

Groton Daily Independent

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Tuesday, Feb. 7

NSU Symphonic Band at GHS Gym from 8:30 a.m. to 9:20 p.m.

GBB at Roncalli: C game at 5:15 p.m. with JV and varsity games to follow.

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

School Lunch: Chili, cornbread, fruit, broccoli and dip.

Senior Menu: Baked chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, California blend vegetables, lemon tart bar, whole wheat bread.

Wednesday, Feb. 8

St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: League at 6:30 p.m., Confirmation at 7 p.m.

MathCounts: NESD Chapter at NSU

Small Group Music Contest: at Aberdeen

School Breakfast: Egg sausage biscuit, fruit, juice, milk.

School Lunch: Lasagna hot dish, corn, fruit, romaine salad, tea buns.

School Menu: Spaghetti with meat sauce, broccoli, garlic toast, orange sherbet.

Thursday, Feb. 9

Parent-Teacher Conferences: 1:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Great Lakes Presentation: Grades 10-11 at GHS from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Grade 12 FAFSA Presentation: Grade 12 at GHS at 7 p.m.

School Breakfast: Pancake on stick, fruit, juice, milk.

School Lunch: Hot dogs, baked beans, fruit,

PARTS COUNTER SALES

Self motivated individual needed to fill our Parts Counter Sales position. Duties include parts sales, display stocking, shipping and receiving. Sponsored training, excellent benefits package and the possibility for advancement. Contact Steve at 605-395-6421 or email resume to s.harry@harrysinc.com.

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57439



Apts for Rent

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

Open: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave.

The cardboard/paper

recycling trailer at the school is **OPEN**

Kristi Peterson Bookkeeping

Simple Solutions for YOU

605/216-4474 ~ peterson4@nvc.net

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Groton Senior Citizens

Groton Seniors met January 9. Present were sixteen members. New officers were installed. Ruby Donavon President and Eunice McColister Vice President, Secretary and treasurer stayed the same. Lee Schinkel played "God of Our Fathers". President Ruby Donavon opened with the the flag pledge. November and December minutes and treasurer report were read. Two get well cards were sent to Marian Raines and Ivan Morehouse. Christmas donation was given to the transit fees. Cards were played. The winners were whist- Ella Johnson and Elda Stange, Canasta- Pat Larson, Pinochle - Alan Zoellner. Door prizes- Lorraine Sippel, Pat Larson and Ruth Pray. Lunch was served by Ruby Donavon, DeLoris Knoll and Eunice McColister.

January 16 January and February birthday were celebrated. Seventeen members attended. Bingo was played. Sharon Zoellner won black out. Door prizes went to Alan and Sharon Zoellner and Lorraine Sippel. Cake, ice cream and strawberries, cookies and bars were served by Alan and Sharon Zoellner and Ella Johnson.

January 23 Twenty members were present. The flag pledge was said in unison. Lee Schinkel played America the Beautiful and all sang. Bev Sombke and Lee Schinkel played and sang "Soon and very soon". Cards were played. The winners whist- Ella Johnson and Bob Pray, Pinochle- Ivan Morehouse and Elda Stange, Canasta - Mary Walker. Door prizes Ruby Donavon, Pat Larson and Elda Stange. Lunch was served by Grace Albrecht, Lee Schinkel and Cindy Gemmill.

Valentines Day – Tuesday, Feb 14th

SHOW YOUR LOVED ONES
HOW SPECIAL THEY ARE!

Fresh Flowers
Plants
Jewelry
Gourmet Coffee
Wine
Truffles & Gourmet Treats
Home Decor
Gift Certificates



Free Delivery to
Groton Schools on
Feb 14th when
ordered by
Monday, Feb 13th!

Add on extra love to any order –
\$25 – add a teddy bear, mylar
balloon & a small box of truffles!

Main Street, Groton
605-397-8650
oldebankfloral.com



Delivery – Aberdeen, Groton, & all surrounding communities



A Robotics Tournament was held in Groton recently. The photo includes from left to right two Mitchell team members, Noah Tullis, Thomas Cranford, another Mitchell team member, Groton Robotics Advisor, Jim Lane another Mitchell team and Groton team members, Andrew Marzahn, Isaac Smith and Jacob Lewandowski.

GT hosts Robotics Competition

GT Robotics hosted a VEX robotics competition January 21 in the Groton Area High School gym. Nine teams from Mitchell and Groton participated. Competition started at 10:30 AM with 30 qualifying matches, at the end of the matches the team ranking was:

Eight teams went on to the elimination rounds with their selected alliances. Two Mitchell teams, Bolt and Mechatron defeated two Groton teams, G-Force and Geek Squad in a best of three championship match.

Tournament Champions – Bolt and Mechatron of Mitchell.

We also had a skills challenge during which a single driver operated robot score as much as possible in a one minute time period.

VEX robotics also encourages the robotists to excel outside the competition field by recognizing these other awards:

Excellence -- Best overall robot, engineering book and team Bolt of Mitchell

Design – Best engineering book G-Force of Groton

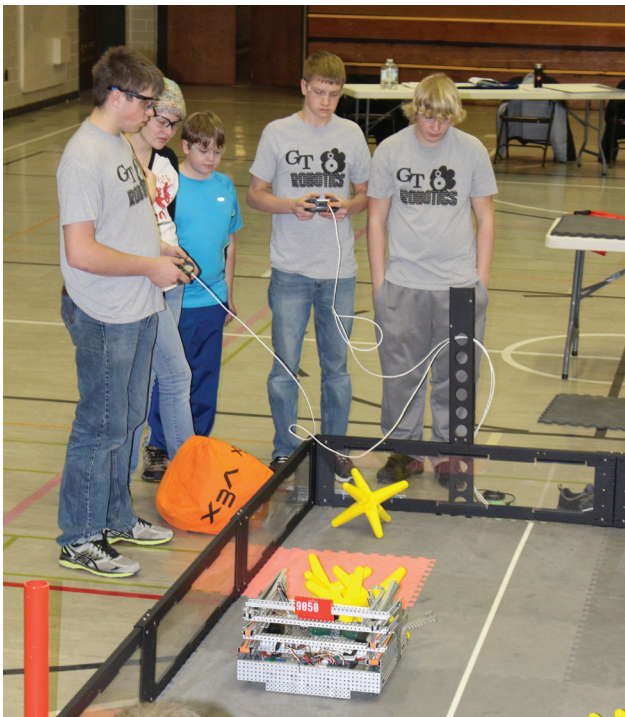
Judges choice – The judges' favorite robot Gear Heads of Groton

Sportsmanship – Best sports during competition Geek Squad of Groton

The state tourney in Mitchell February 28.



Championship Round – Two Mitchell teams vs. two Groton teams including G-Force, Landon Marzahn and Hunter Monson and Geek Squad Andrew Marzahn, Isaac Smith and Jacob Lewandowski. Mitchell won the tournament.



Two Groton Robotics Teams aligned together for this match. Left to Right – Gear Heads Team including Trey Wright, Gabby Kramer, and Jackson Dinger. G-Force Team includes Landon Marzahn and Hunter Monson.

SDSU Extension Releases 2017 Pest Management Guides Available

BROOKINGS, S.D. - South Dakota 2017 Pest Management guides are available online as PDF downloads or as hard copies at SDSU Extension Regional Centers and SDSU Extension events.

"The guides provide recommendations for herbicides, insecticides, seed treatments, and fungicides that are available in South Dakota for controlling weeds, insects, and diseases," explained Paul Johnson, SDSU Extension Weed Science Coordinator.

The guides are available for the following crops:

- * Sunflower & Oilseeds/Alfalfa & Range - including alfalfa, canola, flax, safflower, and sunflowers
- * Corn
- * Soybeans
- * Wheat - including barley, rye, oats, durum, millet, and triticale.

Thanks to generous sponsorships, the guides are available at no cost to South Dakotans. Sponsors include: South Dakota Soybean Research and Promotion Council, the South Dakota Corn Utilization Council, the SDSU Extension IPM Program, South Dakota Department of Agriculture, and the SDSU Extension WEED Project.

More details

The guides were updated for 2017 to include new products, new product names and the corresponding changes to the labels including application rates, rotation restrictions, and additive rates. Cost estimates are included for the herbicide products.

<https://igrow.org/agronomy/corn/2016-pest-guides-released/>

2015 Pesticide Data Program Summary

Testing ensures that any pesticide residues in foods remain at safe levels

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) today published the 2015 Pesticide Data Program (PDP) Annual Summary. The 2015 PDP Annual Summary shows more than 99 percent of the samples tested had pesticide residues well below the residue levels established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and 15 percent had no detectable residue. Residues exceeding the tolerance were detected in 0.53 percent of the samples tested. EPA uses PDP data to conduct dietary risk assessments and to ensure that any pesticide residues in foods remain at safe levels and adverse health effects are unlikely.

The pesticide data USDA publishes each year provide regulators, farmers, processors, manufacturers, consumers and scientists with important insights into the actual levels of pesticide residues found on widely consumed foods. The PDP pesticide residue results are reported to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and EPA through monthly reports. FDA and EPA are immediately notified if a PDP finding would pose a safety risk.

"The Pesticide Data Program uses rigorous sampling and advanced methods to test a wide variety of domestic and imported foods, helping ensure that the U.S. food supply is one of the safest in the world," said Dr. Ruihong Guo, Deputy Administrator of the AMS Science and Technology Program. "The new 2015 report includes data from over 10,000 samples, giving consumers confidence that the products they buy for their families are safe and wholesome."

Each year, USDA and EPA work together to identify foods to be tested on a rotating basis. In 2015, surveys were conducted on fresh and processed foods including fruits and vegetables as well as peanut butter. AMS partners with cooperating state agencies to collect and analyze pesticide residue levels on selected foods. For over 25 years, the PDP has tested a variety of commodities including fresh and processed fruits and vegetables, dairy, meat and poultry, grains, fish, rice, specialty products, and water.



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Department of Agriculture

Things to Keep in Mind: The Good

2015 Pesticide Data Program (PDP) Annual Summary

Release by U.S. Dept of Ag's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) in Nov. 2016

99% of the 10,187 samples tested (*fruits, vegetables, & peanut butter*) (*fresh & processed / domestic & imported*) had pesticide residues well below the EPA established tolerances.

