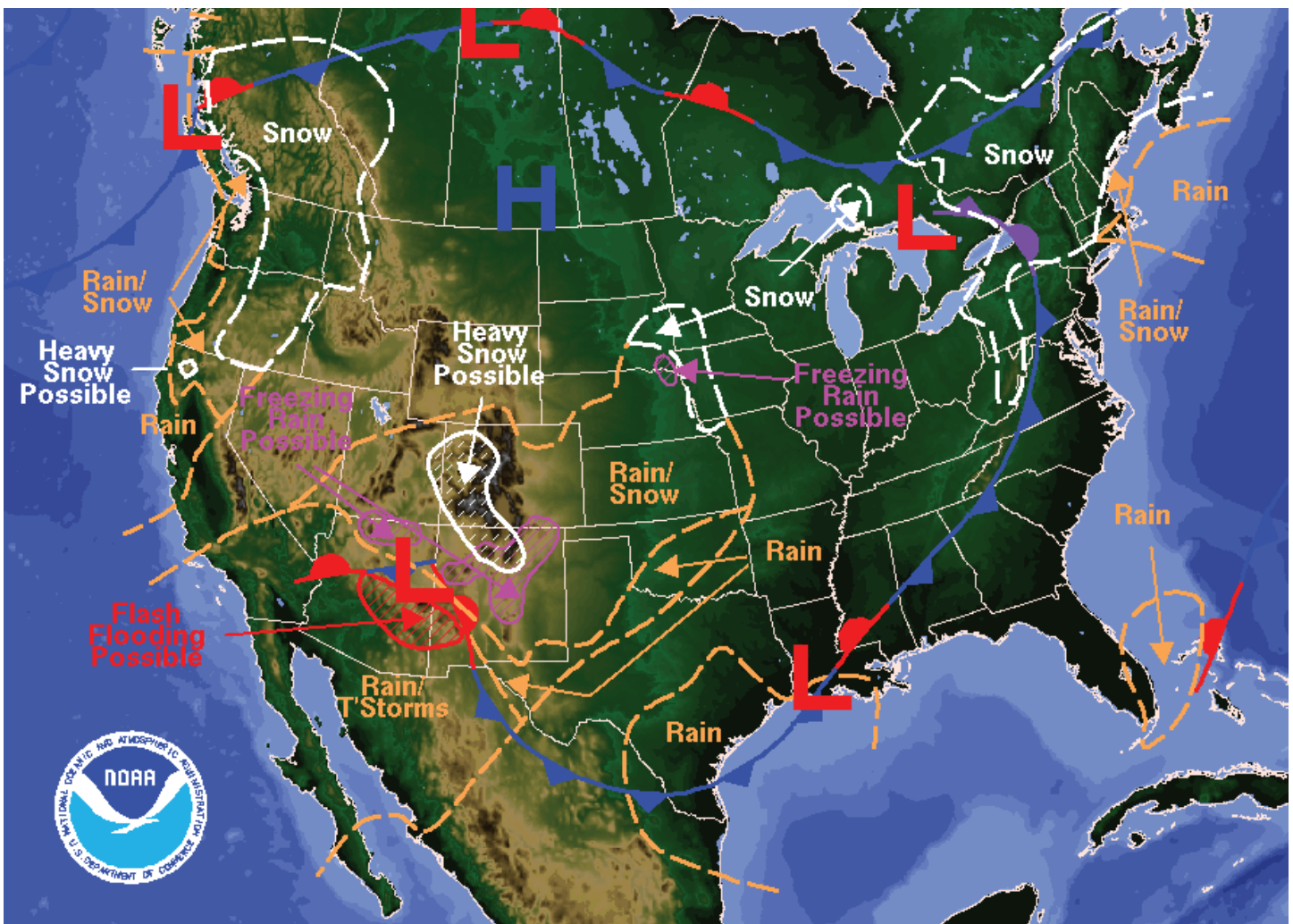
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.88

Average Precip to date: 21.56

Precip Year to Date: 18.22

Sunset Tonight: 4:53 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:11 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Thu, Dec 22, 2016, issued 4:48 AM EST  
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center  
Prepared by McReynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 11 of 54



## POLITICS AND PROMISES

A boy climbed into Santa's lap and asked, "Sir, aren't you really a politician?"

"No!" he protested. "Why do you ask?"

"Well," he said, "you make more promises than you can deliver."

Promises are a big part of everyone's life. People give us their word – implying that we can depend on what they have said, that their promises "can be taken to the bank." Then – far too often – they "forget" what they said or change their minds. Most people do intend to keep their word. But then again, intentions only last, for many, until something more convenient or better comes along.

That's not the way it is with God. We have His record of faithfulness, of keeping His word throughout all of Scripture. What He declares, He does. What He promises, He delivers. What He says comes to pass.

In creation we see the absolute power of God. How reassuring for the Christian. Beginning at the beginning, from the initiation of time until today, God has never wavered on His word. God's promises are anchored in His unchanging character and steadfast love. If this were not true what assurance would we have of our salvation or the hope we have for eternal life with our Lord?

There is nothing too big for Him to manage or too insignificant to escape His attention. We have His Word that assures us of His promise: "I have said it, I will do it."

Prayer: Father, we are grateful for Your Word that reveals Your record made and kept. How reassuring to know we have Someone we can trust with our lives. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture: Isaiah 46:11 From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose. What I have said, that I will bring about; what I have planned, that I will do.

## News from the Associated Press

### Collins leads No. 7 Gonzaga over South Dakota 102-65

By NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS, Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — In the course of making 18 consecutive trips to the NCAA Tournament, No. 7 Gonzaga has set so many program records that comparatively few are left.

They set another one Wednesday night, when they beat South Dakota 102-65 for the best start in team history.

It was their 12th consecutive victory to open the season, breaking the record of 11 set in 1944.

"We should all feel good," Gonzaga coach Mark Few said of his team. "Every task and challenge presented to us, these guys have met it. They're to be commended for that."

Going 12-0 to open the season "was an impressive job by these guys," Few said, in light of a tough non-conference schedule.

Freshman Zach Collins scored 21 points, making all nine of his field goal attempts, as Gonzaga (12-0) romped to victory.

Nigel Williams-Goss added 14 points, nine rebounds and five assists for Gonzaga, which shot 53 percent.

Matt Mooney and Tyler Flack scored 13 points each for South Dakota (9-6), which couldn't overcome 36 percent shooting.

"This is as good a team as I've seen them have without a doubt," South Dakota coach Craig Smith said of Gonzaga. "They'll be national title contenders."

"I thought we played them tough the first 10 minutes and then kind of lost our will," Smith said. "There are just not a lot of holes out there on their team and they exploited us."

The Zags concluded a non-conference slate that included victories over Florida, Iowa State, No. 18 Arizona, Washington, Tennessee and San Diego State.

They have only West Coast Conference games remaining on their schedule, prompting Tennessee coach Rick Barnes to wonder last weekend if they might go undefeated through the regular season. The Bulldogs still have to play at least twice against No. 19 Saint Mary's.

Few said Saint Mary's is as tough a league challenger to the Zags as he has seen during the Bulldogs' NCAA run.

South Dakota hung with the Zags early, trailing just 20-18 9 minutes into the game. But the Zags went on a 9-0 run to push the lead to 11 points.

After a South Dakota basket, Gonzaga scored 10 consecutive points, including 3-pointers by Williams-Goss and Johnathan Williams, for a 39-20 lead. The Coyotes were held to one basket over a span of nearly 7 minutes.

Gonzaga led 52-25 at halftime, after shooting 60.6 percent from the field and making 7 of 14 from 3-point range. South Dakota shot only 31 percent in the first half, missing all nine of its 3-point attempts. The Coyotes scored only seven points in the final 10 minutes of the first half.

The fast start continued a trend in which Gonzaga has outscored its previous six opponents by an average of 41-26 in the first half.

South Dakota's shooting improved in the second half, but it couldn't make up any ground on the Bulldogs.

#### BIG PICTURE

South Dakota: The Coyotes are off to their best start since joining Division I in 2008. Eight different Coyotes have led the team in scoring.

Gonzaga: Gonzaga eclipsed the 1944 Zags, who started the season with 11 consecutive victories. Since joining the NCAA in 1958, the Zags' best start was 9-0 in 2012-13. Gonzaga is holding opponents to 36 percent shooting this season, sixth in the nation. The Bulldogs have trailed in the second half only one time this season, against Florida; they have trailed for less than 34 minutes combined in their 12 games.

#### POLL IMPLICATIONS

An easy win over an overmatched foe does little to enhance the Zags' resume.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 13 of 54

## STATS

Gonzaga won the rebound battle 47-37 and posted 22 assists.

## UP NEXT

South Dakota hosts Omaha on Dec. 29 to open Summit League play.

Gonzaga hosts Pepperdine to open West Coast Conference play on Dec. 29.

More AP college basketball: [www.collegebasketball.ap.org](http://www.collegebasketball.ap.org) and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Top25](https://twitter.com/AP_Top25).

## Packers RB Ty Montgomery looks to stay on roll against Vikes

### Vikings-Packers Capsule

By The Associated Press

MINNESOTA (7-7) vs. GREEN BAY (8-6)

Saturday, 1 p.m. ET, Fox

OPENING LINE — Packers by 5 1/2

RECORD VS. SPREAD — Minnesota 8-6, Green Bay 7-6-1

SERIES RECORD — Packers lead 59-51-2

LAST MEETING — Vikings beat Packers 17-14, Sept. 18

LAST WEEK — Vikings lost to Colts, 34-6; Packers beat Bears 30-27

AP PRO32 RANKING — Vikings No. 19 (tie), Packers No. 10

VIKINGS OFFENSE — OVERALL (31), RUSH (32), PASS (21).

VIKINGS DEFENSE — OVERALL (3), RUSH (18), PASS (3).

PACKERS OFFENSE — OVERALL (10), RUSH (15), PASS (10).

PACKERS DEFENSE — OVERALL (19), RUSH (10), PASS (24).

STREAKS, STATS AND NOTES — Loss eliminates Vikings from playoff contention. ... QB Sam Bradford has 10 TDs, 4 INTs and 94.5 passer rating in past eight road games. ... RB Adrian Peterson had 19 yards on 12 carries before injuring right knee in third quarter in teams' last meeting in Week 2. He returned to lineup last week. ... Peterson averaging 104.6 yards per game in 17 career games against Green Bay. ... WR Stefon Diggs had nine catches for career-high 182 yards and TD last time out against Packers. .. DE Everson Griffen has 11 sacks over past 11 road games ... Packers must beat Vikings to set up Week 17 game against Lions for NFC North title. ... Packers playing on Christmas Eve for first time since 2004, when they beat Vikings 34-31 to clinch NFC North. ... QB Aaron Rodgers has 22 TD passes and six games with 100-plus passer rating since Week 7. ... RB Ty Montgomery's 162 yards rushing last week against Bears were most by a Packer since Samkon Gado ran for 171 against Detroit on Dec. 11, 2005. ... WR Jordy Nelson leads NFL in TD catches (12), red-zone TD catches (10) and red-zone receptions (17). ... Packers have 10 takeaways without committing turnover over last two games. ... Fantasy Tip: Former receiver Montgomery's workload has steadily increased over last three games to season-high 16 carries against Chicago.

For more NFL coverage: [www.pro32.ap.org](http://www.pro32.ap.org) and [http://twitter.com/AP\\_NFL](http://twitter.com/AP_NFL)

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LAST MEETING — Vikings beat Packers 17-14, Sept. 18

LAST WEEK — Vikings lost to Colts, 34-6; Packers beat Bears 30-27

AP PRO32 RANKING — Vikings No. 19 (tie), Packers No. 10

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 14 of 54

VIKINGS OFFENSE — OVERALL (31), RUSH (32), PASS (21).

VIKINGS DEFENSE — OVERALL (3), RUSH (18), PASS (3).

PACKERS OFFENSE — OVERALL (10), RUSH (15), PASS (10).

PACKERS DEFENSE — OVERALL (19), RUSH (10), PASS (24).

**STREAKS, STATS AND NOTES** — Loss eliminates Vikings from playoff contention. ... QB Sam Bradford has 10 TDs, 4 INTs and 94.5 passer rating in past eight road games. ... RB Adrian Peterson had 19 yards on 12 carries before injuring right knee in third quarter in teams' last meeting in Week 2. He returned to lineup last week. ... Peterson averaging 104.6 yards per game in 17 career games against Green Bay. ... WR Stefon Diggs had nine catches for career-high 182 yards and TD last time out against Packers. ... DE Everson Griffen has 11 sacks over past 11 road games ... Packers must beat Vikings to set up Week 17 game against Lions for NFC North title. ... Packers playing on Christmas Eve for first time since 2004, when they beat Vikings 34-31 to clinch NFC North. ... QB Aaron Rodgers has 22 TD passes and six games with 100-plus passer rating since Week 7. ... RB Ty Montgomery's 162 yards rushing last week against Bears were most by a Packer since Samkon Gado ran for 171 against Detroit on Dec. 11, 2005. ... WR Jordy Nelson leads NFL in TD catches (12), red-zone TD catches (10) and red-zone receptions (17). ... Packers have 10 takeaways without committing turnover over last two games. ... Fantasy Tip: Former receiver Montgomery's workload has steadily increased over last three games to season-high 16 carries against Chicago.

For more NFL coverage: [www.pro32.ap.org](http://www.pro32.ap.org) and [http://twitter.com/AP\\_NFL](http://twitter.com/AP_NFL)

## South Dakota congregation prepares to disband

By **DANA HESS, Madison Daily Leader**

MADISON, S.D. (AP) — Constructed of fieldstone, St. Peter Lutheran Church of Orland Township was built to last. While the church building will remain, its small congregation is getting ready to disband.

The church closure isn't a failure of faith but rather a change in demographics. The congregation has dwindled to about 20 members, not enough to sustain the church or pay its bills, the Madison Daily Leader (<http://bit.ly/2hNeQeh>) reported.

"As a congregation, it was a very difficult decision to decide to close but numbers, attendance and our membership was dwindling," said Sue Janssen, congregation president. "There's not very many families that live out here anymore. The income versus expenses just wasn't penciling out."

According to Janssen, the congregation was formed in 1884 and met in the homes of parishioners until the original wooden church could be built in the 1890s. Fundraising for the current church started in 1948 or '49.

When farms and farm families were thriving, so was the church. Janssen estimated that at one time the church had 200 or more members.

On April 23, the church will host its last St. Peter service. Bishop David Zellmer of the South Dakota Synod of the ELCA will officiate. Former pastors have also been invited. A dinner will be served after the service.

Interim pastor Wayne Gallipo of Sioux Falls came to St. Peter knowing that some hard decisions would need to be made.

"They weighed all the options, looked at the hard data and put their emotions aside," Gallipo said.

That didn't make the decision any easier or less painful.

"It's similar to grieving the death of a loved one," Gallipo said the church closing. "It's very hard for them."

"Part of what was very hard was what will happen to the building," said Janssen. "That made it very hard for us to decide to close. It's a beautiful building. It's solid. It's not something you can move away or tear down."

Helping to ease the pain of closing is the church's neighbor, Charlie Johnson. A member of St. Thomas Catholic Church in Madison, Johnson is spearheading an effort to make sure that the church building lives on long after the congregation disbands.

"He felt there was an idea formulating to have a community-type building," Janssen said. "When the congregation heard that, we were like, whew."

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 15 of 54

Johnson, who lives on the farm west of the church and owns the farmland around it, is full of ideas about how the church building could be used after April 23.

"I think the ideas and concepts are endless," Johnson said. "It would all depend on enthusiasm and participation."

As Johnson sees it, in its second life the church would be a perfect venue for weddings, receptions, birthday parties, concerts or as a center for day-long retreats.

"A lot of people would intend to be buried here yet, or have family in the cemetery," Johnson said. "It could still serve as a place for a funeral or at least a reception down in the hall after the burial."

While the future of the church building is up in the air, the adjoining cemetery is run by its own nonprofit organization.

Johnson, an organic farmer, was part of two tours that came through the area this summer. In each case they toured local farms and had lunch at St. Peter, paying the church a rental fee and compensating the church ladies who put together the meal.

"I'm hoping we can continue things like that," Johnson said. "What's going to be needed is a new nonprofit entity that's going to take over the participation of the building and build up enough of a following."

Johnson envisions a group with a part-time director and a membership large enough to pay dues that would handle the facility's bills.

While there are no living quarters on the site, the building includes a sanctuary with room for 250, a basement that can seat 180, bathrooms, a pastor's office and a basement study room.

Johnson said it would be a perfect location for artists.

"It would provide a rural setting, a quiet setting where they could do their music or do their art," Johnson said, calling the building itself a fieldstone work of art.

The church grounds are home to two statues by Allan Fisher, "The Way" and "A Victory Over Death."

"He had come out here to church a few times and was inspired by the rural setting, the nature," Janssen said of Fisher. "The peacefulness inspired him to sculpt 'The Way'."

The cutout of Christ and a lamb allows the prairie in the distance to become part of the artwork.

There are plenty of ideas about how to use the church and the interest in a community center has spread beyond the congregation. There were 19 people at a recent meeting to toss around ideas. Only three of them were from St. Peter.