15% of the 10,187 samples tested had no detectable pesticide residues.

.53% (54 out of 10,187 samples) had residues slightly exceeding the established tolerance. (*No levels exceeded in peanut butter.*)

Sanford
Underground
Research
Facility



Subscribe at: Sanfordlab.org/newsletters

Deep Thoughts

Notes from the underground by Communications Director Constance Walter

Monday, February 6, 2017

Sweeping away hazards

Sanford Lab's Environment, Safety and Health (ESH) Department follows integrated safety management principles to support the design, construction and operation of the facility. It relies on multiple sources, including OSHA, MSHA and the EPA to continuously improve a best-practices safety program.

More importantly, however, ESH recognizes the value of employee involvement to ensure safety is not just talked about, but practiced at every level.

"We do routine inspections, both in our surface and underground operations," said Noel Schroeder, ESH director. "But we also incorporate safety sweeps that focus intensely on a particular area."

Safety sweeps help identify and correct situations that could cause injury to people, damage laboratory infrastructure or harm the environment.

Although routine inspections have the same goals, they include only knowledgeable persons. For example, on an annual level inspection, only those very familiar with the underground environment would be involved.

"A safety sweep brings together a diverse group of people from throughout Sanford Lab who might see things from different perspectives and offer new safety solutions," Schroeder said. "It encourages staff members to contribute to and better understand our safety culture."

Safety sweep inspections are organized by the Safety Committee and may include the examination of equipment, process safety, hazardous substances and materials, emergency planning and response, health, personnel safety and safety administration. They always include persons

of knowledge, an ESH specialist, a member of the safety committee and area employees.

Participants look for a variety of hazards, including slips, trips and falls, and personnel safety practices. Committee members also offer support to employees on performing routine duties in a safe manner.

Each year prior to Neutrino Day, Sanford Lab volunteers walk between the Ross and Yates Headframes to clean up the roadways and prepare for the numerous site visitors.

"First impressions are great impressions," said Peter Girtz, safety tech support lead. "When people come here, they see it's a clean, well-maintained area. And when we walk through the residential areas, neighbors see we are involved in the community and that we care about the community."

Upcoming safety sweeps

To find out how you can participate in safety sweeps, attend one of the Safety Committee meetings, or contact Michelle Andresen at mandresen@sanfordlab.org

- February 22: Waste Water Treatment Plant
- April 26: Ross Yard and Warehouse area

Upcoming safety committee meetings

- March 29: 7 a.m., Ross Dry
- May 31: 7 a.m., Ross Dry



December Safety Performance

While installing pipe and plumbing for a water pressure break tank on the 4100 Level, members of a Ross Shaft crew realized the water pressure was elevated. They stopped work, assessed the situation and mitigated the hazard by safely plumbing the pressure break tank.

From left: Derek Lucero, lead man, Kirby Cleland, Clint Morrison and Josh Quenzer were recognized for their Top Safety Performance by Sanford Lab's Safety Committee.

"This task was very critical. The entire crew deserves credit for going above and beyond," said George Vandine, Ross Shaft foreman (far right).

Ag Land Values in Limbo in 2017

Interest rates will play a role in setting the stage

OMAHA, Neb. – Several factors will come into play in 2017 that will determine the direction of land values.

Randy Dickhut, senior vice president of real estate operations for Farmers National Company, said that in the past three years, agricultural landowners in many regions across the country have seen a decline in profits, which also pushed land values lower.

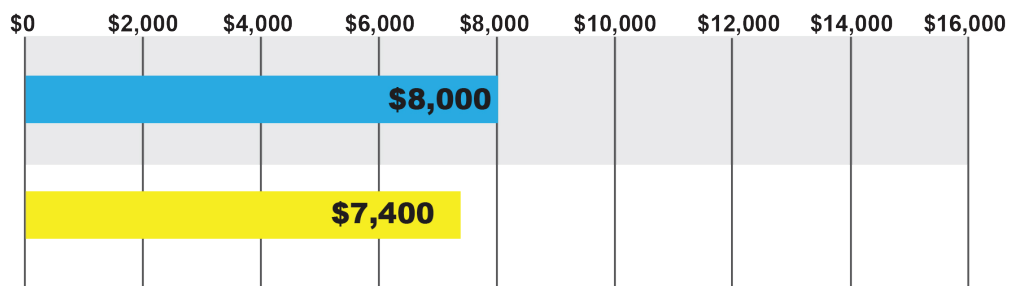
“This winter, questions abound as to the direction of commodity prices, interest rates, inflation, challenges in the world economy, weather and U.S. tax law,” Dickhut said. “Buyers of ag land are asking if it is an opportune time to make a purchase of a farm or ranch, while sellers are asking if the market dynamics are indicating that it is good time to sell land. Depending on location, quality of land and other factors, our agents report seeing regions and local areas where land prices are stable to somewhat strengthening post-2016 harvest. Then there are other areas where land values have continued to decline.”

A key factor impacting land prices will be interest rates, Dickhut said. Grain and livestock prices affecting farm and ranch income also will influence land values.

“Foreign trade policy and its effect on agriculture will be closely watched over the next few months. Potential changes in tax laws could affect estate taxation and capital gains rules that in turn influence buying and selling decisions,” Dickhut said.

SOUTH DAKOTA HIGH QUALITY LAND

AVERAGE SALE PRICES PER ACRE



Source: Farmers National Company Agent Survey

■ January 2016

■ January 2017

Today in Weather History

1861 - The temperature at Gouverneur, NY, bottomed out at -40 degrees, a drop of 70 degrees in one day. Two days later the mercury hit 55 degrees. (David Ludlum)

1861 - Hanover, NH, plunged from 37 degrees at 1 PM on the 7th to 32 degrees below zero at 7 AM on the 8th, and West Cummington MA plummeted 80 degrees to -32 degrees. Boston MA plunged from 46 degrees to -14 degrees, and on the 11th was back up to 60 degrees. (7th-8th) (The Weather Channel)

1934 - A deep freeze made it possible to drive from Bay Shore to Fire Island NY. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1978 - The worst winter storm of record struck coastal New England. The storm produced 27.5 inches of snow at Boston, and nearly 50 inches in northeastern Rhode Island. The fourteen foot tide at Portland ME was probably the highest of the century. Winds gusted to 79 mph at Boston, and reached 92 mph at Chatham MA. A hurricane size surf caused 75 deaths and 500 million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Low pressure in Manitoba, Canada, pulled warm air up from the Gulf of Mexico, and more than forty cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including North Platte NE and Rapid City SD with readings of 73 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Twenty-two cities in the eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Binghamton NY with a reading of 5 degrees below zero. Snow blanketed southern Louisiana, with three inches reported at Cameron. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Twenty-five cities in the western U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. Lows of 16 at Las Vegas NV, 26 at Bakersfield CA, -29 degrees at Milford UT, and -16 degrees at Reno NV were February records. The low of 43 degrees below zero at Boca CA was a state record for the month of February. In Utah, lows of -32 degrees at Bryce Canyon, -27 degrees at Delta, -29 degrees at Dugway, and -38 degrees at Vernal were all-time records for those locations. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - A slow moving cold front spread heavy snow across the state of Utah. Storm totals ranged up to 31 inches at Alta, with 24 inches at reported Brighton and 23 inches at Snowbird. Bitter cold weather prevailed across Alaska for the thirteenth day in a row, with morning lows of -42 degrees at Fairbanks, -48 degrees at Nena-na, and -54 degrees at Bettles. Anchorage AK reported a record low of 23 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



livestream

Upcoming Events








Tuesday at 8 p.m.

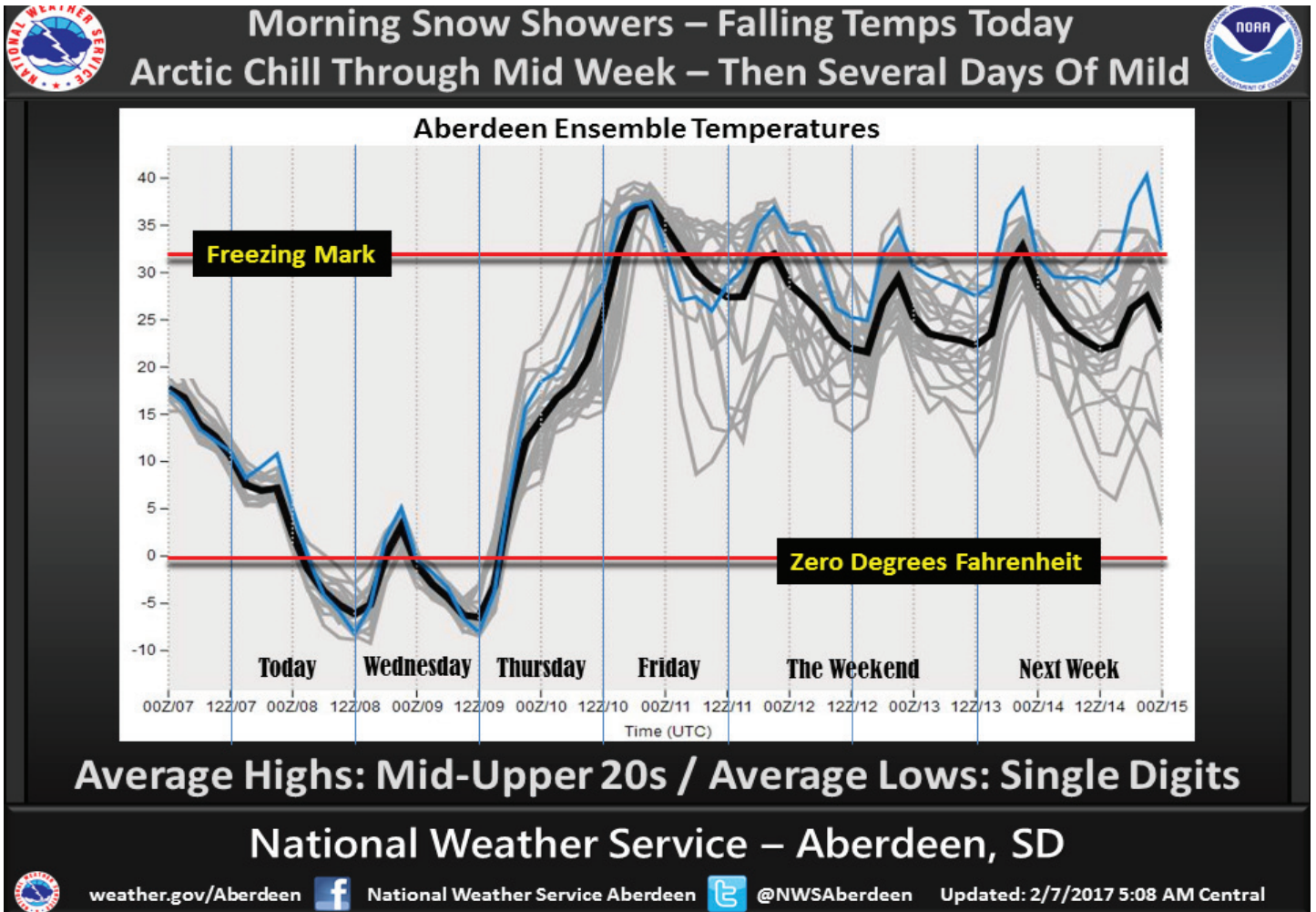
**Girls' Basketball Ball
at Aberdeen Roncalli**

gdilive.com

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Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
						
40% Chance Snow then Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Cold	Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Partly Sunny
High: 14 °F	Low: -5 °F	High: 10 °F	Low: -7 °F	High: 20 °F	Low: 17 °F	High: 50 °F



Published on: 02/07/2017 at 5:11AM

A system moving across the region this morning will bring with it some brief but intense snow showers, along with an Arctic chill. The graph shows the general range of temperatures that can be expected for the Aberdeen area, although the rest of the region will experience similar trends. Through about mid week expect below normal temperatures. The good news is that there will be a substantial warm up for the end of the work week which will likely persist into next week.

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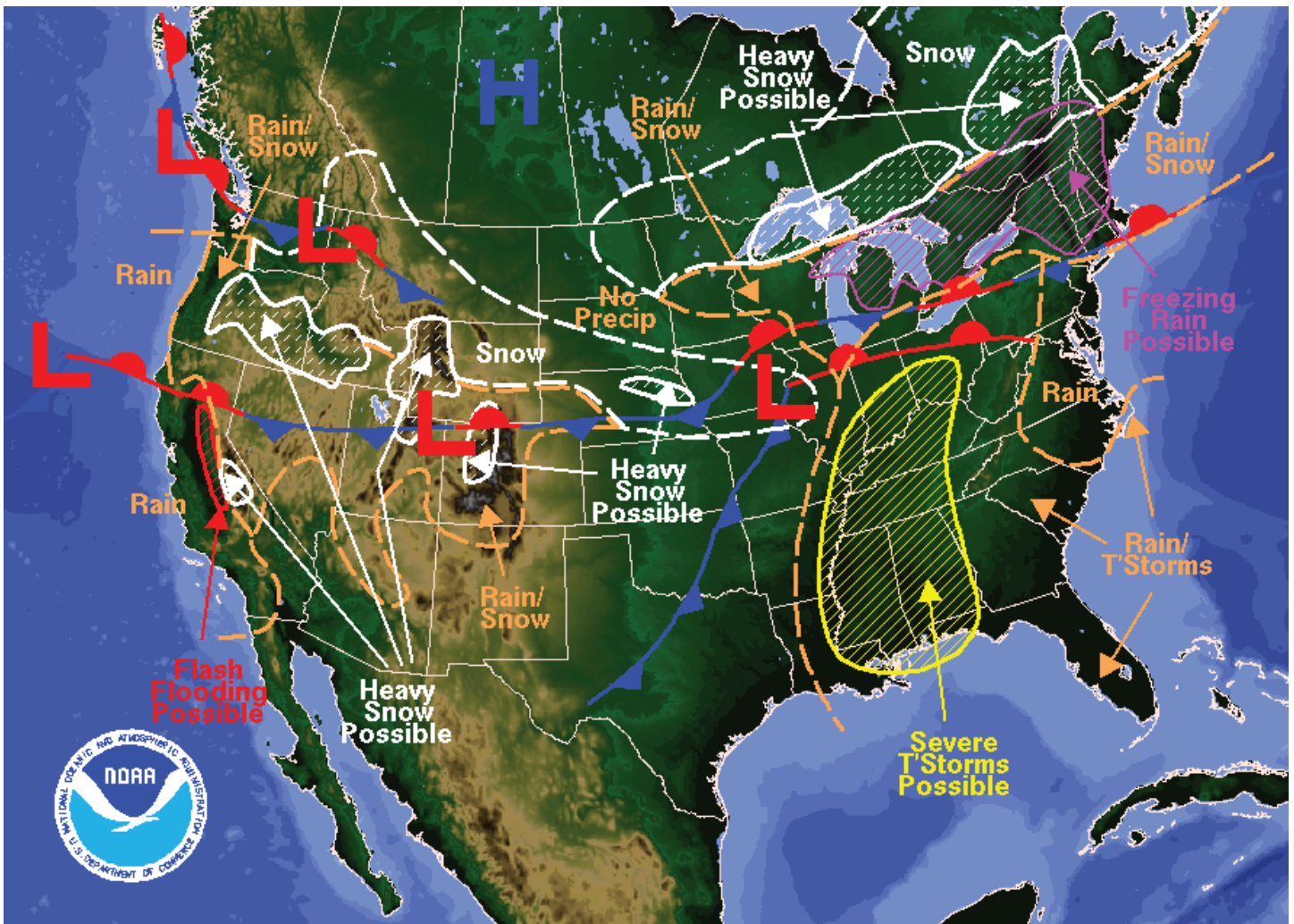
Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 20.7 F at 1:13 PM
Low Outside Temp: 14.4 F at 11:57 PM
High Gust: 23.0 Mph at 3:05 PM

Rain: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 62° in 1987
Record Low: -34 in 1971
Average High: 26°F
Average Low: 4°F
Average Precip in Feb.: 0.11
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.58
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:49 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:45 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Tue, Feb 07, 2017, issued 4:38 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

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COUNT ON ME!

General Robert E. Lee had a brilliant officer serving on his staff. He was fiercely faithful and loyal to the general. He was also a man of conviction, courage and confidence. Every letter or note he wrote to General Lee was signed, "You can count on me."

Our Lord has many people He can count but not many He can count on. But there is one who stands as an example to all of us: Joshua!

Joshua was careful to obey all of the teachings and instructions given by God. As we read the book that bears his name, we find the theme of obedience time and time again. This theme of obedience is so very prominent because it was an important aspect of the believer's life. Additionally, it is certainly a significant part of our lives and one part of our lives that, with God's help, we can control.

We cannot control the events that God brings into our lives, but we can control the way we respond to them. We cannot control the behavior of others around us but we certainly can control how we behave when we are in their presence. We cannot control the decisions of our leaders but we certainly can "pray without ceasing" for them. We cannot control the content of the media but we can certainly choose different materials to read or programs to watch on television.

However, one choice that every Christian has is to obey God. God's Word sets the standard for all to follow.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, empower us with Your Holy Spirit to understand and accept Your Word, and to be obedient to it so You will be able to "count on us." In Jesus' Name, Amen

Scripture for Today: Joshua 11:15 As the Lord had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did. He left nothing undone of all that the Lord had commanded Moses.

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News from the Associated Press

Monday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Bon Homme 54, Beresford 35
Boyd County, Neb. 48, Burke/South Central 24
Bridgewater-Emery 76, Canton 54
Castlewood 62, DeSmet 40
Douglas 64, Sturgis Brown 63
Dupree 57, Kadoka Area 56
Ethan 56, Wagner 51
Great Plains Lutheran 56, Elkton-Lake Benton 53
James Valley Christian 72, Highmore-Harrold 61
Lyman 65, Jones County 62
Madison 62, Chamberlain 56
Miller 78, Ipswich 61
Solen JV, N.D. 87, Wakpala 43
Sully Buttes 74, Stanley County 55
Todd County 68, McLaughlin 65
Wall 70, Philip 65

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Belle Fourche 54, Lead-Deadwood 23
Beresford 64, Bon Homme 34
Burke/South Central 51, Boyd County, Neb. 32
Chester 48, Canistota 41
Dakota Valley 58, Sioux City, North, Iowa 53
Dupree 75, Takini 16
Elk Point-Jefferson 46, Lawton-Bronson, Iowa 41
Elkton-Lake Benton 48, Great Plains Lutheran 38
Ethan 69, Wagner 27
Florence/Henry 57, Estelline 19
Grant County, N.D. 64, Lemmon 32
Hankinson, N.D. 49, Langford 39
Howard 56, Menno 53, OT
Ipswich 59, Miller 53
Irene-Wakonda 59, Alcester-Hudson 50
Little Wound 83, St. Francis Indian 43
McCook Central/Montrose 59, West Central 50
McLaughlin 81, Todd County 69
New Underwood 63, Kadoka Area 35
Parkston 47, Chamberlain 40
Red Cloud 51, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 39
Timber Lake 58, Standing Rock, N.D. 46
Wakpala 58, Solen, N.D. 54
Waverly-South Shore 57, Waubay/Summit 46
Winner 50, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 40

A pair of bills meant to impose stricter regulations on lobbyists and public officials easily passed Monday through their first legislative tests

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A pair of bills meant to impose stricter regulations on lobbyists and public officials easily passed their first legislative tests Monday as state lawmakers weigh measures that would replace provisions of a recently repealed government ethics overhaul.

A Senate bill would bar many officials from private lobbying for two years after leaving state government, while a House proposal would put in place a \$100 annual limit for gifts that legislators and other public officials could accept from lobbyists.

They were unanimously advanced to their full chambers, and Gov. Dennis Daugaard's office indicated support for both bills. Top Republicans have given assurances that voters would see laws passed this session to replace provisions of the voter-approved ethics package that lawmakers dismantled last week.