During its almost 70 years of existence, the church has had a storied past. Johnson recalls that in 1986, at the height of the farm crisis, Dan Rather spent a week broadcasting the CBS Evening News from the KELO studios in Sioux Falls. One night he visited St. Peter Church where farmers gathered to talk to Rather about the farm crisis.

Johnson said some area residents were in for a surprise that night as Rather got lost a couple times along the way to the church. They didn't know what to think of the famous newsman on their front porches asking for directions.

Another time the church was in the news for a sadder reason. In 2000 the church was vandalized by two youngsters, causing \$40,000 worth of damage.

Janssen recalls the date, Aug. 27, because it's her mother's birthday. She arrived early at the church that day to finish her Sunday School lesson.

"It was like a tornado," Janssen said, describing the damage. "It was pretty devastating to us, but it was obvious that they needed our help."

The boys came to the church to apologize. They paid restitution and did some jail time.

The church received an outpouring of generosity from neighbors and other churches. Now it's time for St. Peter to be generous.

Gallipo said the church's baptismal font is going to Table of Grace Church in Harrisburg.

While an inventory team goes from room to room deciding what should be donated and what should be thrown out, there's still a question about what will happen to the parishioners.

With membership that ranges from Madison to Montrose to Chester, finding new churches for the members is a priority, Janssen said.

Even though the congregation is disbanding, Gallipo offers a message of hope. "It's not an end to the ministry of St. Peter," Gallipo said. "It goes on forever through them as they move on to other places."

Information from: The Madison Daily Leader, <http://www.madisondailyleader.com>

## 82-year-old Salvation Army volunteer still bell ringing

By Sara Bertsch, The Mitchell Daily Republic

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — A dime, nickel or even just a few pennies is all Corrine Granger asks that people donate when they see her ringing a bell.

"You got it, you give it," said Granger, 82, as she sat near the shiny red kettle marking her a volunteer bell-ringer for the Salvation Army.

Donning a red apron, filled with candy, Granger spends six days a week, four hours each day, as a bell-ringer — just the same as she's been doing since 1952.

The Elk Point native moved to the Mitchell area with her husband when she was 18 years old. Looking for a church to attend in the Mitchell area, Granger and her husband chose the Salvation Army, which serves as a church, social service organization and thrift store, The (Mitchell) Daily Republic (<http://bit.ly/2gUqgZ4>) reported.

Little did Granger know, she would still be volunteering and working with the organization 64 years later.

Granger and her husband, Eugene, had nine children, each one of them baptized and dedicated with the Salvation Army. All of the children also were bell ringers.

"All of my kids grew up in bell ringing," Granger said. "They always hopped in the car and we all came. They knew when it was bell ringing time."

Now that her children are adults with full-time jobs and children of their own, they don't have time to be a volunteer bell-ringer, Granger said, but they all still recall the fun, family time spent bell ringing when they were younger.

Granger said it was a family affair to go out, ring the bell and raise money for those who are less fortunate. And it's an activity she still enjoys doing.

But bell ringing is just one of countless other jobs and tasks Granger has helped with at the Salvation Army. Granger currently serves as a cook for the organization, arriving each day at 8:30 a.m. and leaving around 2 p.m., giving her a little time before her 4 p.m. shift at Shopko.

On top of cooking and bell ringing, Granger also volunteers to deliver groceries, gives a ride to a fellow employee for his bell ringing shift and picks up bread on Saturdays to deliver to the church.

And each Sunday morning, Granger goes to church, unlocks the door, starts the coffeemaker and sets up for Sunday School.

"I'm always busy doing something," Granger said.

Just as she's helped the Salvation Army for all these years, the group has also helped Granger.

About 40 years ago, Granger said their family home in Mount Vernon burned down, leaving her, her husband and her nine children without a place to live.

But thanks to the Salvation Army, the family was able to stay in a hotel room in Mitchell for two weeks crammed together. They also were given food by the organization, Granger said.

The family lucked out and found a good deal on a home in Mitchell two weeks later, and to this day, Granger still lives in the home with one of her sons.

Her son, Bill, lost his legs to diabetes a few years ago, Granger said, and she still takes care of him. Granger also has another son, in Parkston, who is paralyzed and on a feeding tube. She continues to visit him and bring him to family get-togethers, she said.

Granger's husband Eugene died in 2009, she said, but she still lives in the same home.

Through each of these life obstacles, there's been one organization that's been there through it all — the Salvation Army.



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 17 of 54

"They help me keep my sanity," she said with a laugh. "They're good to me. If I need something, they help me and I help them."

And the organization's help for the Granger family doesn't end there.

Five years ago, Granger was diagnosed with lymphoma. Being a cook for the group, she had to miss work to receive chemotherapy and radiation. Granger said they always allowed her the next day off to recover, allowing her to keep her job. Five months after battling lymphoma, Granger was also diagnosed with breast cancer. She had one breast completely removed, and the Salvation Army was there again to help her through that time.

And it's something Granger will never forget.

"There isn't anything I wouldn't do for them," Granger said. "It's like a home for me."

"Thank you and Merry Christmas."

These are the five words that Granger repeats each time someone passes by her sitting near the sign labeling her a Salvation Army volunteer.

Wearing a heavy black coat, with a Salvation Army logo on the right arm, Granger said there's nowhere else she'd rather be during the holiday season than sitting in her spot in the entrance of Shopko, bell ringing.

After more than 60 years, Granger is an expert when it comes to bell ringing and she's even gathered a fan base.

People from the community who know Granger will stop by to donate some money and just say, "Hello." They don't go into the department store, Granger said.

There's one woman whose daughter died recently, Granger said, who always makes a point to stop and visit Granger while she's bell ringing. And even though she doesn't have much money to donate, Granger said this woman always puts something in the bucket.

"She gave what she had," Granger said "That meant more, you know?"

Maj. Vickie Cole has known Granger for the past two years since joining the Salvation Army. Cole said in those two years, she's seen how caring and compassionate Granger is.

"She believes in always giving back and helping the Salvation army no matter what," Cole said. "She wants kids to have toys at Christmas and a food box. She knows this money will help in that way."

During the holiday season, Cole said finding volunteers to be bell-ringers can be difficult, but they can always count on Granger.

For the organization, donations are very important and Cole said Granger is always working to get as much money as possible, so the group doesn't have to spend anything extra.

"She's a very giving person," Cole said.

With pockets full of candy, Granger said one of her favorite parts of bell ringing is seeing the children. Children, along with their parents, will stop by, drop a donation in the bucket and talk with Granger. She'll give them some candy and send them off with a "Merry Christmas."

Granger also volunteers to do the bell ringing each year as a way to get out of the house and do something, she said. Not only does it help others out, it helps her out.

So far this year, Granger is the only person signed up to ring the bell on Christmas Eve, which is a tradition for Granger, who said she always works on Dec. 24 until 6 p.m.

And Granger, who said she remains in good health, doesn't plan on quitting her bell ringing duties anytime soon. The 82-year-old, who will be 83 in a few weeks, said she will work with the Salvation Army, not just bellringing, for as long as she can.

"I told them I'll probably be there until my last breath," Granger said with a laugh. "The Salvation Army is like a home to me."

## Eureka shop students create playhouses for children

By Katherine Grandstrand, Aberdeen American News

EUREKA, S.D. (AP) — Work on the new school might be all done in Eureka, but there are still a few more structures being built.

Shop teacher Ray Tracy has his classes building a series of 4-foot-by-8-foot buildings — about the size of a backyard storage shed — that will resemble different structures found in any town. There's a bank, a general store, a school and a post office, among others.

The eighth grade was finishing up the first structure, a house, earlier this month, the Aberdeen American News (<http://bit.ly/2hAR44O>) reported.

Students are enjoying the challenge.

"We knew it would be a little bit harder, but we wanted to do it," said Tyler Raines, eighth-grader. "It's pretty fun. We've had some good experiences doing it."

Tyler said he thought that working on roofing would be his favorite part of the project, even though the class hadn't yet started doing so.

"I thought it was cool that we were going to build real buildings," said Kodi Retzer, eighth-grader.

Kodi said building the walls was her favorite part of the process.

Not only do shop students get to learn building techniques, they get to make something for younger children and future generations, Tracy said.

"Each building concept — how to lay out a structure, how to frame, how to use tools — eventually the building trades class I would like to take and plumb the building, and actually put electricity in the building itself," Tracy said.

The tiny village will then be landscaped, he said. The shop classes will add plants and shrubbery.

"It teaches kids how to build a structure and also how to maintain it," Tracy said.

"And then give back to the younger kids here at school," Superintendent Bo Beck said.

Shop teachers from other towns have been interested in the project, Tracy said.

When complete, all of the structures will be strategically placed to make them easy to monitor, Beck said. None of the structures will have doors. That's to avoid pinched fingers.

"The teachers, when they're out on the playground, they can look directly into each building and see what's going on," Tracy said.

The floors of the buildings are made with treated wood, meaning a wet floor won't be a problem, he said. The students will paint the structures inside and out.

The small size of the building makes them moveable. They're built on pallets and can be picked up with a pallet jack. As other projects come up, the buildings can be moved into other corners of the shop.

The new playhouses come with a whole new playground space, Beck said. The new high school was built on the old playground and, during that time, the playground equipment was put in storage and the kids played in an empty field near the school.

The playground equipment was installed after the old high school was razed and cleared. The playhouses are part of a complete playground makeover.

"It will be our little mini city of Eureka," Beck said.

Information from: Aberdeen American News, <http://www.aberdeennews.com>

## Number of home-schooling families on the rise in Sioux Falls

By Megan Raposa, Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Home-school families are like red cars.

"You don't see them until you start looking," Sioux Falls home-school parent Chad Theisen said. "Then you're like, 'There's a red car; there's a red car.'"

And those red cars are starting to pop up everywhere.

The number of home-school families has been on the rise nationally for most of the past two decades,

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 19 of 54

and it's a trend that has held true in Sioux Falls, where the number of home-schoolers has nearly doubled since 2009, the Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2h4naXx>) reported.

More parents are taking their children's education into their own hands for a variety of reasons, from dislike of Common Core curriculum, to wanting more family time, to wanting religion in children's education.

While South Dakota's laws are friendly to families choosing to keep school at home, home-school families still face stereotypes and social stigma.

But it's getting better, parents say, especially as the community grows through home-school groups and social media.

Cathy and Bernie Schock were the only people they knew home-schooling in Sioux Falls in 1981.

They knew they wanted to spend more time with their kids, and after hearing radio personality Paul Harvey talk about home-school families in Missouri, Bernie started getting excited about the prospect of teaching the couple's three children at home.

"A lot of people thought we were crazy," Bernie said.

At the time, the Schocks were the first family to fill out the state's alternate education application in the Sioux Falls School District. The application was added to state law in 1981—the same year the couple began home-schooling.

Cathy and Bernie were pioneers in home education. They lobbied in Pierre and met with legislators to make their case for home-schooling as a viable form of learning.

"They had to see that we were normal parents with normal children," Cathy said. "That we wanted to give them a normal education."

Today, the Schocks are seeing their grandchildren among thousands of home-schooled kids in the state.

Their daughter-in-law Barb Schock has been teaching her kids for nine years. She's also a board member of home-school group Living Legacy Academy (LLA), one of several parent groups in the state.

LLA started in 2005 with about 25 families. Today, it has 87 families, with 50 more on a wait list, said board member Marla Peters.

Statewide, home-school enrollment has risen 40 percent since 2010, according to a count from the South Dakota Department of Education.

Ask Natalie Michael why she home-schools, and she'll ask why the question wasn't framed another way.

"Why does anybody put their kid in the school system that doesn't have to?" said Michael, a home-school parent and director of the eastern South Dakota chapter of Classical Conversations.

Not all home-school parents feel as strongly opposed to public schools as Michael, but most will mention Common Core curriculum as at least one reason influencing their choice to teach at home.

Joel Brunick, who serves on the Sioux Empire Christian Home Educators board with his wife, Kristin Brunick, said he sees Common Core as one of the biggest drivers of home-school growth in recent years.

Michael fought strongly against Common Core in South Dakota until she began the eastern South Dakota chapter of Classical Conversations home-schooling in 2013, a group that now has between 85 and 90 families.

"Instead of fighting Common Core directly . I decided to offer them a better solution, which is, in my opinion, home-schooling," Michael said.

Parents also choose home-schooling as a way to spend more time with their children.

Theisen and his wife, Brooke Theisen, always planned on having one stay-at-home parent with their three children. Though they didn't always plan on home-schooling, now they see their kids' education as a lifestyle.

"Nobody's more passionate about the education of my kids than I am," he said.

The Brunicks also saw home educating as a way to not only spend more time with their kids, but also to share with them the joys of learning.

Religion also plays a role in choosing to home-school for many families, but Joel Brunick said that often receives too much emphasis.

He said it's a stereotype that families only home-school their children for religious reasons.

"A lot of it has to do with families wanting to reconnect," Brunick said.

Many parents said that home educating is a "calling," but it's not a method that works for everybody,

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 20 of 54

Theisen said.

Home-schooling isn't free, unlike public schools, but Marla Peters, an LLA board member and 10-year home educator, said it can be done on a "shoestring budget." Peters estimates spending \$250 annually on home-school supplies.

Sarah Kramer began home-schooling her children when private school tuition became too expensive. She said the initial curriculum investment was about \$1,000, but then materials can be reused.

For those who do feel the home-school "calling," the growth in home educators makes the choice to teach at home easier. There are about a dozen parent groups and co-operatives in the state, and countless resources online.

A Facebook group for home-schoolers in the Sioux Falls area alone has more than 550 members.

That's helpful for parents new to home-schooling or those looking for answers to curriculum questions, Theisen said. Ask a question, and within an hour, someone, somewhere is willing to help you.

Those groups also make it easier for home-school parents to find social outlets for their children.

Peters doesn't feel like there are many forces that work against home-school families — except the stereotypes that home-schooled children aren't social.

That's a stereotype that hits close to home for 13-year-old Na'ama McGowan.

The spunky short-haired teen said when she meets new people and tells them she's home-schooled, they dismiss her or assume that she's overly sheltered or shy. She wants the world to know that's not true.

"People assume you're not going to be a rebel," she said. "(Or) you're not going to fight with your parents. ... Just because we learn in a different environment doesn't mean we're that different."

Peters' children are involved in 4-H, sports, church groups and the weekly LLA meetings, which allow home-schooled children to learn in a traditional classroom environment with each parent teaching different subjects.

Barb Schock's children also have plenty of outlets to socialize with children of all ages and with adults. She said she's surprised that people sometimes think kids have to go to school to develop social skills.

"My kids are not lacking in the slightest bit of socialization," Schock said.

As the primary educator in his household, Theisen also has heard plenty of generalizations about home schooling, including that parents who home-school aren't as educated.

"Yeah, there's stereotypes," said Theisen, who has a master's degree in education and previously worked for a university. "And I don't meet any of those."

Theisen doesn't see the rise in home-school families stopping any time soon.

Home-schooling is a way to adapt to each child's style of learning, he said, adding that he has a "class size of three." It's also empowered him to teach his children using the latest technologies, adapting to changes quicker than traditional schools are able.

As more people teach their own children, home-schooling is also continuing to become more widely accepted, Kristin Brunick said.

"I was always kind of embarrassed to admit that we home-school at first," Brunick said, adding that her mother taught in public schools for 30 years.

Today, people still ask questions, but Brunick said almost everyone she talks to knows somebody that has home-schooled.

"It's been more and more accepted," Brunick said. "It's just a lifestyle that I think people are really embracing."

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

## Judge: SD voter-approved ethics overhaul can't be separated

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A judge has ruled that a South Dakota anti-corruption package approved by voters cannot be separated into different parts.

Circuit Judge Mark Barnett ruled Wednesday that leaving only part of the measure in effect would be

inappropriate, since it was a comprehensive package. The judge has issued an order blocking the entire law from taking effect.

Voters approved the measure last month. South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley has argued that the state should embrace a government ethics commission that is part of the package.

The attorney general's office is defending the law against a court challenge filed by Republican lawmakers and others.

Opponents contend that provisions including the ethics commission, public campaign funding and limitations on lobbyist gifts to lawmakers are unconstitutional.

## Survivor of building collapse asked: 'Am I going to die?'

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The woman who was rescued from beneath the rubble of a collapsed building in downtown Sioux Falls says she tries to find solace in simple things as she recovers from the ordeal.

Emily Fodness said she often thinks of the person who did not survive the collapse of the 100-year building on Dec. 2, construction worker Ethan McMahon, a former Marine and father of two.

"I'm grateful that I'm here, but I'm mourning the life that was lost," Fodness said. "We will be forever attached because of what happened. Then you sort of think, Why? I'm thankful that I got out, but I wish the story was different with Ethan."

Fodness, 22, was sleeping in her family's third-floor loft as construction crews worked on remodeling the street-level bar into a drugstore. She was awakened by a confusing noise. She was used to the construction noise, but this was different.

"It was a loud rumbling, louder than I was used to," she says. "I had a feeling that it had something to do with the construction, but I knew something wasn't right."

Fodness remembers being "a little freaked out" as she turned over in bed.

"So while I was turning over in bed, just waking up, I looked and saw that my floor was collapsing. My bed is one corner, and the floor started caving in the opposite corner. I remember trying to hold onto anything while I was going down toward the center of the room. So my mattress tipped downward at its corner, and me and my dog fell before the mattress fell," Fodness said.