Under the now-defunct initiative, voters could tap a state fund to give two credits worth \$50 each to participating political candidates. It strictly limited lobbyist gifts to lawmakers and also called for an independent commission to ensure that state ethics laws weren't violated and to administer the public campaign finance program.

GOP lawmakers contend that those provisions are unconstitutional, and the embattled law wasn't in effect as Republicans were challenging it in court. Supporters argued that the measure is constitutional.

One of the bills that advanced Monday would put back into state law similar restrictions on former officials becoming lobbyists, doubling the ban in current law to two years. It would apply to former elected officers, department or agency heads and other officials.

Senate Majority Leader Blake Curd, the bill's main sponsor, said he looks forward to working for many provisions that would "make our government better, more transparent, open and accountable to the public."

The other measure would impose the annual \$100 gift limit on statewide officeholders, executive branch agency heads and legislators, or their immediate families.

A gift would be defined as anything of value given without compensation, but it doesn't include food and beverage under \$75 per meal, among other things.

The bill is a bipartisan attempt to put in writing what has already been practice in South Dakota — that public officials not receive gifts from lobbyists or people who employ them, said House Speaker Mark Mickelson, the measure's main sponsor.

House Democratic leader Spencer Hawley said the bill is a step toward honoring the intent of the voters.

A South Dakota House committee has unanimously approved a bill that would allow prosecution against those who traffic minors between the age of 16 and 18

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota House committee has unanimously approved a bill to make it easier to prosecute those who traffic minors between the age of 16 and 18.

The bill that advanced Monday would eliminate the need to prove force, fraud or coercion when prosecuting someone for trafficking minors. Supporters say minors might not testify against their traffickers because they don't realize they've fallen victim.

Sponsor Rep. Thomas Holmes, a Republican from Sioux Falls, says the changing the law could allow prosecutors to lock up more sex traffickers.

The Argus Leader reports (<http://argusne.ws/2jVG8B6>) South Dakota and New York are the only states that require proof of force, fraud or coercion. Police say that requirement makes the state "particularly palatable to traffickers" and makes Sioux Falls a "destination city" for the crime.

A South Dakota lawmaker whose committee was debating whether to allow concealed guns in the Capitol said he hit a panic button just to see how quickly authorities would respond

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota lawmaker whose committee was debating whether to allow concealed guns in the Capitol said he hit a panic button just to see how quickly authorities would respond.

Republican Rep. Larry Rhoden announced what he'd done Monday after several minutes, and his comments were the only public indication that he had hit an alarm meant to alert authorities. Rhoden said he thought it would take less than roughly five minutes for authorities to respond, but the Highway Patrol later issued a statement saying security was able to quickly assess the situation using video monitoring.

Rhoden brought up the incident while he explained his support for legislation that would roll back a ban on guns that applies to most people at the Capitol — a bill that does not have the Highway Patrol's backing.

"We've all heard the old adage that when seconds count, the police are only minutes away," Rhoden said at the committee hearing. "I thought maybe that would be different in our situation."

Highway Patrol Superintendent Col. Craig Price said in a statement that the Capitol protective services division was notified within 25 seconds of the alarm being pressed. A supervisor then looked at the video monitoring system and saw that an armed plainclothes state trooper was already in the room. Nonetheless, Price said, a uniformed officer responded to verify there was no emergency.

Price said that while not all responses may be visible, officers take seriously their responsibility for security at the Capitol and state government complex.

The bill would allow people who have an enhanced pistol permit to bring guns into the Capitol, which has no metal detectors or other security checks at its entrances. Patrol Maj. Rick Miller testified against the legislation during Monday's hearing.

The committee voted to approve the bill, sending it to the full House. Similar legislation has failed in the past.

House Majority Leader Lee Qualm, the bill's main sponsor, said lawmakers on their chamber floor are like "sitting ducks."

"A good guy with a gun is the only thing that will take care of a bad guy with a gun," Qualm said.

A South Dakota House committee has approved a bill that would boost the penalty for performing abortions after 19 weeks of pregnancy from a misdemeanor to a felony

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota House committee has passed a bill that would boost the penalty for performing abortions after 19 weeks of pregnancy from a misdemeanor to a felony.

The panel on Monday revisited a law approved last year that prohibits abortions after 19 weeks and made performing them a misdemeanor, except in medical emergencies.

The bill's sponsor, Rep. Steven Haugaard, a Republican from Sioux Falls, says the misdemeanor charge was an inconsistency in the state's abortion penalty statute and that this bill would fix that.

The state's only abortion clinic, Planned Parenthood in Sioux Falls, does not perform abortions after 14 weeks of pregnancy.

Samantha Spawn of the abortion-rights group NARAL Pro-Choice South Dakota says legislators who support the bill intended to punish women and have "misplaced priorities."

A South Dakota legislative committee has voted 10-5 to kill a bill that would have allowed home-schooled children to participate in public school activities without school board approval

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota legislative committee has voted 10-5 to kill a bill that would have allowed home-schooled children to participate in public school activities without school board approval.

Current law allows school districts to decide whether to allow home-schoolers to participate. Opponents of the bill argued at Monday's meeting that that's good enough.

The Argus Leader of Sioux Falls reports (<http://argusne.ws/2lgCnlX>) that some school officials worry the bill's wording could open loopholes for students who don't meet the state's eligibility rules.

The bill's sponsor, Rep. Sue Peterson, a Republican and home-school parent from Sioux Falls, says it's time to update the law. She cited former NFL quarterback Tim Tebow as a success story due to Florida's activity participation law.

Another bill with similar wording is pending in a Senate committee.

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

Authorities are investigating an armed robbery at a casino in South Dakota

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Authorities are investigating an armed robbery at a casino in South Dakota. Two suspects were caught on security cameras stealing cash from a register and safe at Happy Jack's Casino in Sioux Falls early Friday morning.

Casino clerks were ordered to the ground as a one of the suspects went back to an office and demanded the code to a safe. The suspects are believed to be a man and woman.

Authorities say no one was injured during the robbery and did not disclose how much money was stolen.

A federal judge has spared from prison two Kansas men convicted of federal firearms violations after taking into account their mistaken belief that a Kansas law can shield from federal prosecution anyone owning firearms made, sold and kept in the state

By ROXANA HEGEMAN, Associated Press

WICHITA, Kan. (AP) — A federal judge spared from prison two Kansas men convicted of federal firearms violations after taking into account Monday their mistaken belief that a Kansas law can shield from federal prosecution anyone owning firearms made, sold and kept in the state.

The sentence handed down by U.S. District Judge J. Thomas Marten still leaves intact the federal felony convictions against Shane Cox and Jeremy Kettler, both of Chanute, Kansas. Cox, 45, was given two years of supervised probation, and Kettler, 28, got one year of supervised probation.

Jurors in November returned eight guilty verdicts against Cox, the owner of the now-closed Tough Guys gun store in Chanute, under the National Firearms Act for illegally making and marketing unregistered firearms, including a short-barreled rifle and gun silencers. Kettler was found guilty on one count of possession of an unregistered silencer.

As convicted felons, neither man is allowed to own or possess a firearm.

The Kansas Second Amendment Protection Act, which passed in 2013, says firearms, accessories and ammunition manufactured and kept within the borders of Kansas are exempt from federal gun control laws.

Marten told the two men that while state law is not available to them as a defense, it is a factor he can take into account at their sentencing.

"I am satisfied you both had a good faith belief that you are protected by that statute," Marten said.

In addition to Kansas, similar firearm nullification laws have been signed into law in Alaska, Arizona, Idaho, Montana, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah and Wyoming, according to Everytown For Gun Safety, which advocates common-sense gun control laws.

"You have to understand where we are coming from: The federal government is not omnipotent... They have called everybody's bluff," said state Republican Rep. Mike Houser.

Cox and Kettler told the judge after learning of the proposed sentence that they appreciated him not sending them to prison. Cox also said he was "glad we have Trump as president," eliciting laughter from the packed courtroom of about 60 supporters.

Kettler said after the hearing that he plans to appeal, and said the state law that got him in trouble still stands and could also confuse others. The state should get with the federal government and "figure out who has the right" to control guns in Kansas, he said.

Defense attorneys contended that the National Firearms Act — a part of the Internal Revenue code enacted under Congress' power to levy taxes — is unconstitutional. They also argued that the federal law violated the Second Amendment as well as Tenth Amendment state rights protections of the U.S. Constitution.

"Somebody had to take one for the team," Cox said. "I was doing it out in the open, it wasn't a secretive thing."

Federal appellate court judges will hear arguments Tuesday in the fierce battle over President Donald Trump's travel and refugee ban in a case headed for a possible final face-off at the Supreme Court

By ERIC TUCKER and SUDHIN THANAWALA, Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — State and federal lawyers will argue before a panel of federal appellate court judges Tuesday in the pitched fight over President Donald Trump's travel and refugee ban that could reach the Supreme Court.

The legal dispute involves two divergent views of the role of the executive branch and the court system.

The federal government maintains the president alone has the power to decide who can enter or stay in the United States, while states suing Trump say his executive order is unconstitutional.

Seattle U.S. District Judge James Robart, who on Friday temporarily blocked Trump's order, has said a judge's job is to ensure that an action taken by the government "comports with our country's laws."

The Justice Department filed a new defense of Trump's ban on travelers from seven predominantly Muslim nations as a federal appeals court weighs whether to restore the administration's executive order. The lawyers said Monday the travel ban was a "lawful exercise" of the president's authority to protect national security and said Robart's order that put the policy on hold should be overruled.

The filing with the San Francisco-based 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals was the latest salvo in a high-stakes legal fight surrounding Trump's order.

Washington state, Minnesota and other states say the appellate court should allow a temporary restraining order blocking the travel ban to stand as their lawsuit moves through the legal system.

The judges hearing the arguments — two Democrat-appointed judges and one Republican appointee — are from a randomly assigned panel.

The appeals court over the weekend refused to immediately reinstate the ban, and lawyers for Washington and Minnesota argued anew on Monday that any resumption would "unleash chaos again," separating families and stranding university students.

The Justice Department responded that the president has clear authority to "suspend the entry of any class of aliens" to the U.S. in the name of national security. It said the travel ban, which temporarily suspends the country's refugee program and immigration from seven countries with terrorism concerns, was intended "to permit an orderly review and revision of screening procedures to ensure that adequate standards are in place to protect against terrorist attacks."

The challengers of the ban were asking "courts to take the extraordinary step of second-guessing a formal national security judgment made by the president himself pursuant to broad grants of statutory

authority," the Justice Department wrote.

The Seattle judge's ruling triggered a Twitter rant by the president.

On Sunday, Trump tweeted, "Just cannot believe a judge would put our country in such peril. If something happens blame him and court system. People pouring in. Bad!"

Whatever the appeals court decides, either side could ask the Supreme Court to intervene.

It could prove difficult, though, to find the necessary five votes at the high court to undo a lower court order; the Supreme Court has been at less than full strength since Justice Antonin Scalia's death a year ago. The last immigration case that reached the justices ended in a 4-4 tie.

How and when a case might get to the Supreme Court is unclear. The travel ban itself is to expire in 90 days, meaning it could run its course before a higher court takes up the issue. Or the administration could change it in any number of ways that would keep the issue alive.

After Robart's ruling, the State Department quickly said people from the seven countries — Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen — could travel to the U.S. if they had valid visas.

On Monday, a graduate student who had traveled to Libya with her 1-year-old son to visit her sick mother and attend her father's funeral was back in Fort Collins, Colorado, after having been stopped in Jordan on her return trip. She was welcomed with flowers and balloons by her husband and other children.

Syrian immigrant Mathyo Asali said he thought his life was "ruined" when he landed at Philadelphia International Airport on Jan. 28 only to be denied entry to the United States. Asali, who returned to Damascus, said he figured he'd be inducted into the Syrian military. He was back on U.S. soil Monday.

"It's really nice to know that there's a lot of people supporting us," Asali told Gov. Tom Wolf, who greeted the family at a relative's house in Allentown.

States challenging the ban have been joined by technology companies, who have said it makes it more difficult to recruit employees. National security officials under President Barack Obama have also come out against it.

Tucker reported from Washington. Associated Press writers Martha Bellisle and Gene Johnson in Seattle, Matthew Barakat in Chantilly, Virginia, Michael Rubinkam in Allentown, Pennsylvania, Colleen Slevin in Denver and Mark Sherman in Washington contributed to this report.

A divided Senate is set to confirm President Donald Trump's education secretary nominee, Betsy DeVos, by the narrowest possible margin

By MARIA DANILOVA and ERICA WERNER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate was poised on Tuesday to confirm President Donald Trump's nominee for education secretary by the narrowest possible margin, with Vice President Mike Pence expected to break a 50-50 tie, despite a last-ditch effort by Democrats to sink the nomination.

The vote was expected after an all-night speaking marathon by Democrats on the Senate floor, in a show of opposition to the candidacy of Betsy DeVos. She is a wealthy GOP donor who has devoted herself to promoting charter schools and private school vouchers, sparking concerns among educators that she won't be a strong champion for the nation's public school systems.

Two GOP senators, Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, have announced plans to oppose DeVos in a Senate split 52-48 between Republicans and Democrats. That will leave her with a tie vote if all other Republicans support her and all Democrats oppose her as expected, and will require Pence to put her over the top. A vice president breaking a tie on a Cabinet nomination would be a first in the history of the Senate, according to the Senate historian's office.

Sen. Jeff Merkley of Oregon took the Senate floor before dawn to urge his Republican colleagues to oppose DeVos. Merkley charged that DeVos will seek to turn public education into another huge corporation and deprive students from low-income families and children with disabilities and special needs from thriving.

"That's the vision we are fighting for that is about to be deeply damaged, should the reins of public education be handed over to an individual who wants to destroy public education," Merkley said. "That is why I am encouraging my colleagues to search your hearts, step aside from party politics and pay to play in politics and fight for the children of the united states of America."

Emotions ran high ahead of the vote as constituents jammed senators' phone lines with calls and protesters gathered outside the Capitol, including one person in a grizzly bear costume to ridicule DeVos' comment during her confirmation hearing that some schools might want guns to protect against grizzlies. Her opponents also charge that DeVos has no experience to run public schools, having never attended one or sent her children to a public school.

But Republicans accused Democrats of slow-walking DeVos and other qualified nominees to placate liberal base voters who still haven't come to terms with Trump's election.

"It seems this gridlock and opposition has far less to do with the nominees actually before us than the man who nominated them," said Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky. "Enough is enough."

In addition to DeVos, Republicans hope to confirm a series of other divisive nominees this week: Alabama Republican Sen. Jeff Sessions as attorney general, GOP Rep. Tom Price of Georgia as health secretary and financier Steven Mnuchin as treasury secretary.

In each case Democrats intend to use the maximum time allowed under the Senate's arcane rules to debate the nominations, which may result in a late-night votes this week and delay Mnuchin's approval until Saturday.

Republicans complain that previous presidents have been able to put their Cabinets in place more quickly. Democrats say it's Trump's fault because many of his nominees have complicated financial arrangements and ethical entanglements they claim they have not had enough time to dissect. Thus far, six Cabinet and high-level officials have been confirmed, including the secretaries of state, defense, homeland security and transportation.

The clash over nominees has created a toxic atmosphere in the Senate that mirrors the tense national mood since Trump's election, with Democrats boycotting committee votes and Republicans unilaterally jamming nominees through committee without Democrats present. Yet there is little suspense about the final outcome on any of the nominees because Democrats themselves changed Senate rules when they were in the majority several years ago so that Cabinet nominees can now be approved with a simple majority, not the 60 votes previously required.

Palestinian Cabinet minister calls on international community to punish Israel over new, contentious settlement law

By TIA GOLDENBERG, Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — A Palestinian Cabinet minister on Tuesday called on the international community to punish Israel for a contentious new law, just hours after the Israeli parliament adopted the bill to retroactively legalize thousands of West Bank settlement homes built unlawfully on private Palestinian land.

The explosive law, approved by lawmakers late on Monday, is the latest in a series of pro-settler steps taken by Israel's hard-line government since the election of Donald Trump as U.S. president. It is expected to trigger international outrage and a flurry of lawsuits against the measure.

"Nobody can legalize the theft of the Palestinian lands. Building settlements is a crime, building settlements is against all international laws," said Palestinian Tourism and Antiquities Minister Rula Maayaa. "I think it is time now for the international community to act concretely to stop the Israelis from these crimes."

Trump is seen as more sympathetic to Israel's settlement policies than his fiercely critical predecessor Barack Obama, and the Israeli government has approved plans to build thousands of new homes on occupied territory since Trump took office.

Using a biblical name for the West Bank, Israeli Cabinet minister Yariv Levin said the law was "a first step in a series of measures that we must take in order to make our presence in Judea and Samaria present for years, for decades, for ages."

"I do believe that our right over our fatherland is something that cannot be denied," he said.

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According to the law, Palestinian landowners would be compensated either with money or alternative land, even if they did not agree to give up their property. Critics say the legislation enshrines into law the theft of Palestinian land, and it is expected to be challenged in Israel's Supreme Court.

The vote passed 60-52 in Israel's 120-member Knesset. The raucous debate saw opposition lawmakers shouting from their seats at governing coalition lawmakers speaking in favor of the vote. Some spectators in visitors' seats raised a black cloth in apparent protest.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had voiced misgivings about the law in the lead-up to the vote, reportedly expressing concern that it could trigger international censure and saying he wanted to coordinate with the Trump administration before moving ahead on a vote.

He told reporters on a trip to London that he had updated Washington and was ready to move ahead with the law. Netanyahu was on his way back from the trip and was not present for the vote.

The White House's immediate response was to refer to its statement last week that said the construction of new settlements "may not be helpful" in achieving an Israeli-Palestinian peace. The State Department later said "the Trump administration will withhold comment on the legislation until the relevant court ruling."

David Harris, CEO of AJC, the global Jewish advocacy organization, said that "Israel's High Court can and should reverse this misguided legislation" ahead of Netanyahu's meeting with Trump in February.

Critics have also warned the bill could drag Israel into a legal battle at the International Criminal Court at The Hague, Netherlands, which is already pursuing a preliminary examination into settlements.

Among the law's problematic elements is that the West Bank is not sovereign Israeli territory and that Palestinians who live there are not citizens and do not have the right to vote for the government that imposed the law on them.

Nabil Abu Rdeneh, a spokesman for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, called the law "unacceptable" and urged the international community to act immediately. "This is an escalation that would only lead to more instability and chaos," he said.

Netanyahu faced intense pressure from within his nationalist coalition, especially from the pro-settler Jewish Home party, to press ahead with the vote following the court-ordered evacuation last week of the illegal Amona outpost found to have been built on private Palestinian land. Over 40 settler families were forced to leave the 20-year-old outpost, and on Monday construction vehicles demolished and removed the trailer homes that remained behind.

Naftali Bennett, head of the Jewish Home party, told Israel's Army Radio on Tuesday that the goal of the bill was create the same conditions in the settlements as in Israel proper.

"At the end of the day, behind all the talk there is a simple question: what do we want for the future of Israel?" he said.

After years of condemnations from the Obama administration over settlement construction, Israel's government has ramped up settlement initiatives since Trump took office, announcing plans for some 6,000 new homes in the West Bank and east Jerusalem and promising to build a new settlement for the Amona evacuees.

Trump has signaled a far more accepting approach to settlements, raising hopes in Netanyahu's government that it will be able to step up construction. The White House said little as Netanyahu announced plans during Trump's first two weeks in office to build over 6,000 new settler homes. But after Netanyahu announced his plan to establish a new settlement for the first time in two decades, Trump indicated that he, too, might have his limits.

"While we don't believe the existence of settlements is an impediment to peace, the construction of new settlements or the expansion of existing settlements beyond their current borders may not be helpful in achieving that goal," the White House said.