Suddenly the building buckled and the floor beneath the loft collapsed, burying Fodness in debris. She said she didn't realize at the time the whole building had collapsed.

Fodness recalls thinking the only way out was to grab her phone, which fortunately was within reach. She called her mom and for the next three hours remained trapped in darkness and freezing temperatures until rescuers could reach her.

She drew comfort from her dog Nova who had survived the collapse beside her, Fodness told the Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2idV1cI>). The rescuers actually reached Nova before they saw Emily.

She stretched out her arm as far as she could, as firefighter Dustin Luebke grabbed it.

"He told me, 'We have you, and we're not going to let you go.' That was an incredible relief," Fodness said.

"At one point I asked, 'Am I going to die?'" recalls Fodness. "And I was told, 'No, we're getting you out.'"

Fodness walks on crutches and undergoes physical therapy for her injuries to her hips and legs. She has bad dreams and gets skittish at the sound of sirens.

"You try to wake up like it's any other day, but that's pretty hard right now," she said.

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

## Obama oil pipeline rules face uncertain future under Trump

By **MATTHEW BROWN** and **JAMES MacPHERSON**, Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — President Barack Obama's administration is expected to push through long-delayed safety measures for the nation's sprawling network of oil pipelines in its final days, despite resistance from industry and concern that incoming president Donald Trump may scuttle them.

The measures are aimed at preventing increasingly frequent accidents such as a 176,000-gallon spill that fouled a North Dakota creek earlier this month. Thousands more accidents over the past decade caused

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 22 of 54

\$2.5 billion in damages nationwide and dumped almost 38 million gallons of fuels.

Fights over pipelines have intensified in recent years, illustrated by the dispute over TransCanada's Keystone XL plan and efforts by American Indians to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline from crossing beneath the Missouri River near the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation.

The U.S. Department of Transportation proposal covers roughly 200,000 miles of lines that crisscross the country and carry crude, gasoline and other hazardous liquids.

Environmental and safety advocates have criticized the agency's commitment to tightening oversight of that network after a key safety feature — automatic valves that quickly shut down ruptured lines — was omitted from a draft rule published in 2015.

Further revisions sought by the petroleum industry could make the rule largely ineffective, said Carl Weimer with the Pipeline Safety Trust. But keeping the proposal intact would expose it to a legal challenge or reversal by a Republican-controlled Congress and Trump, an enthusiastic advocate for fossil fuels whose administration would enforce the new safety provisions, Weimer added.

"We already viewed it as an incremental step. If they water it down at all or extend the timelines, it's going to be an even smaller step," he said.

Regulators began crafting the new rule after a 2010 Michigan pipeline break released almost 1 million gallons of crude into the Kalamazoo River. It's languished amid industry criticisms, interventions from Congress and the bureaucratic inertia of the federal regulatory process.

A recent boom in domestic drilling saw accident rates for pipelines increase by roughly a third. The number of hazardous liquid pipeline accidents in the U.S. increased from 350 in 2010 to 462 in 2015.

The Transportation Department proposal calls for tougher inspection and repair criteria, leak detection systems on more lines and other measures to cut risk. Companies also would be required to inspect lines after flooding or other extreme events, a provision adopted after a 2011 ExxonMobil pipeline break spilled 63,000 gallons of crude into Montana's Yellowstone River.

It's currently under review by the White House Office of Management and Budget. Final adoption is anticipated in late December, said Allie Aguilera, government affairs director of the Transportation Department's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration.

Industry representatives argue it would cost companies \$600 million a year and almost \$5 billion over the next decade. That's almost 30 times the government's estimate of \$22.5 million annually.

Association of Oil Pipe Lines Vice President John Stoodly said the rule would force pipeline owners to immediately repair lines with microscopic cracks or traces of corrosion. Currently, the industry is allowed to monitor smaller defects and schedule repairs later.

"It has the potential to distract us away from higher-priority safety issues," Stoodly said of the more stringent repair criteria.

Advocates say the rule is particularly important for rural areas. Current regulations apply primarily to lines in "high consequence areas" with large populations or environmentally sensitive features such as drinking water supplies.

Lines outside those areas are not required to be inspected with mechanical devices known as "pipeline pigs," which travel inside lines looking for flaws.

"This is the first time (the Department of Transportation) is saying you have to inspect them" using the devices, Weimer said.

The Bellingham, Washington-based safety trust was formed after three children were killed when a gasoline pipeline broke in 1999, leaking fuel for 1½ hours before it exploded.

The recent 176,000-gallon pipeline spill near Belfield, North Dakota occurred outside a high consequence area.

Federal investigators said Wednesday that a leak detection system on the Belle Fourche Pipeline Co. line had failed to detect any problems before a rancher discovered the spill on Dec. 5. The company was ordered by the Transportation Department to make improvements to that detection system before re-starting the line.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 23 of 54

It's unclear how long it had been leaking. The oil travelled 4½ miles down a tributary of the Little Missouri River, investigators said. About 76,000 gallons had been recovered as of Tuesday, according to company spokeswoman Wendy Owen.

A third-party vendor had used a pipeline pig to inspect the line in April. The results were being reviewed to make sure the company repaired any flaws that were found, investigators said.

The 6-inch line can carry up to 1 million gallons of crude daily. Belle Fourche is a subsidiary of True Companies of Casper, Wyoming, which has a lengthy history of accidents including a January 2015 spill into the Yellowstone River.

Belle Fourche is a member of the American Petroleum Institute, which acknowledged it has been seeking revisions to the administration's safety proposal but declined to specify the changes it wants.

In a 65-page cost-benefit analysis, the petroleum institute chided federal officials for underestimating the costs and amount of work needed for companies to comply. The group described the rule as a "significant expansion of regulatory oversight."

Minimal federal oversight of pipelines in rural areas has left officials in some states overwhelmed with the task of policing the industry.

Pressured by landowners, farmers and environmentalists, North Dakota will put a state rule into effect Jan. 1 to increase inspections of smaller pipelines known as gathering lines. The federal proposal requires only that companies document spills from the lines.

Kevin Pranis, a spokesman for the Laborers District Council of Minnesota and North Dakota, which represents some workers building the four-state, \$3.8 billion Dakota Access Pipeline, said his group welcomes "sensible" regulation for the industry.

"The pipeline industry is under scrutiny like never before," Pranis said.

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MacPherson reported from Bismarck, North Dakota.

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Follow Matthew Brown on Twitter at —<https://twitter.com/matthewbrownap>

## Feds order correction to plan to North Dakota pipeline owner

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — The Latest on Oil pipeline rules(all times local):  
2 p.m.

Federal regulators have outlined corrective steps that must take place before a company may restart a pipeline that leaked 176,000 gallons of oil into and along a creek in western North Dakota.

The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration issued the order Tuesday to Belle Fourche (foosh) Pipeline Co.

Company spokeswoman Wendy Owen says the order is under review.

A landowner spotted the spill Dec. 5, after the company's monitoring equipment failed to detect the rupture.

The company says erosion of a hillside might have ruptured the pipe, but the cause is still being investigated. A precise location of the break is unknown.

The federal agency's order requires the company to excavate the pipeline in the area of the break, including where it's placed 45 feet below the creek bed.

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11:45 a.m.

President Barack Obama's administration is expected to push through long-delayed safety measures for the nation's sprawling network of oil pipelines in its final days, despite resistance from industry and concern that incoming president Donald Trump may scuttle them.

The measures are aimed at preventing increasingly frequent accidents such as a 176,000-gallon spill that fouled a North Dakota creek earlier this month. Thousands more spills over the past decade caused \$2.5 billion in damages nationwide and dumped almost 38 million gallons of fuel.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 24 of 54

Fights over pipelines have intensified in recent years, illustrated by the dispute over TransCanada's Keystone XL plan and efforts by American Indians to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline from crossing beneath the Missouri River near the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation.

The U.S. Department of Transportation proposal covers roughly 200,000 miles of lines that crisscross the country and carry crude, gasoline and other hazardous liquids.

Environmental and safety advocates have criticized the agency's commitment to tightening oversight of that network after a key safety feature — automatic valves that quickly shut down ruptured lines — was omitted from a draft rule published in 2015.

Further revisions sought by the petroleum industry could make the rule largely ineffective, said Carl Weimer with the Pipeline Safety Trust. But keeping the proposal intact would expose it to a legal challenge or reversal by a Republican-controlled Congress and Trump, an enthusiastic advocate for fossil fuels whose administration would enforce the new safety provisions, Weimer added.

"We already viewed it as an incremental step. If they water it down at all or extend the timelines, it's going to be an even smaller step," he said.

Regulators began crafting the new rule after a 2010 Michigan pipeline break released almost 1 million gallons of crude into the Kalamazoo River. It's languished amid industry criticisms, interventions from Congress and the bureaucratic inertia of the federal regulatory process.

A recent boom in domestic drilling saw accident rates for pipelines increase by roughly a third. The number of hazardous liquid pipeline accidents in the U.S. increased from 350 in 2010 to 462 in 2015.

The Transportation Department proposal calls for tougher inspection and repair criteria, leak detection systems on more lines and other measures to cut risk. Companies also would be required to inspect lines after flooding or other extreme events, a provision adopted after a 2011 ExxonMobil pipeline break spilled 63,000 gallons of crude into Montana's Yellowstone River.

It's currently under review by the White House Office of Management and Budget. Final adoption is anticipated in late December, said Allie Aguilera, government affairs director of the Transportation Department's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration.

Industry representatives argue it would cost companies \$600 million a year and almost \$5 billion over the next decade. That's almost 30 times the government's estimate of \$22.5 million annually.

Association of Oil Pipe Lines Vice President John Stoodly said the rule would force pipeline owners to immediately repair lines with microscopic cracks or traces of corrosion. Currently, the industry is allowed to monitor smaller defects and schedule repairs later.

"It has the potential to distract us away from higher-priority safety issues," Stoodly said of the more stringent repair criteria.

Advocates say the rule is particularly important for rural areas. Current regulations apply primarily to lines in "high consequence areas" with large populations or environmentally sensitive features such as drinking water supplies.

Lines outside those areas are not required to be inspected with mechanical devices known as "pipeline pigs," which travel inside lines looking for flaws.

"This is the first time (the Department of Transportation) is saying you have to inspect them" using the devices, Weimer said.

The Bellingham, Washington-based safety trust was formed after three children were killed when a gasoline pipeline broke in 1999, leaking fuel for 1½ hours before it exploded.

The 176,000-gallon Belle Fourche Pipeline spill near Belfield, North Dakota occurred Dec. 5 on a line outside a high consequence area. True Companies of Casper, Wyoming, which owns the line, said it uses pipeline pigs for inspections, a claim confirmed by federal officials. Company spokeswoman Wendy Owen could not specify when that last occurred.

The 6-inch line can carry up to 1 million gallons of crude daily. It's unclear how long it was leaking before the spill was discovered. By then, oil had travelled 4½ miles down a tributary of the Little Missouri River, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. About 76,000 gallons of oil has been recovered, Owen



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 25 of 54

said Tuesday.

Electronic monitoring equipment on the line failed to detect any problems, the company said.

The American Petroleum Institute acknowledged it was seeking revisions to the administration's safety proposal but declined to specify the changes it wants.

In a 65-page cost-benefit analysis, the petroleum institute chided federal officials for underestimating the costs and amount of work needed for companies to comply. The group described the rule as a "significant expansion of regulatory oversight."

Minimal federal oversight of pipelines in rural areas has left officials in some states overwhelmed with the task of policing the industry.

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"The pipeline industry is under scrutiny like never before," Pranis said.

MacPherson reported from Bismarck, North Dakota.

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## Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press

Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, Dec. 20

Regents take aim at student drinking

Members of the South Dakota Board of Regents are thinking a lot about students and potential drinking problems

That could be seen as a bad sign — the fact that such problems do exist — but it's also a good sign that the issue, which is a very old and universal one, is being addressed.

A discussion on the matter took place recently when the regents convened in Vermillion. They discussed student drinking issues against a curious backdrop, as the Legislature has approved a bill that allows limited alcohol sales on state campuses. This move was done to create new revenue streams for the schools. But again, this action is being taken while addressing student drinking issues on those same campuses.

Student drinking in college has always been an issue, if for no other reason because of the extraordinary alignment of circumstances involved. College campuses are mostly filled with young adults who are really away from home and on their own for the first time. These kids are surrounded by peers in the same situation, and drinking — even though it is technically illegal in most cases — often results. According to a recent study from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, nearly 60 percent of college students had a drink in the month prior to answering the survey, and two out of three of those had engaged in binge drinking.

Such issues can lead to more than drunkenness and hangovers. This can also produce behaviors such as drunken driving, assault and sexual assault.

But colleges generally are part of a so-called "drinking culture," where the consumption of alcohol is part of the ritual of life. (It doesn't have to be, of course, but curiosity and peer pressure are prevalent in such an atmosphere.) That's why it's important for colleges and their governing boards to take student drinking seriously and carefully: They need to address the issue while understanding that this is something kids are prone to do — just like some adults.

Schools like the University of South Dakota and South Dakota State University have taken a head-on approach with students' drinking issues, and that engagement seems to be producing results. This includes working with students who incur drinking offenses and instilling the importance of drinking responsibly

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 26 of 54

— which, again, is something that could be useful once they leave the college life and have to function in the real world.

Are schools sending the wrong message when they try to address student drinking issues while allowing limited sales on campus (even if those sales aren't to students)? Not really. Alcohol is legal and therefore a fact of life. It can generate new revenue in a time when every penny for education counts. But it also has to be managed, just as those who consume alcohol need to know their own limits and manage it accordingly. So, yes, the two can co-exist.

The regents' discussion is an acknowledgement that kids will be kids — which has always been true in every generation — and that problems can arise and can be addressed. It's a learning experience for these young adults, and the regents and schools need to be there to offer guidance.

Capital Journal, Dec. 16

The legislature needs make government transparency a bigger priority next year

When voters approved Initiated Measure 22 last month, their attitude was quite clear. They want a more accountable, more transparent government.

The pair of scandals that have unfolded in the last five years or so — EB-5 and GEAR UP — were just too big to sweep under the rug. As much as South Dakotans trust their Republican-led government, they just couldn't ignore the fact that four children were apparently murdered in September of 2015 by their father after he stole millions of taxpayer dollars. The theft was made possible, at least in part, by lax oversight of the money on behalf of state officials.

A few years before that tragic incident, a former economic development official, Richard Benda, took his own life after investigators say he improperly used money generated by the EB-5 foreign investor program to secure himself a job in the private sector. Benda was going to be indicted before he died.

Long before either of these scandals came to light, the South Dakota government had been rated as one of the least transparent state governments in the union. Government transparency groups have long decried the state's poor open records laws and lack of institutionalized accountability, such as an ethics commission.

Last year, for example, South Dakota was given an "F" by the Center for Public Integrity in its 2015 State Integrity Investigation. The state was ranked 47th when it comes to government accountability.

We don't believe that low rankings and poor grades in studies that look at the existence or non-existence of laws mean that South Dakota is rife with corruption. The vast majority of our civil servants and elected leaders are good people who want to do good work on our behalf.

We do, however, believe in the old maxim "Trust but Verify." And until IM-22 was approved, South Dakotans have had little ability to verify that their elected officials are in fact working in the best interests of the state or are instead working for special interests.

Legislators have repeatedly refused to update and strengthen the laws regarding public disclosure of government activities and the benefits legislators receive from lobbyists as well as just about anything else that threatens to give regular people more access to government. That's why voters were forced to make the changes themselves.

But direct democracy isn't the best way to get anything done. It often leads to poorly written legislation that can create more problems than it solves. Such is the case with IM-22.

All the good stuff in IM-22 such as an ethics commission and forcing legislators to report who gives them free stuff, has been overshadowed by the law's failings. Public financing of elections is a bad idea, for example, so is restricting a person's first amendment right to speak through their wallets.

The problems with the law are what led to the lawsuit that caused Circuit Judge Mark Barnett to issue an injunction against the law late last week. It now seems unlikely that IM-22 will survive the courts intact.

Hopefully, the good portions of the bill will survive. If not, the Legislature needs to learn from this episode and start making real progress toward giving South Dakotans a more transparent and accountable government. The people have spoken.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 27 of 54

We say no matter the outcome of the IM-22 lawsuit, legislators need to improve government transparency during the next legislative session.

Rapid City Journal, Dec. 19

Nation's gain would be college's loss

Heather Wilson brought some impressive credentials with her when in 2013 she took the job as the president of South Dakota School of Mines & Technology in Rapid City.

A U.S. congresswoman for 10 years, a member of President George H. Bush's National Security Council staff, senior adviser to Sandia and Los Alamos national laboratories, Rhodes Scholar and an Air Force Academy graduate who served in Europe make up just part of an impressive resume.

Now, the 56-year-old New Hampshire native and former New Mexico congresswoman has been summoned to the new mountain top of American politics — Trump Tower — to interview for a job that would be difficult for anyone to turn down if offered.

President-elect Donald Trump's transition team contacted Wilson last week and invited her to New York City to be interviewed for the position of Director of National Intelligence, a key position in the administration.