The Palestinians want the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip — territories Israel captured in the 1967 Mideast war — for their future state. Much of the international community views settlements as illegal and an obstacle to reaching peace with the Palestinians. Shortly before leaving office, Obama allowed the U.N. Security Council to pass a resolution declaring settlements illegal.

Before the law passed, the U.N. Mideast envoy, Nickolay Mladenov, called on lawmakers to vote against the law, saying that "it will have far-reaching legal consequences for Israel and greatly diminish the pros-

pects for Arab-Israeli peace.”

Associated Press writers Bradley Klapper in Washington and Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations contributed to this report.

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. APPEALS COURTS WILL HEAR TRUMP TRAVEL BAN ARGUMENTS

The federal government maintains the president alone has the power to decide who can enter or stay in the United States, while states suing Trump call his executive order unconstitutional.

2. POOR WISCONSIN COUNTY THAT VOTED FOR TRUMP AWAITS ECONOMIC REVIVAL

“We’ve been railroaded, run over by the politicians and run over by laws,” says small-engine repair shop owner Mark Berns, a Crawford County resident.

3. PALESTINIANS SEEK TO PUNISH ISRAEL OVER SETTLEMENTS LAW

The explosive law is the latest in a series of pro-settler steps taken by Israel’s hard-line government since the election of Donald Trump as U.S. president.

4. AS MANY AS 13,000 HANGED IN SYRIA PRISON SINCE 2011, AMNESTY SAYS

Senior Syrian officials authorized the killings at Saydnaya Prison — known to detainees as the slaughterhouse — the rights group says.

5. MILITARY ASKS FOR \$30B DEFENSE BUDGET INCREASE

Pentagon officials say they need the added funds for new jet fighters, armored vehicles, improved training and more.

6. TRUMP SAYS MEDIA IGNORE SOME TERROR ATTACKS, BUT OFFERS NO EVIDENCE

The president makes an unsupported claim that terrorist acts in Europe go unreported.

7. WHAT MYANMAR POLICE FOUND IN BUDDHIST MONK’S CAR, MONASTERY

Acting on a tip, officers discovered 400,000 meth pills in the monk’s vehicle, and another 4 million pills in his monastery.

8. JAPANESE ENGINEER WORKS TO SCULPT SOUND

Yasuhisa Toyota’s talents at crafting acoustics are widely sought out as classical music venues are increasingly designed in “vineyard style,” where audiences surround the stage to hear performers up close.

9. WHERE’S THE MOST EXPENSIVE HOUSE IN U.S.

The 38,000-square-foot Los Angeles mansion, listed for \$250 million, boasts 12 bedroom suites, 21 bathrooms, and a 40-foot theater.

10. PATRIOTS READY FOR VICTORY LAP

Tom Brady and company will parade through Boston following the team’s come-from-behind 34-28 overtime win over the Atlanta Falcons in the Super Bowl.

Buoyed by President Donald Trump’s pledge to rebuild the U.S. armed forces, senior Pentagon officials have delivered to Congress blueprints for increasing the defense budget by more than \$30 billion

By RICHARD LARDNER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Buoyed by President Donald Trump’s pledge to rebuild the U.S. armed forces, senior Pentagon officials have delivered to Congress plans for increasing the defense budget by more than \$30 billion to acquire new jet fighters, armored vehicles, improved training and more.

The informal proposals, obtained by The Associated Press, represent the first attempt by Trump’s Defense Department to halt an erosion of the military’s readiness for combat. The shortfalls outlined in the documents may provide Trump and the Republican-led Congress with a powerful incentive to strike the

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strict limits on military spending mandated by a 2011 budget control law.

Portions of the plans will likely be included in the formal supplemental budget for 2017 that the Trump administration is sending to Capitol Hill soon.

Top defense officials are scheduled to testify Tuesday before the House Armed Services Committee on the state of the military. They're expected to address how the fiscal caps — known as sequestration — have pushed the armed forces to a breaking point by locking them into budgets too small to address heavy demands.

Appearing before the committee will be Gen. Daniel Allyn, Army vice chief of staff; Gen. Stephen Wilson, Air Force vice chief of staff; Adm. William Moran, vice chief of naval operations; and Gen. Glenn Walters, assistant commandant of the Marine Corps.

The Marine Corps, arguing for \$4.2 billion boost in its 2017 budget, warned that the "nation's force in readiness" will have to continue shifting money intended for new weapons to pay current bills.

"As near-peer competitors probe the limits of American retrenchment and the operational environment grows more complex, the Marine Corps of today is largely optimized for the past and sacrificing modernization to sustain current readiness," the service's budget amendment reads.

The Navy's request totals \$12 billion in additional spending and asks for 24 F/A-18E/F Super Hornet fighters, one San Antonio-class amphibious landing dock ship, and dozens more Sidewinder missiles.

Without more money, the 2017 fiscal year — which ends Sept. 30 — "is projected to have a significant shortfall in afloat readiness," according to the Navy document.

The Army is seeking a \$8.2 billion "modernization uplift" for a force of 476,000 active-duty soldiers, which is the troop floor mandated by Congress. Nearly \$2.2 billion of the total would be spent on new CH-47F Chinook heavy-lift and Apache attack helicopters and 12 Grey Eagle surveillance drones. Another \$400 million would go to strengthen soldier training.

The Air Force plan outlines \$6.2 billion in "unfunded priorities." including money for five additional F-35 Joint Strike Fighters. The service also wants \$225 million to maintain an active-duty force of 322,000 airmen.

Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, said Monday there is widespread agreement on Capitol Hill that sequestration needs to be eliminated. He said there is an overwhelming view that defense spending has been cut too much and added that more of the broader federal budget is under scrutiny than before.

"I think we have a great opportunity to do the right thing for the country," Thornberry told reporters. "I'm pretty optimistic that it will actually happen."

Follow Richard Lardner on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/rplardner>

At \$250 million, a new mega mansion in the exclusive Bel Air neighborhood of Los Angeles is the most expensive home listed in the United States

By AMANDA LEE MYERS, Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — At \$250 million, a new mega mansion in the exclusive Bel Air neighborhood of Los Angeles is the most expensive home listed in the United States.

The passion project of developer and handbag tycoon Bruce Makowsky, the four-level, 38,000-square-foot mansion built on spec includes 12 bedroom suites, 21 bathrooms, five bars, three gourmet kitchens, a spa and an 85-foot infinity swimming pool with stunning views of Los Angeles. There's also a 40-seat movie theater, a bowling alley, and a fleet of exotic and vintage cars worth \$30 million.

According to Makowsky, only 3,000 people in the world could afford to buy it.

The Associated Press recently interviewed Makowsky inside the mansion. Here's what he had to say about why he built it and who would spend \$250 million on a house.

Q: Why did you build this house?

A: "After being on major mega yachts across the world and on beautiful private aircraft, it didn't make

sense to me people were spending \$350 million on a boat, \$100 million on a plane and they're living in \$20 million and \$30 million homes ... The homes have not kept up with the toys. So my feeling is if you're going to spend over 12 hours a day in your home it should be the most amazing experience in the world."

Q: What is it like being inside the house?

A: "I would say it's the eighth wonder of the world. I've had a couple people come in here and say it's in the top seven — one of the other seven could go away ... Every single inch of this house is breathtaking. It's a sensory overload. I've shown this house about 25 times now. People go in and use just about every adjective on half of the lower level. There's no more adjectives. They just become numb. Every single thing in this house makes you feel like you're in heaven."

Q: How did you reach \$250 million for the listing price?

A: "The reason it's \$250 million is because of all the work for the past four years of having 300 people inside here, the art curations inside the house. We have over \$30 million worth of cars, exotic sports cars and vintage cars ... We have a 270-degree view from the snow-covered mountains all the way down to L.A. Seven full-time staff come with the house, which is crazy. So if you want the best chef in the world, you have her, and if you want a masseuse we have you all hooked up ... We have water features that go completely around the house. We have stones from 50 different quarries from around the world, the most beautiful precious stones running through the house ... I truly believe the value is here."

Q: Why would someone spend so much money on a house, even with all these amenities?

A: "It's the kind of thing where I can't sell it. Somebody has to fall in love with it and die over it. And when a person sitting with \$2 billion, \$5 billion or \$20 billion in the bank and it's just a number, do they really want to enjoy every second of their life — because this isn't rehearsal, this is real life — or do they just want to look at a number in the bank?"

Donald Trump dismisses polls showing low approval ratings as "fake news," but opposition to his go-it-alone actions persists, from boardrooms to protests everywhere he goes

By LISA LERER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Scrappy as ever, Donald Trump on Monday dismissed polls showing low approval ratings as "fake news." But whatever his opinion, active opposition to his go-it-alone presidency appears to be widening.

From corporate boardrooms to the halls of Congress, Trump is facing an unprecedented effort to disrupt even the most basic of his presidential functions. It's an evolving, largely grass-roots effort that aims to follow Trump and his potential supporters everywhere they go — and there are early signs that it's having an impact.

The Trump name alone is enough to spark outrage. There are plans for a mass "mooning" of Trump Tower in Chicago. Boycotts are underway of companies that sell Ivanka Trump's clothing line or advertise on NBC's "Celebrity Apprentice," where Trump has remained an executive producer.

Congressional offices are being flooded with emails, social media messages and calls jamming phone lines. Hundreds of protesters are flocking to town halls and local congressional offices, some in strongly Republican districts, to voice their opposition to Trump's Cabinet picks, health care plans and refugee restrictions.

The goal, say organizers of some of the efforts, is nothing short of complete resistance. It's a strategy Democrats say they learned from the success of the tea party movement, which stymied President Barack Obama's agenda through protests, door-to-door political action campaigns and online activism.

"The lesson from the last eight years is, sadly, that implacable resistance works," said Rep. Gerry Connelly, D-Va. "Because it's all about your base, and I will simply point out that our base is bigger than theirs, and it's riled up."

Trump and some Republicans shrug it off as sore losers unwilling to accept the results of the election.

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The president's core supporters, in states like Iowa and Wisconsin, applaud him as a man of action, delivering on his campaign promises to move quickly and shake up Washington.

Although recent polls show his approval ratings in the 40s, a historic low for a new president, Trump rejects the surveys as false.