The position was created in the wake of the 9/11 terror attacks. The person who holds that job is considered the president's top intelligence adviser, a challenging position moving forward as America and the world wrestles with the seemingly intractable forces of terrorism.

In an email sent last week to her staff and others at the School of Mines, Wilson said she did not pursue a job with the Trump Administration and is happy as the college's president. She went on to say, however, that "the security of our country is important to all of us, and when a President or President-elect asks you to consider whether your gifts could be used in the service of this nation, you have to be willing to consider it."

If Wilson is offered and accepts the job as the Director of National Intelligence, it will be a significant loss for the school and community. In her short time here, she has overseen a building boom of sorts on the campus. Earlier this year, the Journal reported the school was working on as many as 60 different construction projects, including a \$6.4 million expansion of the chemistry building and the new \$8 million Placer Hall, a six-story building that houses 200 students.

More recently, Wilson unveiled a plan to build a \$20 million research center in east downtown Rapid City. She also is a tireless promoter of the school and belongs to a number of important organizations in the community.

Wilson has been an asset to the School of Mines and the community at large, but nonetheless we wish her the best moving ahead regardless of her decision. She has the credentials, character and experience to be an asset to the incoming Trump administration.

Dozens of neglected animals seized

CREIGHTON, S.D. (AP) — Dozens of dogs, cats and rabbits have been taken from a home in Pennington County because of neglect.

Sheriff's officials say deputies, acting on a tip, served a search warrant at a house in Creighton, north of Wall, on Monday and found the animals. Most are in poor condition. They include 45 dogs, 14 cats, 15 rabbits and one bird.

The Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2if2wQH>) reports criminal charges are pending against the home owner.

The animals were taken to the Rapid City Humane Society. Because of the influx of animals, the shelter is asking for pet food, bedding, blankets, towels and money for medical care.

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

## Europe scrambles to find Tunisian suspect in Berlin attack

By GEIR MOULSON, Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Authorities across Europe scrambled Thursday to track down a Tunisian man suspected of driving a truck into a Christmas market in Berlin, as one of his brothers urged him to surrender.

Nearly three days after the deadly attack that killed 12 people and injured 48 others, the market in the center of the German capital reopened, with concrete blocks in place at the roadside to provide extra security.

Organizers at the market decided to ditch party music or bright lighting, and Berliners and visitors have laid candles and flowers at the site in tribute.

German authorities issued a wanted notice for Anis Amri on Wednesday and offered a reward of up to 100,000 euros (\$104,000) for information leading to the 24-year-old's arrest, warning that he could be "violent and armed."

The Sueddeutsche Zeitung newspaper and broadcasters NDR and WDR reported Thursday that Amri's fingerprints were found on the driver's door of the Polish-registered truck that caused the mayhem Monday night. The daily Berliner Zeitung reported that his fingerprints were found on the truck's steering wheel.

The reports did not name sources and German prosecutors refused to comment on them.

One of Amri's brothers still in Tunisia, meanwhile, urged him to stop being a fugitive.

"I ask him to turn himself in to the police. If it is proved that he is involved, we dissociate ourselves from it," brother Abdelkader Amri told The Associated Press.

He said Amri may have been radicalized in prison in Italy, where he went after leaving Tunisia in the wake of the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings.

Several locations across Germany were searched overnight, including a house in the Dortmund and a refugee home in Emmerich on the Dutch border, German media reported.

The manhunt also prompted police in Denmark to search a Sweden-bound ferry in the port of Grenaa after receiving tips that someone resembling Amri had been spotted, but police said they found nothing indicating his presence.

An Israeli woman, Dalia Elyakim, and 31-year-old Fabrizia Di Lorenzo of Italy were among the 12 killed in the Berlin market attack, their countries said. Di Lorenzo had lived and worked in Berlin for several years.

German officials had deemed Amri, who arrived in the country last year, a potential threat long before the attack Monday — and even kept him under covert surveillance for six months this year before halting the operation.

They had been trying to deport him after his asylum application was rejected in July but were unable to do so because he lacked valid identity papers and Tunisia initially denied that he was a citizen.

A document belonging to Amri, who according to authorities has used at least six different names and three different nationalities, was found in the cab of the market attack truck.

Family members of Amri, speaking from his hometown of Oueslatia in central Tunisia, were shaken to learn that he was a suspect. Amri left Tunisia years ago for Europe but had been in regular contact with his brothers via Facebook and phones.

## US-based cleric rejects links to Russian envoy's killing

By NATALIYA VASILYEVA, Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — A U.S.-based Muslim cleric on Thursday condemned the killing of Russia's envoy to Turkey and rejected accusations that his movement was behind the attack.

Ambassador Andrei Karlov was shot dead by an off-duty policeman in front of stunned onlookers at a photo exhibition in Ankara earlier this week. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has implicated Fethullah Gulen in the killing, saying the policeman had links to his movement.

In a video address made available to The Associated Press, Gulen accused the Turkish government of blaming and defaming his movement and suggested the government would facilitate other assassinations and blame them on his followers.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 29 of 54

Gulen said "it is not possible for them to convince the world of such accusations."

Russia flew a team of 18 investigators and foreign ministry officials to Turkey to participate in the investigation.

Foreign ministry officials and members of parliaments have gathered at the Russian foreign ministry's headquarters for a farewell ceremony. Diplomats and officials laid flowers at the open casket with an honorary guard standing by.

"Those who raised a hand against Ambassador Karlov, who took his life will definitely fail in their attempts to stop Russia from cooperating with other countries including Turkey," Konstantin Kosachev, chairman of the foreign affairs committee at the upper chamber of the Russian parliament.

President Vladimir Putin arrived at the end of the ceremony, laid flowers at the casket, offered condolences to the ambassador's widow and left.

Karlov's casket was then carried out of the foreign ministry's building and taken for a funeral service at Moscow's main Christ the Savior Cathedral.

Patriarch Kirill, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, said at the beginning of the service that the ambassador died a "martyr's death." Kirill and other clerics, all dressed in ceremonial white robes, took part in the service that is expected to last for at least an hour.

Karlov will be laid to rest in Moscow later Thursday.

## Last group to be evacuated from Syria's Aleppo within hours

By **BASSEM MROUE**, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — The evacuation of the last remaining civilians and fighters from a rebel-held enclave in eastern Aleppo will be completed in the coming hours, the Red Cross and state TV said Thursday, as more gunmen and civilians braved freezing temperatures to leave.

The evacuations were set in motion last week after Syria's opposition agreed to surrender its last footholds in eastern Aleppo. Since then, about 30,000 fighters and civilians have been bused out, according to the United Nations. On Wednesday, buses began evacuating the last group, an estimated 3,000 people.

The departures pave the way for President Bashar Assad to assume full control after more than four years of fighting over Syria's largest city. It marks his most significant victory since an uprising against his family's four-decade rule swept the country in 2011.

Ingy Sedky, a spokeswoman for the International Committee of the Red Cross, said the few thousand remaining people will be evacuated in 40 buses and hundreds of private cars. She said another four buses will leave the besieged government-held villages of Foua and Kfarya in the northwestern Idlib province.

Sedky said the operation will take place over multiple stages and will likely be completed later on Thursday. Syrian state TV said "Aleppo will be free of terrorists within the next few hours."

Exclusive Associated Press footage from Aleppo showed armed rebels in pickup trucks leaving the eastern part of the city on Thursday through the Ramouseh crossing.

Rami Abdurrahman, who heads the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, said some 1,500 evacuees have decided to stay in government-controlled areas. He said a snow storm delayed the evacuation of civilians to rebel-held areas on the western outskirts of the city.

Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV reported that two of the four buses that left Foua and Kfarya have arrived in government-held areas in Aleppo and two others are being held until the last group leaves Aleppo.

## 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. EUROPE SCRAMBLES TO FIND TUNISIAN SUSPECT IN BERLIN ATTACK

German officials had deemed suspect Anis Amri, who arrived in the country last year, a potential threat long before the attack.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 30 of 54

## 2. TRUMP DENOUNCES BERLIN MARKET ATTACK

The president-elect also appears to suggest a willingness to move ahead with his campaign pledge to temporarily ban Muslim immigrants from coming to the United States.

## 3. LAST GROUP TO BE EVACUATED FROM SYRIA'S ALEPPO WITHIN HOURS

The International Committee of the Red Cross says the few thousand remaining people will leave in 40 buses and hundreds of private cars.

## 4. REPEAL OF NORTH CAROLINA LGBT LAW FAILS

A deal has fallen apart to undo the North Carolina law known as the "bathroom bill" in a sign of the state's bitter political divide.

## 5. AFTER YEARS FLEEING ISLAMIC EXTREMISTS, IRAQI FAMILY FACES TRAGEDY

They get caught in the crossfire in Mosul, where many civilians have been killed or wounded by shelling or in gunbattles between Iraqi forces and Islamic State militants.

## 6. WHAT GETS SCRUTINY AFTER DEADLY OAKLAND FIRE

The shutting down of a makeshift nightclub highlights friction between underground music venues and authorities who see the DIY events as disasters-in-waiting.

## 7. ERIC TRUMP TO STOP RAISING MONEY FOR CHARITY

The president-elect's son says he worries the donations will be perceived as a way to buy access to his father.

## 8. WHO MEETS AMID REGIONAL CONCERNS

In an annual show of seasonal goodwill, Finland's Santa teams up with Russia's Grandfather Frost at the two countries' busiest joint border crossing.

## 9. WHERE LEGO MASTER BUILDERS SHOW WORK

Gingerbread houses built of Legos are created for this year's White House holiday display by a team of master builders.

## 10. WHICH OILY TREAT OUTLASTS HEALTH CAMPAIGN IN ISRAEL

Israelis find a minister's advice on dumping their beloved Hanukkah doughnuts tough to follow.

## Deep divide stops effort to repeal North Carolina LGBT law

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

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — A supposedly bipartisan deal to repeal North Carolina's anti-LGBT law collapsed when both sides balked and started blaming each other, likely meaning the state will remain a pariah shunned by corporations, entertainers and high-profile sporting events.

After more than nine hours of backroom discussions and sporadic public effort, Republican state legislators quit trying to repeal the law called House Bill 2 and went home Wednesday night.

The law omits gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people from state anti-discrimination protections, bars local governments from passing broad non-discrimination ordinances covering them, and orders transgender people to use bathrooms and showers that align with their sex at birth.

"I'm disappointed that we have yet to remove the stain from the reputation of our great state that is around this country and around the world," Democratic Gov.-elect Roy Cooper said.

He said he and his staff worked for more than a week on forging an agreement to repeal the law, talking with lawmakers from both parties, businesses, sports industry representatives and LGBT leaders.

GOP legislators who see themselves as business-friendly appeared shaken by a months-long backlash as major companies like BASF, IBM and Bank of America described HB2 as bad for business.

The compromise touted by both Cooper and outgoing GOP Gov. Pat McCrory called for Charlotte to do away with its ordinance. In exchange, lawmakers would undo the LGBT law.

But many conservatives never wanted to repeal the law and GOP lawmakers cried foul when Charlotte leaders initially left part of the city's ordinance in place. When the Senate bill called for a months-long ban on cities passing similar ordinances, Democrats said Republicans were going back on their promise.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 31 of 54

Senate leader Phil Berger, a Republican, blamed Cooper and the Democratic-controlled Charlotte City Council for sinking the repeal effort.

Berger said Charlotte officials misled lawmakers into thinking they had fully repealed their ordinance Monday. The council met again Wednesday morning to scrap the rest of local law.

"I'm sorry folks, I don't trust them, and our folks don't trust them. There's no reason to trust them," Berger said after his chamber adjourned.

Social conservatives defended the law's transgender bathroom requirement — which has no enforcement or punishment provisions — as necessary to prevent heterosexual predators from masquerading as transgender to molest women and girls when they are vulnerable.

"We continue to encourage our leaders to never sacrifice the privacy, safety, or freedom of young girls by forcing them to use the bathroom, shower, or change clothes with grown men just to satisfy the demands of greedy businesses, immoral sports organizations, or angry mobs," North Carolina Values Coalition Executive Director Tami Fitzgerald said in a statement.

The U.S. Justice Department and others contend the threat of sexual predators posing as transgender persons to enter a bathroom is practically nonexistent.

The issue of transgender bathroom use "wasn't a problem North Carolina was facing," said Mara Keisling, executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality. Legislators "should admit they messed up and repeal the bill. They seem to be still trying to figure out how to blame Charlotte, or blame Bruce Springsteen," who canceled a Greensboro show after the law passed.

HB2 has been blasted by gay-rights groups and resulted in conventions, jobs and sporting events such as the NBA All-Star Game shunning North Carolina. Corporate critics of the law included Deutsche Bank and Paypal, which both backed out of projects that would have brought hundreds of jobs to the state.

"The NCAA's decision to withhold championships from North Carolina remains unchanged," spokesman Bob Williams said.

McCrory signed the law and became its national face. HB2, along with other right-leaning bills he signed, turned this fall's gubernatorial campaign into a referendum on the state's recent conservative slant. He lost by about 10,000 votes to Cooper. Meanwhile, fellow Republicans U.S. Sen. Richard Burr and President-elect Donald Trump comfortably won the state.

McCrory, the first sitting North Carolina governor elected to a four-year term to lose re-election, echoed Republican accusations that "the left sabotaged bipartisan good faith agreements for political purposes."

Repealing the state law could also have ended protracted legal challenges by the federal Justice Department and transgender residents. Much of that litigation has been delayed while the U.S. Supreme Court hears a separate Virginia case on transgender restroom access.

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

## Trump denounces attack, vows tough immigration plan

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and JULIE PACE, Associated Press

PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Denouncing the deadly attack on a Christmas market in Germany, President-elect Donald Trump renewed his vow to stop radical terror groups and appeared to suggest a willingness to move ahead with his campaign pledge to ban temporarily Muslim immigrants from coming to the United States.

Trump proposed the Muslim ban during the Republican primary campaign, drawing sharp criticism from both parties. During the general election, he shifted his rhetoric to focus on temporarily halting immigration from an unspecified list of countries with ties to terrorism, though he did not disavow the Muslim ban, which is still prominently displayed on his campaign website.

The president-elect, when asked Wednesday if the attack in Berlin would cause him to evaluate the

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 32 of 54

proposed ban or a possible registry of Muslims in the United States, said "You know my plans. All along, I've been proven to be right, 100 percent correct."

"What's happening is disgraceful," said Trump, who deemed the violence "an attack on humanity, and it's got to be stopped."

A transition spokesman said later Wednesday that Trump's plans "might upset those with their heads stuck in the politically correct sand."

"President-elect Trump has been clear that we will suspend admission of those from countries with high terrorism rates and apply a strict vetting procedure for those seeking entry in order to protect American lives," spokesman Jason Miller said. But transition officials did not comment on whether Trump could also push for the overarching ban on Muslims.

The Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for Monday's attack in Berlin that left 12 people dead and 48 injured. On Wednesday, German officials launched a Europe-wide manhunt for a "violent and armed" Tunisian man suspected in the killings.

Trump, who addressed reporters for less than two minutes outside his palatial South Florida estate, said he has not spoken to President Barack Obama since the attack. Aides said that he received the classified presidential daily intelligence briefing on Wednesday and met with incoming White House national security adviser Michael Flynn.

Trump was spending the final days of 2016 huddled with advisers at Mar-a-Lago, his grand resort in Palm Beach. He also met Wednesday with the heads of Boeing and Lockheed Martin, companies with high-dollar government contracts that Trump has criticized. Boeing has a contract to build two new Air Force One planes and Lockheed Martin builds the F-35 fighter jet.

Trump said of his meeting with Lockheed Martin CEO Marillyn Hewson, "It's a little bit of a dance. We're trying to get costs down."

Dennis Muilenburg, CEO of Boeing, said his company was committed to working with Trump to lower costs on the Air Force One project.

The president-elect was also finalizing his senior White House team, wrapping up a decision-making process that has been dogged by infighting among rival factions within Trump's organization. Some of Trump's original campaign aides have expressed concern to the president-elect himself that they are getting boxed out in favor of those more closely aligned with incoming chief of staff Reince Priebus, former chairman of the Republican National Committee.

Among the early advisers who will not be joining Trump at the White House is Corey Lewandowski, his combative first campaign manager. But the operative won't be far away — Lewandowski announced plans to start a political consulting firm with offices just a block away from the White House.

Lewandowski oversaw Trump's campaign through the Republican primaries, but he clashed with the candidate's family and was fired. Still, he remained close to Trump, talking with him frequently and showing up occasionally at the president-elect's offices during the transition.

Lewandowski said he was offered "multiple opportunities" to join the administration, though people with knowledge of the process said those opportunities did not include senior positions in the West Wing.

The president-elect announced plans to hire economist Peter Navarro to run a new National Trade Council that will be housed in the White House. Navarro, author of "Death by China," has endorsed a hard line approach toward relations with Beijing.

In a statement, the Trump transition team said the creation of the council "demonstrates the president-elect's determination to make American manufacturing great again."

Trump also named billionaire investor Carl Icahn as an adviser on regulatory reform, though the transition team said Icahn would not be serving as a federal government employee.

Transition officials said additional announcements on White House jobs were expected this week.