"Any negative polls are fake news, just like the CNN, ABC, NBC polls in the election. Sorry, people want border security and extreme vetting," he tweeted on Monday. "I call my own shots, largely based on an accumulation of data, and everyone knows it."

Later Monday, Trump renewed his Twitter attacks on The New York Times, slamming the paper "for the poor reporting it did on my election win. Now they are worse!"

Trump's base is likely to reward him for his actions, say former White House aides, who note that all presidents face opposition and public demonstrations.

"It's only a problem if it lets it stop him from doing what he seeks to do," said former George W. Bush spokesman Ari Fleischer, who recalled a travel stop in Portland, Oregon, when protesters threw rocks at the president's motorcade. "When it comes to policy full speed ahead, the people screaming at you can't be convinced to be for you in any case."

But recent presidents never faced the kind of multi-front opposition that Trump is now experiencing so early in their terms.

Last week, he canceled a trip to the Harley-Davidson factory in Milwaukee, where local groups planned to protest his event. The White House said the protests weren't the cause. And on Saturday, more than 1,000 protesters beat drums, sang and chanted outside the gates of Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort, where the president was attending a Red Cross benefit.

The displays of public outrage have been aimed not only at Trump but at lawmakers, world leaders and corporate executives who might be tempted to work with him to pass key parts of his agenda, like replacing the health care law or rewriting trade agreements.

The White House claims to be unimpressed by the protests. In fact, a lot of the demonstrators are simply paid to show up and shout, says Trump Press Secretary Sean Spicer. But that's just a fantasy, foes say.

"The level of mobilization against Trump is almost like nothing I've ever seen before," said Joe Dinkin, spokesman for the Working Families Party, which coordinates weekly anti-Trump events across the country. "Collaboration with Trump is a path that will bring well-deserved ire."

Already, there are some signs that the early efforts may be having an impact on his ability to promote his agenda across the globe. On Monday, the speaker of Britain's House of Commons said he strongly opposes Trump addressing Parliament, making it unlikely he'll be given the honor during a state visit later this year.

Technology executive Elon Musk spent hours on Twitter over the weekend defending his decision to serve on Trump's business council. So far, one CEO— Uber's Travis Kalanick — has quit the group after facing a weeklong rider boycott.

The ACLU saw donations pour in after it sued the government over the refugee ban.

And Republican lawmakers are bracing themselves for an onslaught of rowdy town hall meetings, after congressmen in California and Florida faced raucous crowds last weekend.

"The situation was rapidly escalating into a riot," said California Rep. Tom McClintock, who had to be extracted by police from an event in downtown Roseville, the population center of his sprawling congressional district. "One thing came through loud and clear: They were not angry at President Trump for breaking any of his promises - they were angry at him for keeping them."

President Donald Trump is accusing the media of deliberately minimizing coverage of threat posed by the Islamic State group, saying news outlets "have their reasons" for not reporting what he described as a "genocide" underway at the hands of group

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE, Associated Press

MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. (AP) — President Donald Trump on Monday accused the media of deliberately minimizing coverage of the threat posed by the Islamic State group, saying news outlets "have their reasons" for not reporting what he described as a "genocide" underway at the hands of the group.

The president did not immediately offer evidence to support his claim, made during the new commander in chief's first visit to the headquarters for U.S. Central Command. Later, the White House released a list of 78 attacks it described as "executed or inspired by" the Islamic State group since September 2014. The White House said "most" on the list did not get sufficient media attention, although it did not explain how it defined the term. Some of the incidents on the list received widespread attention and deep reporting.

"You've seen what happened in Paris and Nice. All over Europe it's happening. It's gotten to a point where it's not even being reported," Trump told a group of military leaders and troops during the visit. "And in many cases, the very, very dishonest press doesn't want to report it. They have their reasons and you understand that."

Trump, who has made relentless criticism of the media a hallmark of his presidency, did not explain why he thinks news outlets minimize attention on such attacks.

Later, White House spokesman Sean Spicer tried to tone down the president's remarks, saying it was a question of balance: "Like a protest gets blown out of the water, and yet an attack or a foiled attack doesn't necessarily get the same coverage."

The list released late Monday included incidents like a truck massacre in Nice, France, that killed dozens and received widespread attention, as well as less high-profile incidents in which nobody was killed.

The AP could not verify that each of the incidents had connections to the Islamic State group. The list appeared to be hastily assembled, including several misspellings of the word "attacker."

Trump also used the visit to CENTCOM to defend his immigration and refugee restrictions and reaffirm his support for NATO.

He laced his speech with references to homeland security amid a court battle over his travel ban on people from seven majority-Muslim countries. He did not directly mention the case now before a federal appeals court after a lower court temporarily suspended the ban.

"We need strong programs" so that "people that love us and want to love our country and will end up loving our country are allowed in" and those who "want to destroy us and destroy our country" are kept out, Trump said.

"Freedom, security and justice will prevail," Trump added. "We will defeat radical Islamic terrorism and we will not allow it to take root in our country. We're not going to allow it."

Trump touched upon various alliances in his remarks, noting, "we strongly support NATO."

He spoke Sunday with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. A White House statement said the two "discussed how to encourage all NATO allies to meet their defense spending commitments," and also talked about the crisis in Ukraine and security challenges facing NATO countries.

Trump once dismissed the trans-Atlantic military alliance as "obsolete," and said he would decide whether to protect NATO countries against Russian aggression based on whether those countries "have fulfilled their obligations to us."

Speaking as commander in chief, Trump repeated his promises to defeat "radical Islamic terrorists" but provided no specifics on any policy changes he wants in the fight against the Islamic State.

Before his remarks, Trump sat down for lunch with a room full of troops in fatigues from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines, as well as senior members of his White House staff.

Trump made small talk with some of the soldiers, discussing everything from football to military careers.

"Gonna make it a career?" Trump asked one person.

"C'mon, you have to stay," he urged another.

Trump also hailed New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady, saying he "cemented his place" in football history after his fifth Super Bowl win Sunday.

Trump stopped at the base on the way back to Washington after his first weekend away from the White House. Trump spent the weekend at his estate in Palm Beach, Florida, with first lady Melania Trump, who had not appeared in public since shortly after her husband took office.

At MacDill, the president was briefed by CENTCOM and SOCOM leaders. A number of his advisers, including Gen. Joseph Dunford, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Michael Flynn, Trump's national security adviser, also attended.

Trump met with Florida Gov. Rick Scott before delivering his remarks, telling the crowd at CENTCOM that Scott's endorsement of his candidacy for president "makes him a better friend of mine," adding that with those who don't offer their endorsement, "it's never quite the same."

CENTCOM oversaw a recent raid by U.S. special operations forces on an al-Qaida compound in Yemen, the first military operation authorized by Trump. A Navy SEAL, Senior Chief Special Warfare Operator William "Ryan" Owens, 36, of Peoria, Illinois, was killed, making him the first known U.S. combat casualty under Trump.

Three other U.S. service members were wounded in the operation. More than half a dozen suspected militants and more than a dozen civilians were also killed, including the 8-year-old daughter of Anwar al-Awlaki, a radical cleric and U.S. citizen who was targeted and killed in 2011 by a U.S. drone strike.

Trump made no mention of Owens or the raid in Yemen during his remarks Monday, but he paid recognition to the sacrifices of American military families and the spouses of American soldiers, vowing his support to those who risk their lives for the country.

"We protect those who protect us, and we will never, ever let you down," he said.

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The fierce battle over President Donald Trump's travel and refugee ban edged up the judicial escalator Monday, headed for a possible final face-off at the Supreme Court

By ERIC TUCKER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The fierce battle over President Donald Trump's travel and refugee ban edged up the judicial escalator Monday, headed for a possible final face-off at the Supreme Court. Travelers, temporarily unbound, tearfully reunited with loved ones at U.S. airports.

The Justice Department filed a new defense of Trump's ban on travelers from seven predominantly Muslim nations as a federal appeals court weighs whether to restore the administration's executive order. The lawyers said the travel ban was a "lawful exercise" of the president's authority to protect national security and said a judge's order that put the policy on hold should be overruled.

The filing with the San Francisco-based 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals was the latest salvo in a high-stakes legal fight surrounding Trump's order, which was halted Friday by a federal judge in Washington state.

A randomly selected panel of appellate judges is to hear arguments Tuesday.

The appeals court earlier refused to immediately reinstate the ban, and lawyers for Washington and Minnesota — two states challenging it — argued anew Monday that any resumption would "unleash chaos again," separating families and stranding university students.

The Justice Department responded that the president has clear authority to "suspend the entry of any class of aliens" to the U.S. in the name of national security. It said the travel ban, which temporarily suspends the country's refugee program and immigration from seven countries with terrorism concerns, was intended "to permit an orderly review and revision of screening procedures to ensure that adequate standards are in place to protect against terrorist attacks."

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The challengers of the ban, the Justice Department wrote, were asking "courts to take the extraordinary step of second-guessing a formal national security judgment made by the president himself pursuant to broad grants of statutory authority."

Whatever the appeals court decides, either side could ask the Supreme Court to intervene.

It could prove difficult, though, to find the necessary five votes at the high court to undo a lower court order; the Supreme Court has been at less than full strength since Justice Antonin Scalia's death a year ago. The last immigration case that reached the justices ended in a 4-4 tie.

The president's executive order has faced legal uncertainty ever since Friday's ruling by U.S. District Judge James Robart, which challenged both Trump's authority and his ability to fulfill a campaign promise.

The State Department quickly said people from the seven countries — Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen — with valid visas could travel to the U.S. The Homeland Security Department said it was no longer directing airlines to prevent affected visa holders from boarding U.S.-bound planes.

On Monday in Colorado, a graduate student who had traveled to Libya with her 1-year-old son to visit her sick mother and attend her father's funeral was back in Fort Collins after having been stopped in Jordan on her return trip. She was welcomed with flowers and balloons by her husband and other children.

Two Yemeni brothers whose family has sued over the travel ban, and who'd been turned away in the chaotic opening days of the order, arrived at Dulles International Airport in Virginia, where they were greeted by their father.

"America is for everybody," Aqel Aziz said after greeting his sons.