Meanwhile, Democrats were looking ahead to confirmation hearings for Trump's Cabinet picks, including Steve Mnuchin, his nominee to lead the Treasury Department. Ohio Sen. Sherrod Brown sent Mnuchin a letter Wednesday asking him to explain his involvement with OneWest, a bank that critics have called a "foreclosure machine."



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## Underground music gets scrutiny after deadly Oakland fire

By **MICHAEL R. BLOOD, Associated Press**

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The party is over at Purple 33.

About a week after 36 people died in a fire at an underground music party in Oakland, inspectors acting on a complaint discovered a makeshift nightclub and unpermitted living quarters concealed in a warehouse near Los Angeles International Airport.

Authorities searching the drab, two-story building found an illegally constructed dance floor, paired with a bar and DJ booth. Haphazard wiring snaked through walls, and an outdoor staircase capped by a bamboo canopy was flagged as a fire threat.

The unlicensed club was shut down, and operator Donald Cassel, who also lives there, was ordered to clear out.

The closing of the space dubbed Purple 33 highlights growing friction between underground music venues that can be the only option for experimental or emerging performers and their fans, and authorities who see disasters-in-waiting.

Finding them is another matter, when clandestine events can be announced with a fleeting Facebook post or text message and, in many cases, vanish after the music stops.

"You have a situation where folks are coming together and they are not applying for special permits. They're just posting fliers 24 hours in advance, and they're bringing hundreds of people in for different functions," Oakland Fire Chief Teresa Deloach Reed said at a news conference days after the Dec. 2 fire during an electronic music party at an illegally converted warehouse nicknamed "Ghost Ship."

"We do not have the resources to track those types of functions," she conceded.

After the blaze, officials in LA, Baltimore and other cities announced plans to aggressively pursue illegally converted warehouses and other jerry-rigged living spaces. The threat of a crackdown is unnerving musicians and artists who live in them, and routinely accept risks that can come with performing on unlicensed stages.

The Los Angeles case has similarities to Oakland, where a leased warehouse was converted into living space and an entertainment stage without proper permits or inspections.

"Lesser-known artists are happy to play nearly anywhere that will host them, because there are very few options," said Amanda Brown, co-owner of the Los Angeles record label 100% Silk, which lost two of its artists in the Oakland fire.

"These events are way more about community and shared experience than they are making money," she said in an email. "Most artists are very flexible and willing to deal with strange venues as long as there is a sound system and some enthusiasm for the music."

It's difficult to generalize about underground music and the places it's played, which sometimes hide in plain sight. Purple 33 has a web page.

It's like a jukebox, encompassing everything from punk to metal to electronic, a branch that itself is divided into dozens of splinters. Similarly, the events can range widely: a couple of dozen people in a garment factory, an after-hours gathering in a coffee shop, 150 electronic music fans in a clearing in a forest.

The scene is alternately inclusive, welcoming artists and fans of all demographics, and exclusive, since by definition it's hard to find if you don't know where to look. The list of Oakland victims speaks to the diversity it attracts: a teacher, a computer engineer, a filmmaker, musicians and artists, a lawyer.

Regulations vary, but generally a gathering of 100 people with live music on a stage would require one or more permits. Depending on its size, a fire marshal could make a spot check to ensure fire extinguishers are available and lighting is adequate, or officials might oversee the event.

In general, building inspectors in Los Angeles would reject applications for musical events in warehouses, since they are designed to hold goods, not parties.

A gritty location can be part of the allure, and Cassel and others see it as an escape from mainstream clubs that they see as unwelcoming, even hostile, to free spirits and nonconformists.

But a big part of it is economics. A maze of rules and the high costs that come with meeting them leave few alternatives for running events on a skimpy budget, they say.

"When you are charging five, six bucks and 50 people show up, it doesn't work to have a permit," said George Chen, who organized underground shows in the San Francisco Bay Area for over a decade.

Cassel acknowledges he ran Purple 33 without proper authorization, but says it's not because he didn't try. The businessman-contractor-inventor who once sold skateboard parts claims he spent \$70,000 on licensing and other fees to try to get the city to green-light his club, whose patrons he calls "a family."

But neighbors who feared wild parties blocked the project. He went underground.

"I wanted to do everything legal. It takes a lot of money," Cassel, 56, said in an interview.

"But the greatest issue isn't the money. They don't seem to want to guide you along. At the end of the day, they say no."

Despite Fire Department concerns, Cassel says the site was safe, with multiple exits, fire extinguishers and an emergency plan that could get everyone out in two minutes.

Fans note that legal venues have risks, too, pointing to a Rhode Island nightclub fire in 2003 that killed 100.

Given the numerous underground shows around LA, there appear to be relatively few reported problems.

The Los Angeles Fire Department dispatched 102 inspectors to check reports of overcrowding or illegal gatherings in 2016, but they do not document how many were in unpermitted locations.

The LAFD said it had no records of injury or damage at underground events.

Cassel hopes to reclaim his warehouse space one day, and he's partnering with underground organizers to change laws to make cities friendlier to what they do.

A crackdown will backfire, he predicted, and dangers could get worse.

"It's just going to go deeper underground."

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Associated Press writer Paul Elias in San Francisco contributed to this report.

## Mexicans mourn dead, seek relatives, after fireworks blast

By MARIA VERZA and CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN, Associated Press

TULTEPEC, Mexico (AP) — Some brought photos of their missing loved ones to the Mexican fireworks market where a series of explosions killed at least 33 people, while others who had already claimed their dead began to mourn their loss.

Friends and relatives of Ernesto Ornelas, 67, gathered in the narrow street in front of his house in the Mexico City suburb of Naucalpan late Wednesday to pray, sing and mourn his loss in the deadly blasts, whose cause has still not been determined.

Authorities in Mexico State said the death toll could rise further because 12 people were listed as missing and some body parts were found at the scene of Tuesday's tragedy in the San Pablito fireworks market in the city of Tultepec.

Ornelas had been shopping for fireworks with his son Cesar Ornelas and his 15-year-old grandson Francisco when the explosions occurred. They became separated in their dash to escape. Cesar and Francisco suffered minor injuries and only later saw Ernesto, bleeding from his head and with his clothing burned, loaded into an ambulance.

After learning which hospital he'd been taken to they were told he had died of a head injury, Cesar Ornelas said Wednesday. "We don't know if it was from a fall or if a flying rock hit him."

Investigators were focusing their attention on ignored safety measures that led to vendors displaying fireworks outside their concrete stalls in the passageways that divided the sellers. The passageways were supposed to prevent exactly the sort of devastating chain reaction that occurred.

Juana Antolina Hernandez, who has run a stand for 22 years in San Pablito next to one operated by her

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 35 of 54

parents, escaped the market in a mad dash when the explosions began. On Wednesday, she was one of the disconsolate residents waiting outside a local morgue.

"I can't find my father, and my mother is very badly burned," said Hernandez, 49. "I am waiting here for them to tell me if my father is here, but up to this point, nothing."

Of the 33 dead, the state listed 10 as unidentified. In some cases, the bodies were so badly burned that DNA identification will be necessary.

San Pablito was especially well stocked for the holidays and bustling with hundreds of shoppers when the blast reduced the market to a stark expanse of ash, rubble and the scorched metal. Dramatic video of the explosion showed a towering plume of smoke that was lit up by a staccato of bangs and flashes of light, the third such incident to ravage the market on the northern outskirts of Mexico's capital since 2005.

Refugio Leon, whose family ran seven stalls in the market, said vendors commonly stacked displays of bottle rockets and firecrackers outside their establishments in the passageways — even though the rules supposedly forbade putting merchandise in what were supposed to be safety buffers.

"Everybody did it," Leon said, speculating that it may have played a role in the rapid spread of the explosions.

Video and photos of the stalls from previous years showed concrete-block enclosures with open dirt passageways between them; later photos showed the passageways filling up with fireworks and awnings.

On Dec. 12, the city of Tultepec issued a statement calling San Pablito "the safest market in Latin America." It said 100 tons of fireworks were expected to be sold during the high season, which runs from August to New Year's.

The city quoted Juan Ignacio Rodarte Cordero, the director of the state's Fireworks Institute, as saying "the stalls are perfectly designed and with sufficient space between them to avoid any chain of fires." City officials said the stalls were equipped with trained personnel, sand, shovels and fire extinguishers.

But during a recent visit to the market, little of that safety equipment could be seen. And when Tuesday's explosion began, vendors and customers didn't have time to look for it — or even, in many cases, to run.

Deadly fireworks explosions have also occurred elsewhere in Mexico: In 2002, a blast at a market in the Gulf coast city of Veracruz killed 29; in 1999, 63 people died when an explosion of illegally stored fireworks destroyed part of the city of Celaya; and in 1988, a fireworks blast in Mexico City's La Merced market killed at least 68; and in 2013 a rocket struck a truck loaded with fireworks for a religious procession in Tlaxcala state, killing 17 people.

Sherman reported from Naucalpan.

## Mexicans seek loved ones, answers in deadly fireworks blast

By MARIA VERZA, Associated Press

TULTEPEC, Mexico (AP) — Relatives of workers at a fireworks market flattened by a deadly chain-reaction explosion searched hospitals for loved ones Wednesday as attention focused on apparent lax security that allowed vendors to display their dangerous wares in the passageways between stalls.

Late Wednesday, the state of Mexico, where the San Pablito Market is located, updated its list of dead to 33, a figure also announced by state Interior Secretary Jose Manzur in a local radio interview. About 46 people remained hospitalized. Ten of the injured were minors, including one girl with burns over 90 percent of her body.

Juana Antolina Hernandez, who has run a stand for 22 years in San Pablito next to one operated by her parents, escaped the market in a mad dash when the explosions began Tuesday afternoon. The following day she was one of the disconsolate residents waiting outside a local morgue.

"I can't find my father, and my mother is very badly burned," said Hernandez, 49. "I am waiting here for them to tell me if my father is here, but up to this point, nothing."

San Pablito was especially well stocked for the holidays and bustling with hundreds of shoppers when the blast reduced the market to a stark expanse of ash, rubble and the scorched metal, casting a pall over the Christmas season. Dramatic video of the explosion showed a towering plume of smoke that was lit up

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 36 of 54

by a staccato of bangs and flashes of light, the third such incident to ravage the market on the northern outskirts of Mexico's capital since 2005.

Refugio Leon, who spent years working at the market and whose family ran seven stalls there, said vendors commonly stacked displays of bottle rockets and firecrackers outside their establishments in the passageways — even though the rules supposedly forbade putting merchandise in what was supposed to be a safety buffer to prevent chain-reaction explosions.

"Everybody did it," Leon said, speculating that it may have played a role in the rapid spread of the explosions.

Video and photos of the stalls from previous years showed concrete-block enclosures with open dirt passageways between them; later photos showed the passageways filling up with fireworks and awnings.

Officials in Mexico State, which borders Mexico City, said it was too early to identify a cause of the massive series of blasts.

On Dec. 12 the city of Tultepec, where the market is located, issued a statement calling San Pablito "the safest market in Latin America." It said 100 tons of fireworks were expected to be sold during the high season, which runs from August to New Year's.

The city quoted Juan Ignacio Rodarte Cordero, the director of the state's Fireworks Institute, as saying "the stalls are perfectly designed and with sufficient space between them to avoid any chain of fires." City officials said the stalls were equipped with trained personnel, sand, shovels and fire extinguishers.

But during a recent visit to the market, little of that safety equipment could be seen. And when Tuesday's explosion began, vendors and customers didn't have time to look for it — or even, in many cases, to run.

In a fireworks market in Jaltenco, about 30 minutes away from the San Pablito market, business was slow on Wednesday.

Rosa Maria Gonzalez, 47, indicated that her stand was 12 meters from the next nearest ones and said she believed that San Pablito's passageways were narrower and more cluttered.

Gonzalez said she had a permit and met all of the other required safety measures with a bucket of sand and bucket of water at the ready. But she conceded it likely would not make a difference.

"When there is really an accident there isn't time for anything," Gonzalez said. "I'm not going to look for the sand, if it begins to go off the only thing you can do is run and wait until it all goes out."

The president of the leftist Democratic Revolution Party, Alejandra Barrales, noted that fireworks accidents take place regularly including four this year alone.

"This demonstrates the lack of care and attention not just here but in the whole state," Barrales said in a statement.

Mexico State chief prosecutor Alejandro Gomez said some of the dead were so badly burned that neither their age nor their gender could be immediately determined, and that DNA tests would be needed. He said the toll could rise because 12 people were listed as missing and some body parts were found at the scene.

A list of the nine bodies identified so far included a 3-month-old boy and a 12-year-old girl. Gomez said a total of seven male minors were among the dead.

Tultepec Mayor Armando Portuguez Fuentes said late Tuesday that the manufacture and sale of fireworks is a key part of the local economy. He added that it is regulated by law and under the "constant supervision" of the Defense Department, which oversees firearms and explosives.

"This is part of the activity of our town. It is what gives us identity," Portuguez said. "We know it is high-risk, we regret this greatly, but unfortunately many people's livelihoods depend on this activity."

Manzur, the interior secretary, said 30,000 people make a living from fireworks in Tultepec and the trade had been going on there for two centuries.

"Everything is gone," said Hernandez, the woman at the morgue, for whom the market represents a family business passed down from one generation to the next. "I know we lost everything, but I am going to start over."

Two similar fires engulfed the San Pablito Market in 2005 and 2006, touching off chain-reaction explosions that leveled hundreds of stalls in each incident.

Deadly fireworks explosions have also occurred elsewhere in Mexico: In 2002, a blast at a market in the

Gulf coast city of Veracruz killed 29; in 1999, 63 people died when an explosion of illegally stored fireworks destroyed part of the city of Celaya; and in 1988, a fireworks blast in Mexico City's La Merced market killed at least 68; and in 2013 a rocket struck a truck loaded with fireworks for a religious procession in Tlaxcala state, killing 17 people.

In an editorial Wednesday, El Universal lamented what it called a "traditional tragedy."

"Our country's fascination with fireworks has caused, among other things, a long series of accidents with terrible results," the newspaper said.

## Before Trump's presidency, US privacy board in disarray

By TAMI ABDOLLAH, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal board responsible for protecting Americans against abuses by spy agencies is in disarray just weeks before President-elect Donald Trump takes office.

The five-member Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board will have only two remaining members as of Jan. 7 — and zero Democrats even though it is required to operate as an independent, bipartisan agency. The vacancies mean it will lack the minimum three members required to conduct business and can work only on ongoing projects. Trump would have to nominate new members, who would have to be confirmed by the Senate.

The board was revitalized after former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden's disclosures on the scope of U.S. spying in 2013. It notably concluded that the NSA's phone surveillance program was illegal.

Since then, it has been crucial in ensuring members of Congress and the public have a window into the highly secretive and classified world of intelligence agencies. But it's unclear if Trump will support robust intelligence oversight. During his campaign, Trump appeared to support strengthened intelligence overall and surveillance of mosques, but he's more recently expressed distrust of intelligence agencies. The Trump transition team didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Jim Dempsey, a Democrat, will leave the board Jan. 3 because for months the Senate has not confirmed his re-nomination by President Barack Obama. And former U.S. Judge Patricia Wald, the only other Democrat, informed the White House this month that she intends to retire effective Jan. 7. The board also will lose its executive director, Sharon Bradford Franklin, who plans to step down before Trump's presidency, according to an individual with knowledge of the board's operations who wasn't authorized to speak.

Already in limbo is a public oversight report on the use of a Reagan-era executive order that since 1981 has authorized sweeping powers by intelligence agencies like the NSA to spy even on innocent Americans abroad and never has been subject to meaningful oversight from Congress or courts. The senior Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, Dianne Feinstein of California, has said her committee has not been able to sufficiently oversee programs operated under the order.

The privacy panel's report on the order is stalled and there's no work being done on it, according to the individual, who has knowledge about the project's status. Some individual agency reports related to the order were expected to be completed before the board loses its quorum, the person said.

Another review, of a 2014 presidential directive that details U.S. signals-intelligence activities for foreign intelligence and counterintelligence purposes, is on track to be released before Jan. 20, the individual said. That review was requested by Obama.

One of the board's two remaining Republicans, Rachel Brand, whose term officially expires in January, could continue through March. If Trump were to move forward with any board nomination, she may continue through the end of the year. Should Brand leave, Republican Elisebeth Collins would become the last board member; her term ends in January 2020.

The oversight board was created by statute in 2007. Its members are part-time and required to be able to maintain a top-secret clearance.

While lacking enforcement ability to impose its recommendations on the intelligence community, the board does have the "power of persuasion and invoking public concern about issues," said former board chairman David Medine, a Democrat who resigned a year early, in July, to work for a development orga-

nization. That power is significantly diminished without the minimum three members necessary to report findings to the public.

The board's review of intelligence agencies' use of Section 215 of the Patriot Act, which the NSA used to conduct bulk collection of domestic telephone records, concluded their program was illegal and should be shut down. That finding split along party lines with the Democrats in the majority.

The review was also a driver for passage of the USA Freedom Act, which went into effect in November 2015. It prevents the government's bulk collection of Americans' phone records and requires a request to a phone company be first vetted by the U.S. Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court rather than an internal agency administrator.

Congress has at various points, including in the 2017 intelligence budget bill, put in provisions to limit the board's authorities or constrain its spending.

Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, said in an emailed statement that the panel's role as a government watchdog is "absolutely critical now."

He said Congress needs to ensure the board functions as intended by defending its authorities and making sure its new members are committed to independent oversight.

The board contributes "important information to the public discourse and debate," said Neema Singh Guliani, legislative counsel with the ACLU. But if it can't do its job, maybe "we're in the same lack of oversight that led to the abuses of the past."

Follow Tami Abdollah on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/latams>

## Researchers: Nearly 400 drug addicts helped in police effort

By PHILIP MARCELO, Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — A novel drug addiction program developed in a small Massachusetts fishing town and since replicated in dozens of cities nationwide was able to place almost 400 addicts into treatment nearly each time they sought it during the first year of operation, researchers say in a report being published Thursday in the New England Journal of Medicine.

The team from the Boston Medical Center and Boston University's School of Public Health say 376 addicts sought assistance 429 times from the Gloucester Police Department's Angel program from June 2015 to May 2016. They received the help they needed nearly 95 percent of the time, researchers say.

David Schiff, a Boston Medical Center doctor and lead author of the report, said that rate is far higher than the 50 to 60 percent for similar, hospital-based initiatives.

Part of the reason, she said, is that Gloucester's addicts were voluntarily coming to police seeking help. "They were motivated individuals that came to the station ready to engage in care," Schiff said.

The report also notes that Gloucester police established a relationship with a local treatment center to make placement easier. Its officers were working round-the-clock to secure the placements. And Massachusetts mandates health coverage for drug detoxification.

Law enforcement officials in communities that have adopted Gloucester-like heroin initiatives say the report helps validate their work.

"Police officers do not get to pick and choose who they help, and that puts us in a position to make a major impact on the heroin and opioid epidemic," said Frederick Ryan, police chief in the Boston suburb of Arlington.

The Angel program has been replicated in some form by more than 150 police departments in 28 states since it was launched in June 2015. It gained notoriety after the then-police chief promised heroin addicts they could turn in their drugs at the police station without fear of arrest, so long as they agreed to start treatment.

As part of the program, officers personally reach out to treatment centers on behalf of addicts, arrange their transportation to the facilities and, if needed, pair them with a volunteer "angel" for emotional support.

David Rosenbloom, a professor at Boston University's School of Public Health who helped write the

report, suggested the program's success underscores the difficulty of accessing drug treatment services.

Roughly half of the participants in the program had prior drug-related arrests, he noted.

"It says something when addicts are going to the police station for treatment," said Rosenbloom, a founding board member of the Police Assisted Addiction and Recovery Initiative, a Massachusetts-based nonprofit that supports the Angel program and partly financed the research. "It's a real condemnation of how the whole treatment system faces the public."

The next step for researchers is following up with first-year participants to see how they fared in treatment and beyond, he said. The researchers also hope to study similar programs nationally.

Follow Philip Marcelo at [twitter.com/philmarcelo](https://twitter.com/philmarcelo). His work can be found at <http://bigstory.ap.org/journalist/philip-marcelo>

## Aleppo evacuations in heavy snow end brutal war chapter

By PHILIP ISSA and KARIN LAUB, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Hundreds of rebel fighters and civilians, including small children swaddled in thick blankets, were bused out of war-ravaged Aleppo in heavy snow on Wednesday as the evacuation of former rebel strongholds entered its final phase.

Scenes of buses slowly driving out of Aleppo in a shroud of white offered an evocative finale to what has been one of the most brutal chapters in Syria's civil war.

The departures from Aleppo pave the way for President Bashar Assad to assume full control there, after more than four years of fighting over Syria's largest city. It marks the most significant victory for Assad since an uprising against his family's four-decade rule swept the country in 2011.

The evacuations were set in motion last week after Syria's opposition agreed to surrender its last footholds in eastern Aleppo. Since then, about 25,000 fighters and civilians have been bused out, according to the United Nations. On Wednesday, buses began evacuating the last rebels and civilians, an estimated 3,000 people.

By nightfall, 25 buses carrying hundreds of people had driven in a rare snow storm from eastern Aleppo to opposition-held areas in the countryside near the city, said opposition activist Ahmad Primo, who was monitoring arrivals at the main drop-off point in the Rashideen district.

The evacuees got off the buses wearing thick jackets and carrying sacks with belongings. One woman dressed in a black robe and face veil carried a small child swaddled in a heavy yellow blanket. A man held a toddler whose face was peeking out from under a blanket shielding him from falling snow.

The opposition's Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said Wednesday evening that with the evacuation of the last group of rebels from eastern Aleppo, Assad was in full control, save for a few positions on the western outskirts of the city that were still in rebel hands.

Meanwhile, the International Committee of the Red Cross said patients and all those requiring medical care had been evacuated from the last hospital in the city's east.

Pro-government forces repeatedly struck medical facilities in rebel-held neighborhoods in their push to expel the opposition from Aleppo this year. In November, the U.N. said it believed there were no more functioning medical facilities in the eastern part of the city.

Wednesday's bus movements came after evacuations had been suspended for 24 hours, one of several snags and delays since the first bus convoys left the city last week.

Frequent disagreements have erupted between the rebels and the government, as well as among rebel groups, over compliance with a wider deal that also includes evacuations from two rebel-besieged villages, Foua and Kfarya.

The ICRC said about 750 people have been bused out of the villages, leaving hundreds more to be evacuated.

Meanwhile, it was unclear if any U.N. observers were on the ground in eastern Aleppo on Wednesday — two days after a U.N. Security Council resolution approved their urgent deployment.

Deputy U.N. spokesman Farhan Haq said some U.N. staff were present at a Syrian government check-

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 40 of 54

point outside Aleppo's eastern sector, but he couldn't say for sure if any observers had been let into the onetime rebel-held area.

Elsewhere in northern Syria, fighting intensified in the Islamic State-controlled town of al-Bab, where Turkish troops and Turkey-backed Syrian opposition fighters have been trying to drive the extremists out.

Turkey's state television said 10 Turkish soldiers were killed Wednesday in three separate suicide attacks in al-Bab.

The report by TRT television came hours after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said IS was fighting "for dear life" in al-Bab, carrying out suicide bombings and attacks with improvised explosive devices.

A total of 35 Turkish soldiers have died in northern Syria since August, when Turkey sent ground troops to support the Syrian opposition forces in clearing a border area of IS militants and to curb Syrian Kurdish territorial expansion.

Meanwhile, a 7-year-old Syrian girl who was evacuated on Monday from eastern Aleppo and whose mother ran a Twitter account in her name met with Erdogan in the Turkish capital, Ankara. Bana Alabed's mother, Fatemah, began operating the account in September, tweeting on her daughter's behalf. The account has garnered some 354,000 followers, and has included tweets to Michelle Obama and Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, asking for help.

At the United Nations, the Security Council approved the delivery of humanitarian aid across borders and conflict lines in Syria for another year, in a resolution aimed at reaching thousands in need in rebel-held areas.

The resolution, adopted unanimously, noted the "the continued deterioration of the devastating humanitarian situation in Syria," where more than 13.5 million people require urgent assistance.

Also at the U.N., the General Assembly voted to establish an investigative body that will assist in documenting and prosecuting the most serious violations of international law in Syria, including possible war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The 193-member world body adopted the resolution over strenuous objections from Syria and Russia, who accused the assembly of interfering in the work of the Security Council.

A U.N. board of inquiry said it had received reports that an attack on an aid convoy on the outskirts of Aleppo in September, which killed 10 people and injured 22, was "highly likely" to have been carried out by the Syrian air force but it was unable to reach a definitive conclusion. A summary of the board's report was released by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

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Associated Press writer Suzan Fraser in Ankara, Turkey, contributed to this report.

## **Trump: Deadly violence in Germany is 'attack on humanity'**

**By JONATHAN LEMIRE and JULIE PACE, Associated Press**

PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump declared Wednesday that the deadly truck attack on a Christmas market in Germany was "an attack on humanity and it's got to be stopped." He also suggested he might go forward with his campaign pledge to temporarily ban Muslim immigrants from coming to the United States.

"You know my plans. All along, I've been proven to be right, 100 percent correct," Trump said when asked if the attack in Berlin had caused him to reevaluate the proposal. "What's happening is disgraceful."

Trump proposed the Muslim ban during the Republican primary campaign, prompting criticism from both parties. He shifted his rhetoric during the general election to focus on temporarily halting immigration from an unspecified list of countries with ties to terrorism, though he did not disavow the Muslim ban. A transition spokesman said later Wednesday that Trump's plans "might upset those with their heads stuck in the politically correct sand."

"President-elect Trump has been clear that we will suspend admission of those from countries with high terrorism rates and apply a strict vetting procedure for those seeking entry in order to protect American lives," said spokesman Jason Miller.



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 41 of 54

But transition officials did not comment as to whether Trump could also push for the overarching ban on Muslims. The proposal remains on his campaign website.

The Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for Monday's attack in Berlin that left 12 people dead and 48 injured. On Wednesday, German officials launched a Europe-wide manhunt for a "violent and armed" Tunisian man suspected in the killings.

Trump was spending the final days of 2016 huddling with advisers at his palatial private estate in South Florida. He also met Wednesday with the heads of Boeing and Lockheed Martin, companies with high-dollar government contracts that Trump has criticized. Boeing has a contract to build two new Air Force One planes and Lockheed Martin builds the F-35 fighter jet.

Trump, who briefly spoke to reporters outside Mar-a-Lago, said of his meeting with Lockheed Martin CEO Marilyn Hewson, "It's a little bit of a dance. We're trying to get costs down."

Dennis Muilenburg, CEO of Boeing, said his company was committed to working with Trump to lower costs on the Air Force One project.

The president-elect was also finalizing his senior White House team, wrapping up a decision-making process that has been dogged by infighting among rival factions within Trump's organization. Some of Trump's original campaign aides have expressed concern to the president-elect himself that they are getting boxed out in favor of those more closely aligned with incoming chief of staff Reince Priebus, former chairman of the Republican National Committee.

Among the early advisers who will not be joining Trump at the White House is Corey Lewandowski, his combative first campaign manager. But the operative won't be far away — Lewandowski announced plans to start a political consulting firm with offices just a block away from the White House.

Lewandowski oversaw Trump's campaign through the Republican primaries, but he clashed with the candidate's family and was fired. Still, he remained close to Trump, talking with him frequently and showing up occasionally at the president-elect's offices during the transition.

Lewandowski said he was offered "multiple opportunities" to join the administration, though people with knowledge of the process said those opportunities did not include senior positions in the West Wing.

The president-elect announced plans to hire economist Peter Navarro to run a new National Trade Council that will be housed in the White House. Navarro, author of "Death By China," has endorsed a hard line approach toward relations with Beijing.

In a statement, the Trump transition team said the creation of the council "demonstrates the president-elect's determination to make American manufacturing great again."

Trump also named billionaire investor Carl Icahn as an adviser on regulatory reform, though the transition team said Icahn would not be serving as a federal government employee.

Transition officials said additional announcements on White House jobs were expected this week.

Trump opened his day by boasting anew about his Nov. 8 election victory, tweeting that his win in the Electoral College was more difficult to pull off than winning the popular vote would have been if he had tried. Democrat Hillary Clinton won at least 2.6 million more votes than Trump, an apparent sore point for the president-elect. "

"I would have done even better in the election, if that is possible, if the winner was based on popular vote - but would campaign differently," he tweeted.

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## 'Obamacare' holding its own: 6.4M signed up so far

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — "Obamacare" seems to be holding its own. The administration said Wednesday that 6.4 million people have enrolled for subsidized private coverage through HealthCare.gov, ahead of last year's pace.

Despite rising premiums, dwindling insurers and the Republican vow to repeal President Barack Obama's

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 42 of 54

health care law, about 400,000 more people signed up through Monday than for a comparable period in 2015, the Health and Human Services Department said.

"Today's enrollment numbers confirm that doomsday predictions about the marketplace are not bearing out," said HHS Secretary Sylvia Burwell.

Still, it's too early for supporters of the Affordable Care Act, or ACA, to say "I told you so."

It's unclear if the administration will meet its target of 13.8 million sign-ups. That's partly because the share of new customers is down when compared with current consumers re-upping for another year.

New customers are 32 percent of the total this year versus 40 percent around the same time last year. Administration officials said they're going to focus on getting more new customers between now and the end of open enrollment Jan. 31.

Other vital signs for HealthCare.gov were encouraging.

"There are zero signs that the ACA's marketplaces are in danger of imminent collapse," said Larry Levitt of the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation, who has followed the health care law from its inception.

That carries an implicit warning for President-elect Donald Trump and congressional Republicans, who have promised to move quickly to repeal the law. That repeal would be followed by a GOP-inspired replacement. Although immediate changes affecting 2017 are unlikely, the whole process could take several years, creating uncertainty for people with coverage.

As if on cue, Democratic governors Wednesday fired off a letter to GOP congressional leaders, calling the repeal plan "nothing more than a Washington, D.C., bait-and-switch" that would leave millions uninsured and shift to states an estimated \$69 billion in uncompensated care costs over a decade.

The statistics released Wednesday are for 39 states served by the federal online insurance marketplace. Numbers from states running their own markets have not been fully tallied and will be added later, raising the total. Toward the end of this month, several million current customers who are being re-enrolled automatically will be added to the count.

Some of the biggest sign-up numbers so far are coming from states Trump won in the presidential election, including Florida (1.3 million); Texas (776,000); North Carolina (369,000); Georgia (352,000) and Pennsylvania (291,000). Vice President-elect Mike Pence's home state of Indiana had 119,000 residents enrolled.

Premiums for a midlevel benchmark plan in HealthCare.gov states are going up an average of 25 percent next year, driven by lower-than-expected enrollment and higher medical costs. At the same time, about one-third of U.S. counties will have only one marketplace insurer next year because some major commercial carriers have left the market, and many nonprofit insurance co-ops created by the law have collapsed.

The impact of premium increases has been softened by the law's subsidies, which are designed to rise if the cost of insurance goes up.

A study last week from the nonpartisan Center for Health and Economy found that the average monthly subsidy will increase by \$76, or 26 percent, from \$291 currently to \$367 in 2017.

But that means taxpayers will fork over nearly \$10 billion more for subsidies.

And subsidies don't help all customers. Some make too much money to qualify. And an estimated 5 million to 9 million people buy individual policies outside HealthCare.gov and state markets that offer financial assistance.

Independent analyst Caroline Pearson of the consulting firm Avalere Health said the administration should be concerned about the apparent slowdown in new consumers.

"At this time, enrollment appears to be slightly behind the pace needed to reach the administration's goal of signing up 13.8 million people," she said. "However, if more people who are currently in the market renew their coverage, then that goal could still be achieved."

HealthCare.gov's advertising in the closing weeks of open enrollment will be aimed at attracting new customers, said HHS Secretary Burwell. In addition, the IRS will be sending people who paid fines for being uninsured a not-too-subtle nudge, reminding them that they can avoid higher penalties for 2017 by signing up now.

Republicans plan to repeal "Obamacare" early next year, but it could take up to several years to replace it. During the interlude, party leaders have promised an orderly transition to a new system. It's unclear what that would involve, but presumably some of the law's popular provisions — such as subsidies and protection for those with pre-existing medical conditions — would be kept in place.

The 2010 health overhaul added coverage for about 20 million people through a combination of subsidized private health insurance and a state option to expand Medicaid. Several Republican states adopted the Medicaid expansion, including Indiana under Pence.

Online: [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov)

## Don't cut the cord too fast; a pause benefits most newborns

By LAURAN NEERGAARD, AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Don't cut that umbilical cord too soon: A brief pause after birth could benefit most newborns by delivering them a surge of oxygen-rich blood.

New recommendations for U.S. obstetricians, the latest in a debate over how quick to snip, suggest waiting "at least 30 seconds to 60 seconds after birth," for all healthy newborns.

That's double what often happens now. It's common in the U.S. for doctors to cut the cord almost immediately, within 15 to 20 seconds of birth, unless the baby is premature.

Cutting the cord is a memorable moment in the delivery room, and Wednesday's advice from the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists won't interfere if dads want to help.

An extra half minute may not seem like much, but a lot of oxygen-rich blood reaches the baby through the umbilical cord shortly after birth, said Dr. Maria Mascola of ACOG's Committee on Obstetric Practice.

It may flow for up to five minutes, she said, but much of the placental blood transfers in that first minute — and there's increasing evidence that it has some health benefits.

Here are some things to know:

### DOES THE CORD REALLY MATTER ONCE THE BABY BREATHES?

It can give a boost to what Dr. Tonse Raju of the National Institutes of Health calls the amazing transition that happens as the baby takes his or her first breath.

In the womb, the placenta acts as the fetus' lungs. But within seconds of birth, the circulation changes and lungs once filled with fluid inflate as the baby inhales air. Cut access to lingering placental blood in the cord too soon, and the baby misses extra oxygen to supplement those early breaths.

Before the 1960s, it wasn't uncommon to wait five minutes or more to cut the cord. Then, for unclear reasons, doctors began clamping and cutting almost immediately.

"Unfortunately, the value of immediate clamping has never been shown," said Raju, a perinatology specialist at NIH's National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. He wasn't involved with the new recommendation.

### THE LATEST EVIDENCE

Studies began showing that babies born prematurely benefit from longer access to cord blood, with a lower risk of transfusions, anemia and bleeding in the brain. In response, ACOG recommended a pause for them.

Now ACOG cites research showing full-term babies benefit, too, with a lower risk of even mild iron deficiency that can delay cognitive development. One study showed waiting 3 minutes to cut the cord led to slightly better early brain development.

### TODAY'S ADVICE

The World Health Organization says to wait one minute; some other groups say it's OK to wait two minutes, or even five. ACOG settled on "at least" 30 seconds to one minute.

However long the pause, it shouldn't interfere with mom holding her baby. NIH's Raju recommends telling parents, "While the baby's nice and warm on your skin, we'll take our time and then clamp."

### ARE THERE RISKS?

Doctors won't delay cutting if the baby has problems breathing and needs emergency care.

An initial fear that delayed clamping spurs maternal bleeding has proved unfounded. But babies do need to be monitored for signs of jaundice, a risk for any newborn but one that may be slightly increased with delayed clamping.

## WHAT ABOUT CORD BLOOD BANKING?

Some parents bank their child's umbilical cord blood for possible future medical use. Delayed cord cutting means there's less left to store, and ACOG said families should be counseled accordingly.

## Germany had monitored Berlin truck attack suspect for months

By **FRANK JORDANS, Associated Press**

BERLIN (AP) — German officials had deemed the Tunisian man being sought in a manhunt across Europe a threat long before a truck plowed into a Christmas market in Berlin — and even kept him under covert surveillance for six months this year before halting the operation.

Now the international manhunt for Anis Amri — considered the prime suspect in Monday's deadly rampage — is raising questions about how closely German authorities are monitoring the hundreds of known Islamic extremists in the country.

The issue puts new pressure on Chancellor Angela Merkel, who is running for re-election next year. Critics are lambasting her for allowing hundreds of thousands of asylum-seekers to enter the country, allegedly without proper security checks.

Among them was Amri, a convicted criminal in both Tunisia and Italy with little chance of getting asylum who successfully evaded deportation from Germany even as German authorities rejected his asylum application and deemed the 24-year-old a possible jihadi threat.

He is suspected in the attack that left 12 people dead and 48 injured Monday evening in Berlin. Health officials said 12 of the injured had very serious wounds.

After German media published photos of him and a partial name, federal prosecutors issued a public appeal for information along with the promise of a 100,000-euro (\$105,000) reward for his arrest.

Within hours it emerged that the man authorities warned could be "violent and armed" had in fact been known to them for months as someone with ties to Islamic extremists who used at least six different names and three different nationalities.

"People are rightly outraged and anxious that such a person can walk around here, keep changing his identity and the legal system can't cope with them," said Rainer Wendt, the head of a union representing German police.

Authorities had initially focused their investigation on a Pakistani man detained shortly after the attack, but released him a day later for lack of evidence. After finding documents belonging to Amri in the cab of the truck, they issued a notice to other European countries early Wednesday seeking his arrest.

According to Ralf Jaeger, the interior minister of North Rhine-Westphalia state, Amri arrived in Germany in July 2015 as the influx of asylum-seekers was nearing its peak.

Although registered in the west of the country, near the Dutch border, Amri had moved around Germany regularly since February, living mostly in Berlin, said Jaeger.

Within months of his arrival, authorities had added Amri to a growing list of potentially violent Islamic extremists, not all of them asylum-seekers.

"Security agencies exchanged information about this person in the joint counter-terrorism center, the last time in November," said Jaeger.

State prosecutors in Berlin even launched an investigation of Amri on March 14 following a tip from federal security agencies, who warned that he might be planning a break-in to finance the purchase of automatic weapons for use in a possible future attack.

Surveillance showed that Amri did deal drugs in a notorious Berlin park and was involved in a bar brawl, but no evidence was found to substantiate the original warning.

The surveillance measures were called off in September, by which time Amri had disappeared from his regular haunts in Berlin, prosecutors said.

Separately, Amri's asylum application was rejected in July. German authorities prepared to deport him but weren't able to do so because he didn't have valid identity papers, Jaeger said. In August they started trying to get him a replacement passport.

"Tunisia at first denied that this person was its citizen, and the papers weren't issued for a long time," Jaeger said. "They arrived today."

It wasn't clear whether Germany was aware of Amri's previous brushes with the law, both in his homeland and in Italy, where he lived until last year. Tunisia's Mosaïque FM radio reported that he was sentenced to several years in prison in both countries for violent crimes.

The Italian news agency ANSA reported that Amri was ordered expelled after his prison time in Italy. However, Tunisian authorities didn't finish all the paperwork in the required time, so Amri never was sent back to Tunisia, it reported.

The Islamic State group, which claimed responsibility for Monday's attack, did not identify Amri as the man witnesses saw fleeing from the truck, but described him as "a soldier of the Islamic State" who "carried out the attack in response to calls for targeting citizens of the Crusader coalition."

Germany's Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere cautioned that he was "a suspect, not necessarily the perpetrator."

"We are still investigating in all directions," he said.

A spokesman for Tunisia's anti-terrorism judicial police said they questioned Amri's family members at their home Wednesday in the central Tunisian town of Oueslatia.

Spokesman Sofiane Selliti did not say how many people were questioned. His family lives in poverty and his parents are divorced, according to Tunisia's Mosaïque FM radio, which reported that the father said he had no contact with his son, although his other sons did.

Some German lawmakers have called for consequences regardless of whether Amri turns out to have been behind the wheel of the truck in Berlin.

"In my view we experienced a major shift on Monday," said Stephan Mayer, a member of Merkel's center-right bloc. "Terrorism has reached a new level in Germany. It's shaken the nation and citizens are worried. I think citizens wouldn't accept it if we simply returned to the political order of the day."

Mayer proposed extending the period that people can be held in detention prior to deportation, to give authorities more time to gather the necessary paperwork. He said authorities should also be able to deport people deemed a threat to public order.

Germany's Federal Criminal Police Office currently considers 549 Islamic extremists capable of committing "politically motivated crimes of considerable significance."

Wendt, the police union official, said keeping tabs on all of these people was a major challenge.

"From a manpower perspective it would ... be unimaginable to keep all potential threats under police surveillance round the clock," he said.

Geir Moulson in Berlin, Bouazza ben Bouazza in Tunis and Lori Hinnant in Paris contributed to this report.

## Suspect in deadly Berlin attack is latest Tunisian jihadi

By LORI HINNANT, Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — The Tunisian now wanted throughout Europe has six aliases, three nationalities — and links to the same brand of Islamic extremism that has drawn at least 6,000 of his countrymen to jihadi networks.

Anis Amri, who turns 24 on Thursday, is in grim company with other Tunisians claimed by the Islamic State group. One of them includes the man who mowed down 86 Bastille Day revelers in the southern French city of Nice last July and another who gunned down dozens of tourists on a beach in Tunisia.

At least 6,000 Tunisians have left home to join Islamic State extremists, forming the single largest nationality of foreign fighters for the group. Many trained at IS camps in neighboring Libya. Others made their way to Syria and Iraq.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 46 of 54

It's still not known whether Amri had direct links to Islamic State, but the extremist group claimed responsibility for the Monday night truck attack on the Berlin Christmas market that left 12 people dead and 48 injured.

Amri's wallet was found inside the cab of the truck, and German authorities on Wednesday issued a warrant for him, listing three different nationalities and six different names and birthdays that he presumably provided.

His birthdate is officially listed in the warrant as Dec. 22, 1992, according to a version obtained by The Associated Press. In a pair of photos, he has a sparse beard and no mustache.

Tunisian anti-terror police interrogated Amri's relatives Wednesday in the central Tunisian town of Oueslatia, a spokesman, Sofiane Selliti, told The Associated Press. He did not say how many family members were present.

Amri's father told Tunisia's Mosaique FM radio that his son left his homeland about seven years ago, spent four years in a prison in Italy after being accused in a fire at a school there then moved to Germany more than a year ago. The father said he had no contact with his son, although Amri's brothers did.

Mosaique FM cited security officials as saying that Amri had been convicted in absentia for aggravated theft with violence in Tunisia and sentenced to five years in prison. No dates were given.

After his prison time in Italy, Amri was ordered expelled, the Italian news agency ANSA reported. However, Tunisian authorities didn't finish all the paperwork in time, so Amri never was sent back to Tunisia.

The suspect's family lives in poverty and his parents are divorced, according to Mosaique FM radio.

State prosecutors in Berlin launched an investigation of Amri on March 14 following a tip from federal security agencies, who warned that he might be planning a break-in to finance the purchase of automatic weapons for use in a possible future attack.

Surveillance showed that Amri did deal drugs in a notorious Berlin park and was involved in a bar brawl, but no evidence was found to substantiate the original warning.

The surveillance measures were called off in September.

Separately, Amri's asylum application was rejected in July. German authorities prepared to deport him but weren't able to do so because he didn't have valid identity papers.

As for the Berlin attack, it's not the first time a suspect has discarded identifying documents in a vehicle. The attackers who carried out the 2015 massacre at the Charlie Hebdo newspaper in Paris did so, as did one of the Nov. 13 attackers in Paris and the Tunisian truck attacker in Nice, Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel. In all of those cases, the attackers were killed.

"It could be to kind of leave a trace and strengthen potential claims of responsibility," Otso Iho, an analyst with IHS Jane's, said of the abandoned ID documents.

Amarnath Amarasingam, a scholar at George Washington University's program on extremism, says he believes Amri did have ties with the Islamic State group.

"The fact that ISIS took credit for the attack before the attacker was arrested signals to me that he was in direct communication with someone in ISIS," he wrote in an email to the AP. "We can probably expect a video or a statement from the attacker himself fairly soon."

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Bouazza Ben Bouazza in Tunis, Elaine Ganley in Paris and Frances D'Emilio in Rome contributed.

## 17 stolen masterpieces returned to Italy with only scratches

By COLLEEN BARRY, Associated Press

VERONA, Italy (AP) — Seventeen masterpieces valued at 17 million euros (\$17.7 million) were returned to Italy from Ukraine on Wednesday after being stolen by masked, armed robbers from a Verona art museum last year.

Italian Culture Minister Dario Franceschini, who traveled to Kiev to retrieve the paintings — which included works by Rubens, Tintoretto and Mantegna — said the possibility of ever recovering them once seem remote. Still, the paintings returned with little more than scratches after their long ordeal, according

to an art expert.

"It's an important day, because the works are all returning to Verona intact," Franceschini said. "It was an ugly story that became a beautiful story."

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko handed over the paintings to Franceschini in a ceremony in Kiev, saying "the theft of masterpiece paintings is akin to stealing part of the city's heart."

The paintings, wrapped in plastic bags, were recovered in May by Ukrainian border guards who intercepted them on a small island on the Dniester River during an attempt to smuggle them into Moldova.

They were stolen in November 2015 when three armed robbers entered the Castelvechio Museum, located in a medieval castle, at closing time just before the alarm system was activated. The robbers calmly removed the paintings before escaping in a security guard's car.

A guard at the museum, Pasquale Silvestri Riccardi, was convicted of armed robbery and sentenced to 10 years and eight months in prison earlier this month. Five others were also convicted, including Riccardi's Moldovan girlfriend, who received six years, and his twin brother, who was sentenced to eight months.

Two Moldovans are on trial in their home country for the thefts.

Franceschini credited strong cooperation between law enforcement in the three countries for recovering the paintings and finding the thieves, giving particular praise to Italy's Carabinieri art squad. The culture minister also announced the government would introduce legislation this week making the theft or damage of Italy's cultural heritage specific crimes with elevated penalties.

Curator Ettore Napione traveled to retrieve the paintings, studying them carefully with gloved hands before wrapping them for the homeward journey. The works were displayed in simple wooden frames made for them after they were recovered, because the thieves had cut the canvasses from their original frames, which they then discarded.

"They suffered scratches, nothing very serious," Napione said.

The paintings are to be shown together at their home in the Castelvechio Museum for about a month beginning Friday before undergoing restoration and reframing.

Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow contributed.

## Turkey links Russian envoy's killer to US-based cleric Gulen

By SUZAN FRASER, Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Turkey's president on Wednesday implicated a U.S.-based Muslim cleric in the killing of Russia's envoy to Turkey, saying the policeman who carried out the attack was a member of his "terror organization."

Ambassador Andrei Karlov was killed Monday evening by a gunman in front of stunned onlookers at a photo exhibition in Ankara. The assassin, Mevlut Mert Altintas of Ankara's riot police squad, was killed in a police operation.

"He (Altintas) was a member of the FETO terrorist organization. There is no point in hiding this," President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said during a joint news conference with his visiting Albanian counterpart. "From the places he was raised to his connections — that's what they point at."

Turkey has accused Fethullah Gulen — a former ally who has turned into Erdogan's top foe — of trying to destabilize Turkey and says his movement is behind a failed military coup in July aimed at toppling the Turkish leader. Gulen has denied any involvement in the coup. His movement also condemned "in the strongest terms" the ambassador's assassination.

The government however, has labeled the movement "the FETO terror organization" and has cracked down on Gulen's followers, arresting tens of thousands of people for their alleged link to the coup and purging more than 100,000 suspected supporters from government jobs.

Turkey is also pressing the United States to extradite Gulen so he may be prosecuted for the coup attempt and other alleged crimes.

Erdogan told reporters that Turkey's intelligence agency was also looking into Altintas' possible foreign

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 48 of 54

connections, saying there were "certain clues" indicating overseas links. He did not elaborate.

Turkey has been rife with speculation about Altintas' motive and possible links to Gulen, but Erdogan's statement was the first time a senior official openly blamed the killing on the movement.

On Tuesday evening, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu spoke with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry by phone and provided information on the assailant, according to an official in his ministry. The official, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with government rules, said Cavusoglu also told Kerry that both Turkey and Russia "know" that Gulen's movement was behind the attack.

During the phone call, Kerry raised concerns about "some of the rhetoric coming out of Turkey with respect to American involvement or support, tacit or otherwise, for this unspeakable assassination yesterday because of the presence of Mr. Gulen here in the United States," Kerry's spokesman John Kirby said.

"It's a ludicrous claim, absolutely false," Kirby said. "We need to let the investigators do their job and we need to let the facts and the evidence take them where it is before we jump to conclusions."

Russia flew a team of 18 investigators and foreign ministry officials to Turkey to participate in the investigation. In Moscow, President Vladimir Putin's spokesman indicated that Russia doesn't believe the 22-year-old gunman acted on his own, but refused to explain the reasons for the suspicion.

"We shouldn't rush with any theories before the investigators establish who were behind the assassination of our ambassador," spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Wednesday.

Neighbors in Altintas' hometown of Soke in western Turkey near the Aegean coast described a quiet, respectable family who showed no signs of radicalization.

"To me, he appeared to be a well-meaning, calm fellow. That's how I saw him. His mother and father are good people," said neighbor Zeki Inan, 74. "We were shocked when we heard that this boy did this. We could not believe it."

Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency raised the number of people detained in connection to the attack to 11, including Altintas' parents, sister, three other relatives and his roommate.

The agency said investigators, among other things, were trying to determine whether anyone from the Russian Embassy may have provided the gunman with information about Karlov as well as the gunman's links to possible Gulenists within Turkey's police force.

Citing the Ankara prosecutor's office, Anadolu said the gunman, who had three spare cartridges on him as well as more than 20 bullets in his pocket, ignored calls for him to surrender after he had shot the ambassador, and opened fire on police, taking shelter behind a wall. It said special forces police who stormed the art gallery shot Altintas in the feet, legs and knees but that he continued to fire on police from the ground, shouting that he "would not be captured alive."

The report said investigators believe the security forces killed Altintas, fearing he may have had a bomb on him.

Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmus, speaking to Turkish state television TRT, also said the gunman is not believed to have acted alone.

"This is not an ordinary attack that was conducted by a lone man," Kurtulmus said. "There are some people who directed (him) behind the scenes, who led him into carry out such a plan, who wanted to obtain political gains."

"Those who are behind this pawn wanted to disrupt ...Turkish-Russian relations in an irreparable way. But they won't succeed," he said.

Mehmet Guzel in Soke, Turkey, Elena Becatoros in Ankara, Bradley Klapper in Washington and Nataliya Vasilyeva in Moscow contributed to this report.

## UN extends aid deliveries to Syria across borders for 1 year

By EDITH M. LEDERER, Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The U.N. Security Council approved the delivery of humanitarian aid across borders and conflict lines in Syria for another year Wednesday in a resolution aimed at reaching thousands



in need in rebel-held areas without government approval.

The resolution, adopted unanimously, expresses grave distress at "the continued deterioration of the devastating humanitarian situation in Syria" where more than 13.5 million people require urgent assistance.

It cited the alarming situation in besieged areas where hundreds of thousands of civilians are trapped.

"The significance, if implemented, will be that people who are in areas that are not held by the regime would be able to have access to much needed food, medicine, blankets, shelter provided by the U.N. and humanitarian agencies over the course of the next year," Britain's U.N. Ambassador Matthew Rycroft said. "But as always it all depends on actions not words."

The Security Council accused the Syrian government of increasing "impediments" to aid deliveries across conflict lines, and the Islamic State extremist group and al-Qaida-linked groups of hindering and preventing aid deliveries "through deliberate interference and obstruction."

The resolution, sponsored by Egypt, New Zealand and Spain, emphasizes that Syria's humanitarian situation continues to threaten peace and security in the region and will deteriorate further without a political settlement.

It expresses "outrage" that the more than five-year Syrian conflict has led to escalating violence and the killing of well over 250,000 people.

The Security Council expressed grave concern at "the lack of effective implementation" of its previous resolutions on cross-border and cross-line aid deliveries which called for a halt to all attacks on civilians, schools, medical facilities and water supplies.

They also demanded an end to the indiscriminate use of weapons, including air strikes and barrel bombs, as well as suicide attack, torture and executions, and "the use of starvation of civilians as a method of combat" including by besieging populated areas.

The resolution, which extends the mandate for aid deliveries until Jan. 10, 2018, demands "the full and immediate implementation" of all previous council demands.

It asks Syrian authorities to positively and expeditiously respond to all requests for aid deliveries across conflict lines.

The resolution also reaffirms that the council will take further unspecified measures "in the event of non-compliance with this resolution" or previous ones.

## Ex-Israeli president exits prison after 5-year rape sentence

By JOSEF FEDERMAN, Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Former Israeli President Moshe Katsav walked free from prison on Wednesday, winning early release five years after he was put behind bars for rape in a landmark case that disgraced the country's political system but also delivered a key victory for women's rights.

Katsav exited the Maasiyahu prison in central Israel, accompanied by his wife, Gila, and other family members. Wearing a dark suit and skullcap, Katsav smiled but did not comment to a crowd of reporters before getting into a car and driving away.

His lawyer, Zion Amir, told Channel 10 TV that he had a short phone call with an emotional Katsav and planned to see him later in the evening at his home in the southern town of Kiryat Malachi.

"He's happy and confused and angry and satisfied," Amir said.

Dozens of supporters greeted Katsav as he arrived at his home, shrieking with joy, warmly hugging him and hoisting bouquets of flowers.

Katsav, 71, was sentenced to a seven-year term in 2011 after being convicted of two counts of raping an employee and sexually harassing other women. Last week, a parole board accepted his request for early release, saying the disgraced politician, who has denied any wrongdoing, had undergone a "change" behind bars. It had rejected previous requests for parole.

Katsav's downfall jolted Israeli politics. Seen as a rags-to-riches success story, Katsav was born in Iran and immigrated to Israel as a child, growing up in impoverished tent camps and Kiryat Malachi, a hard-scrabble town in southern Israel. He was elected mayor of the town at age 24, becoming the youngest

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 50 of 54

mayor in Israel's history and launching a rapid rise in the nationalist Likud Party.

He held a series of Cabinet posts before parliament selected him to be president in 2000. He engineered the upset victory over Nobel peace laureate Shimon Peres by rallying ultra-Orthodox Jewish parties behind him.

Israel's presidency is a largely ceremonial office, typically filled by a respected elder statesman expected to rise above politics and serve as a moral compass. Most political power is in the hands of the prime minister.

The allegations against Katsav forced him to resign in 2007, two weeks before his term was to end, paving the way for Peres to assume the office.

Katsav was convicted of two counts of raping an employee in 1998, when he was Israel's tourism minister. He was also convicted of lesser counts of indecent acts; sexual harassment involving two other women who worked for him when he was president, from 2000 to 2007; and obstruction of justice.

Katsav denied all allegations, claiming he was a victim of a political witch hunt and suggesting he was targeted because he is a Sephardic Jew — a Jew of Middle Eastern origin. At his conviction, he even shouted at the judges, saying "The lies have won!" But in their ruling, the three-judge panel said his version of events was "strewn with lies."

The verdict was seen as a victory for the Israeli legal system and for women's rights in a decades-long struggle to chip away at what has often been the nation's male chauvinist culture, which once permitted political and military leaders great liberties. At the time, he was the most senior politician ever to go to prison. He was later joined by former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who is now serving a 19-month sentence on corruption charges.

In an interview with the AP the night before going to prison, Katsav insisted he was innocent and said he had always been faithful to his wife. In interviews from prison, he continued to insist on his innocence.

The parole board twice rejected Katsav's requests for early release. But last week, it said he could go free after seeing changes in his behavior.

"There is no doubt...the prisoner underwent a change," the parole board wrote in its decision. The board said it questioned Katsav about his actions and their consequences, and was "impressed by the honesty of his answers."

Under the terms of his release, he cannot travel abroad for two years or grant interviews to the media, and must not leave his house after 10 p.m. He has been ordered to attend weekly therapy sessions, and will not be able to serve in any position in which he oversees women.

## China says it will cooperate with Trump but warns on Taiwan

By GERRY SHIH, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China warned Thursday that ties with the U.S. will likely see new complications and the only way to maintain a stable relationship is by respecting each other's "core interests."

Foreign Minister Wang Yi's remarks appeared to underscore that China's position on Taiwan is non-negotiable, weeks after President-elect Donald Trump suggested he could re-evaluate U.S. policy on Taiwan. It also mirrored Beijing's relatively measured posture toward the incoming U.S. administration despite signs of growing wariness.

Wang told the Communist Party mouthpiece, the People's Daily, that China will strive to boost cooperation with the U.S. but he foresaw "new, complicated and uncertain factors affecting bilateral relations" under the Trump administration.

China complained this month after Trump questioned a U.S. policy that since 1979 has recognized Beijing as China's government and maintains only unofficial relations with Taiwan. Beijing regards the self-governing island as part of China and has long used the "core interest" formulation to signal that any move by Taiwan toward formal independence could be met with military force.

Trump's comments on Taiwan, combined with his accusations that China is manipulating its currency and threats of imposing hefty tariffs against Chinese imports, have rattled relations between the world's

two largest economies.

Trump's transition team announced Wednesday that Peter Navarro, who has accused China of effectively waging economic war against the United States, would head a trade policy council inside the White House.

Asked by reporters about Trump's appointment of an economist and author whose books include "Death by China," foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said Beijing has been observing the incoming U.S. administration's transition and its policy direction.

"As two major powers with broad mutual interests, cooperation is the only correct choice," Hua said without naming Trump or Navarro.

Although Navarro — and Trump — have been heavily criticized in the Chinese press, including state media, Beijing has largely measured its official response to potential flashpoints. This week, China's military returned a U.S. underwater drone in the South China Sea that Trump had described as "stolen" on Twitter.

In the People's Daily interview, Wang said U.S.-China relations are generally trending toward stable cooperation and mutual benefit. He quoted a Chinese poem — previously cited by President Xi Jinping as a metaphor for U.S.-China ties — depicting a river that flows inevitably, regardless of mountainous obstacles.

"This is a historical trend that cannot be changed by an individual's will," Wang said.

After what he described as a turbulent year steered by the trend of "reverse globalization" and punctuated by terror attacks, Wang said China is now a mature nation that could act as a "stabilizer" in global affairs.

China under Xi is adopting an assertive leadership role on the world stage, Wang said, such as hosting the G20 summit and heading discussions at the APEC forum in Peru.

"The world is choosing between openness and conservatism, cooperation and closure, transformation and old ways," Wang said. "We will lead the way amid a shake-up in global governance, we will take hold of the situation amid international chaos, we will protect our interests amid intense and complex games."

## Kuwait moves annual Washington party to Trump's hotel

By BRADLEY KLAPPER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — One of the Middle East's richest nations said Tuesday it would host its annual Washington party at Donald Trump's new hotel, underscoring the president-elect's unusual status as the owner of a major venue for events in the U.S. capital.

Salem Al Sabah, Kuwait's ambassador to the U.S., said the party would take place Feb. 25, adding that he hopes guests like the "new hotel in town." He said no one pressed him to move the Kuwaiti National Day event from its regular venue at the Four Seasons. Although Kuwait did not have a contract with the Four Seasons for the party, the date had been set aside for it to possibly take place there.

"I do not know President-elect Trump," the ambassador told The Associated Press in a telephone interview. "I do not know any of his people. None of his people have contacted me." He added: "I thought would be exciting for our guests to see a new venue. It looks great. It looks cool. So let's do it."

Al Sabah noted that last year's reception occurred at the Newseum, a museum promoting the media.

Nevertheless, the move to Trump's \$200-million renovation of the Old Post Office Pavilion could reinforce questions raised about the incoming president's possible conflicts of interest. House Democrats already have warned that they'll make the splashy hotel a headache for Trump if he doesn't dump his ownership stake before taking office Jan. 20. Trump has a six-decade lease on the property.

The Trump Organization is moving to remove thorny overseas relationships, canceling hotel licensing deals in Azerbaijan, neighboring Georgia and Brazil.

Al Sabah ridiculed the notion that he would choose the D.C. hotel to curry favor with the next administration.

"We have very deep economic, military and cultural ties; we've had tens of thousands of American troops in our country," he said, noting Kuwait's basing of forces for U.S. operations in Afghanistan and to fight the Islamic State group. "You think a two-hour reception in a ballroom does that?"

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This story "kingdom" to "nation" in summary and first sentence.

## Trump family drops access offered for charity donations

By JULIE BYKOWICZ, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump's children may see his move to the White House as a way to raise money for their favorite causes.

Two recent fundraising pitches featuring the incoming first family were meant to benefit charities, but they also raised questions among ethics experts that the Trumps might be inappropriately selling access.

Last week, Eric Trump tried auctioning a coffee date with his sister Ivanka to raise money for a children's hospital. Now, Eric and Donald Trump Jr. are part of a venture that initially offered a private reception with their father during inauguration weekend in exchange for \$1 million donations that would go to conservation charities. Some of those contributors could later go hunting or fishing with one or both of the sons, the invitation promised.

These events are dissolving as quickly as they become public, suggesting the family is learning on the fly what's acceptable.

Trump aides say the Trump family has been focused on resolving the perception of conflicts when it comes to Trump's business; how to handle their charitable endeavors has been a secondary concern. But in light of recent events, the Trump team is looking more quickly for solutions, said a Trump transition official, speaking on condition of anonymity to share internal discussions.

Eric Trump canceled the coffee with Ivanka after The New York Times reported that some of the bidders were doing so to gain insight about the Trump administration.

Hope Hicks, a Trump spokeswoman, said the hunting and fishing events reflected "initial concepts that have not been approved or pursued by the Trump family." She added that the sons "are not involved in any capacity. Additionally, the president-elect is not aware of the event or the details pertaining to it."

The two previous presidents, Barack Obama and George W. Bush, expressly forbade immediate family members from such fundraising activities to avoid the appearance of selling access.

"We kept it simple. We did not allow the first family to be auctioned off, which is what is happening here," said Norman Eisen, who served as White House chief ethics counselor as Obama took office in 2009.

Richard Painter, who filled a similar role for Bush, said the White House "strongly discouraged" the president, his family and top aides from fundraising for charities, and avoided altogether charity fundraising that came with any access to those people.

Both said that while there's nothing explicitly illegal about the charity fundraising, it diverges from the best practices of previous White House administrations.

In an invitation that began circulating last week when the entertainment site TMZ posted it, Eric and Donald Trump Jr. were listed as honorary co-chairmen for a group seeking up to \$1 million donations for a Jan. 21 inauguration event dubbed "Opening Day."

Top donors could enjoy other perks such as a "private reception and photo opportunity for 16 guests with President Donald J. Trump" and "a multi-day hunting and/or fishing excursion for 4 guests with Donald Trump Jr. and/or Eric Trump and team," according to the invitation.

A few days before the invitation went out, a new nonprofit called Opening Day Foundation was registered in Texas. Paperwork filed with the state lists the two adult Trump sons and their Texas-based friends Gentry Beach and Tom Hicks Jr. as the nonprofit's directors. The documents were first reported by the Center for Public Integrity.

But Eric and Donald Trump Jr. had no idea they were named in the new nonprofit and have asked the Texas secretary of state to amend the filing to delete them, according to the Trump transition official. Mark Brinkerhoff, a spokesman for the event planners, also said Tuesday that the Trump sons should not have been listed as directors of the nonprofit.

On Tuesday, the inauguration venture put out a new invitation, which stripped out all references of access to the incoming president and his immediate family, although Eric and Donald Trump Jr. remain listed as honorary co-chairmen.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 53 of 54

The \$1 million donors can attend a private reception "with VIPs and celebrities associated with the event," the invitation now says. And in place of the Eric and Donald Trump Jr. hunting and fishing trip, there's more generic mention of a "multi-day excursion for four guests."

The walk-back follows a turnabout on the Ivanka Trump coffee after the Times report last week.

"Today, the only people who lost are the children of St. Jude," Eric Trump said after canceling the fundraiser for the children's hospital.

Painter and Eisen — the former White House counselors, who have been critical of Trump's business entanglements and failure to publicly address them so far — said part of the problem with these charity fundraisers is that the president-elect has yet to explain which of his family members will be involved in the government and which will stay at the helm of his international business empire.

They praised the Trumps for making quick adjustments after seeing bad press about the fundraising but said that doesn't eliminate the need for Trump to develop and follow hard-and-fast rules as previous presidents did.

"How many times are they going to have to stub their toe?" Eisen said. "If you continually have to reverse course and improvise, what is the point at which it becomes a sign of recklessness instead of willingness to do good will?"

Associated Press writers Catherine Lucey in Des Moines, Iowa, and Jonathan Lemire in Palm Beach, Florida, contributed to this report.

## Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Dec. 22, the 357th day of 2016. There are nine days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 22, 1941, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill arrived in Washington for a wartime conference with President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

On this date:

In 1775, Esek Hopkins was appointed the commander-in-chief of the Continental Navy.

In 1894, French army officer Alfred Dreyfus was convicted of treason in a court-martial that triggered worldwide charges of anti-Semitism. (Dreyfus was eventually vindicated.)

In 1910, a fire lasting more than 26 hours broke out at the Chicago Union Stock Yards; 21 firefighters were killed in the collapse of a burning building.

In 1937, the first, center tube of the Lincoln Tunnel connecting New York City and New Jersey beneath the Hudson River was opened to traffic. (The second tube opened in 1945, the third in 1957.)

In 1940, author Nathanael West, 37, and his wife, Eileen McKenney, were killed in a car crash in El Centro, California, while en route to the funeral of F. Scott Fitzgerald, who had died the day before.

In 1944, during the World War II Battle of the Bulge, U.S. Brig. Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe rejected a German demand for surrender, writing "Nuts!" in his official reply.

In 1968, Julie Nixon married David Eisenhower in a private ceremony in New York.

In 1977, three dozen people were killed when a 250-foot-high grain elevator at the Continental Grain Company plant in Westwego, Louisiana, exploded.

In 1989, Romanian President Nicolae Ceausescu (chow-SHES'-koo), the last of Eastern Europe's hard-line Communist rulers, was toppled from power in a popular uprising. Playwright Samuel Beckett died in Paris at age 83.

In 1991, the body of Marine Lt. Col. William R. Higgins, an American hostage slain by his terrorist captors, was recovered after it had been dumped along a highway in Lebanon.

In 2001, Richard C. Reid, a passenger on an American Airlines flight from Paris to Miami, tried to ignite explosives in his shoes, but was subdued by flight attendants and fellow passengers. (Reid is serving a

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 170 ~ 54 of 54

life sentence in federal prison.)

In 2010, President Barack Obama signed a law allowing gays for the first time in history to serve openly in America's military, repealing the "don't ask, don't tell" policy.

Ten years ago: Rape charges were dropped against three Duke University lacrosse players, but kidnapping and sexual offense charges remained. (Those charges were later dropped as well.) Space shuttle Discovery returned to Earth after a smooth, 13-day flight to rewire the international space station.

Five years ago: A wave of 16 bombings ripped across Baghdad, killing at least 69 people in the worst violence in Iraq in months. It happened days after the last American forces left the country, heightening fears of a new round of sectarian bloodshed. Melanie Amaro, a 19-year-old vocalist from Sunrise, Florida, won the first U.S. season of "The X Factor" talent competition on Fox.

One year ago: Migration experts said more than a million people who had been driven out of their countries by war, poverty and persecution entered Europe in 2015. Stanford running back Christian McCaffrey was named The Associated Press college football player of the year.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Hector Elizondo is 80. Country singer Red Steagall is 78. Former World Bank Group President Paul Wolfowitz is 73. Baseball Hall-of-Famer Steve Carlton is 72. Former ABC News anchor Diane Sawyer is 71. Rock singer-musician Rick Nielsen (Cheap Trick) is 68. Rock singer-musician Michael Bacon is 68. Baseball All-Star Steve Garvey is 68. Golfer Jan Stephenson is 65. Actress BernNadette Stanis is 63. Rapper Luther "Luke" Campbell is 56. Country singer-musician Chuck Mead is 56. Actor Ralph Fiennes (rayf fynz) is 54. Actress Lauralee Bell is 48. Country singer Lori McKenna is 48. Actress Dina Meyer is 48. Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, is 46. Actress Heather Donahue is 43. Actor Chris Carmack is 36. Actor Harry Ford (TV: "Code Black") is 34. Actor Greg Finley is 32. Actor Logan Huffman is 27. Rhythm-and-blues singer Jordin Sparks is 27. Pop singer Meghan Trainor is 23.

Thought for Today: "The way you overcome shyness is to become so wrapped up in something that you forget to be afraid." — Lady Bird Johnson (born this date in 1912, died 2007).