Syrian immigrant Mathyo Asali said he thought his life was "ruined" when he landed at Philadelphia International Airport on Jan. 28 only to be denied entry to the United States. Asali, who returned to Damascus, said he figured he'd be inducted into the Syrian military. He was back on U.S. soil Monday.

"It's really nice to know that there's a lot of people supporting us," Asali told Gov. Tom Wolf, who greeted the family at a relative's house in Allentown.

The legal fight involves two divergent views of the role of the executive branch and the court system.

The government has asserted that the president alone has the power to decide who can enter or stay in the United States, while Robart has said a judge's job is to ensure that an action taken by the government "comports with our country's laws."

His Friday ruling triggered a Twitter rant by Trump, who dismissed Robart as a "so-called judge." On Sunday, Trump tweeted, "Just cannot believe a judge would put our country in such peril. If something happens blame him and court system. People pouring in. Bad!"

Trump was back on Twitter Monday night, tweeting: "The threat from radical Islamic terrorism is very real, just look at what is happening in Europe and the Middle-East. Courts must act fast!"

States challenging the ban have been joined by technology companies, who have said it makes it more difficult to recruit employees. National security officials under President Barack Obama have also come out against it. A declaration filed by John Kerry and Madeleine Albright, former secretaries of state, and others said the ban would disrupt lives and cripple U.S. counterterrorism partnerships without making the nation safer.

"It will aid ISIL's propaganda effort and serve its recruitment message by feeding into the narrative that the United States is at war with Islam," they wrote.

How and when a case might get to the Supreme Court is unclear. The travel ban itself is to expire in 90 days, meaning it could run its course before a higher court takes up the issue. Or the administration could change it in any number of ways that would keep the issue alive.

The bench also could be full, with a new ninth justice on board, by the time the court is ready to hear arguments. If Judge Neil Gorsuch is confirmed this spring as Senate Republicans hope, chances of a tie vote would disappear.

Associated Press writers Eugene Johnson and Martha Bellisle in Seattle, Matthew Barakat in Chantilly, Virginia, Michael Rubinkam in Allentown, Pennsylvania, Colleen Slevin in Denver and Mark Sherman in

Washington contributed to this report.

Through a Super Bowl ad, public statements and court filings, Silicon Valley's biggest companies are taking a strong stand against President Donald Trump's travel ban, risking backlash

By MAE ANDERSON and MICHAEL LIEDTKE, AP Technology Writers

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Through a Super Bowl ad, public statements and court filings, Silicon Valley's biggest companies are taking a strong stand against President Donald Trump's travel ban, saying high tech needs immigrants' creativity and energy to stay competitive.

Although the companies are risking a backlash from customers who side with Trump, they say the push-back is necessary for an industry dependent on thousands of highly skilled foreign workers.

About 58 percent of the engineers and other high-skill employees in Silicon Valley were born outside the U.S., according to the Silicon Valley Leadership Group, an industry trade group.

"Immigration and innovation go hand in hand," said Carl Guardino, the group's CEO. "This cuts so deeply into the bone and marrow of what fuels the innovation economy that very few CEOs feel the luxury of sitting on the sidelines. So people are going to stand up and speak up."

The tech industry contends there aren't enough Americans with the specialized skills these companies need. Though critics contend that companies favor immigrants because they can pay them less, tech companies argue that the ban would pressure them to move some operations abroad.

"A lot of these companies will really struggle if all of a sudden we turn off the spigot," said Greg Morisett, dean of computing and information sciences at Cornell University.

In a court filing Sunday against the ban, 97 companies, including such major tech players as Google, Apple, Microsoft, eBay, Netflix, Facebook and Twitter, also spoke of the entrepreneurial spirit of "people who choose to leave everything that is familiar and journey to an unknown land to make a new life."

Google CEO Sundar Pichai and Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella both came from India. Google co-founder Sergey Brin is a Russian refugee who moved to the U.S. as a boy. The father of Apple's late co-founder, Steve Jobs, immigrated from Syria.

Tech worker Ehsaan Taeb, 28, said his whole family is in Iran and knowing his parents won't be able to visit him has added stress to his life. But seeing his company and other tech companies taking a stand against the ban has heartened him, he said.

"When you see your employer and other companies make that kind of effort, that makes me feel very supported and in a community that's thoughtful and caring," said Taeb, who works in support at Checkr, a software company that provides background checks for businesses.

The Silicon Valley Leadership Group estimates that half the companies in the region were co-founded by an immigrant or are now led by a CEO from outside the U.S.

In signing an executive order Jan. 27 that would temporarily ban people from seven Muslim-majority countries, Trump said he was trying to protect Americans by preventing terrorists from slipping into the country. The administration says the president has the constitutional authority to decide who can enter.

During the Super Bowl, several companies ran ads that promoted diversity and inclusion, as marketers tried to reach both sides of a consumer base roiled by the election.

One of the most overtly political was from Airbnb, a company that matches travelers with places to stay. The San Francisco company showed close-ups of people with different ethnicities. A narrator says: "We believe no matter who you are, where you're from, who you love or who you worship, we all belong. The world is more beautiful the more you accept."

Airbnb followed up with a campaign to provide short-term housing over the next five years for 100,000 people in need, starting with refugees, disaster survivors and relief workers.

The company also said it will donate \$4 million over four years to the International Rescue Committee, joining many tech brethren in making financial contributions.

Google set up a \$4 million "crisis fund" in January to support organizations that are helping immigrants and refugees, while ride-hailing service Lyft pledged \$1 million over the next four years to the American Civil Liberties Union, one of the groups challenging the ban.

And workers from Google and Comcast workers have staged walkouts over the restriction.

"I wouldn't be where I am today or have any kind of life that I have today if this was not a brave country that really stood out and spoke for liberty," Brin told a crowd of Google employees who walked out in protest last week.

Tech companies risk alienating the many Americans who support Trump and his policies. But the risk is lower than that of, say, a company that makes consumer products with plenty of alternatives.

It's much harder to boycott a Facebook or Google, where you have friends or your email address, said digital marketing analyst Rebecca Lieb. She added that people are less likely to toss out a \$2,000 laptop or pricey mobile phone than change soft drinks.

In fact, tech companies might be more wary of backlash from the anti-Trump side. Last week, Uber CEO Travis Kalanick quit Trump's council of business leaders after an outcry from Uber customers and employees who were upset about the ban.

In addition, most tech companies have operations around the world and risk alienating customers abroad if they stay silent.

"We interact with a large global ecosystem and our businesses would not be here or be able to thrive without it," said Aaron Levie, CEO of Box Inc., an online storage service. "So our businesses are extremely sensitive, by default, to things that affect immigration and things that affect our relationship with the broader world."

Associated Press Writers Barbara Ortutay in New York and Chris Grygiel in Seattle contributed to this report. Mae Anderson reported from New York.

Israel's parliament passes a contentious law meant to retroactively legalize thousands of West Bank settlement homes built unlawfully on private Palestinian land, a step expected to trigger international anger and a flurry of lawsuits against the measure

By TIA GOLDENBERG, Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's parliament on Monday passed a contentious law meant to retroactively legalize thousands of West Bank settlement homes built unlawfully on private Palestinian land, a step that is expected to trigger international outrage and a flurry of lawsuits against the measure.

The explosive law is the latest in a series of pro-settler steps taken by Israel's hard-line government since the election of Donald Trump as U.S. president. He is seen as more sympathetic to Israel's settlement policies than his fiercely critical predecessor, and the Israeli government has approved plans to build thousands of new homes on occupied territory since Trump took office.

"We are voting tonight on our right to the land," Cabinet minister Ofir Akunis said during a stormy debate ahead of the vote. "We are voting tonight on the connection between the Jewish people and its land. This whole land is ours. All of it."

Critics say the legislation enshrines into law the theft of Palestinian land, and it is expected to be challenged in Israel's Supreme Court. According to the law, Palestinian landowners would be compensated either with money or alternative land, even if they did not agree to give up their property.

The vote passed 60-52 in Israel's 120-member Knesset following a raucous debate in which opposition lawmakers shouted from their seats at governing coalition lawmakers speaking in favor of the vote from the dais. Some legislators supportive of the law took pictures of the plenum during the vote while some spectators in visitors' seats raised black cloth in apparent protest.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had voiced misgivings about the law in the lead-up to vote, reportedly expressing concern that it could lead to international censure and saying he wanted to coordi-

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nate with the Trump administration before moving ahead on a vote.

He told reporters on a trip to London that he had updated Washington and was ready to move ahead with the law. He was on his way back from the trip and was not present for the vote.

The White House's immediate response was to refer to its statement last week that said the construction of new settlements "may not be helpful" in achieving an Israeli-Palestinian peace. The State Department later that "the Trump administration will withhold comment on the legislation until the relevant court ruling."

David Harris, CEO of AJC, the global Jewish advocacy organization, said: "Israel's High Court can and should reverse this misguided legislation."

"The controversial Knesset action, ahead of Prime Minister Netanyahu's meeting with president Trump in Washington, is misguided and likely to prove counter-productive to Israel's core national interests," he said in a statement.

Netanyahu's attorney general has called the bill unconstitutional and said he won't defend it in the Supreme Court. Critics have warned it could drag Israel into a legal battle at the International Criminal Court at The Hague, Netherlands, which is already pursuing a preliminary examination into settlements.

Among the law's problematic elements is that the West Bank is not sovereign Israeli territory and that Palestinians who live there are not citizens and do not have the right to vote for the government that imposed the law on them.

Palestinians condemned the law.

"This is an escalation that would only lead to more instability and chaos. It is unacceptable. It is denounced and the international community should act immediately," said Nabil Abu Rdeneh, a spokesman for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

Netanyahu faced intense pressure from within his nationalist coalition, especially from the pro-settler Jewish Home party, to press ahead with the vote following the court-ordered evacuation last week of the illegal Amona outpost found to have been built on private Palestinian land. Over 40 settler families were forced to leave the 20-year-old outpost, and on Monday construction vehicles demolished and removed the trailer homes that remained behind.

Opposition legislators said Netanyahu's support for the law was a high-stakes risk meant solely to curry favor with settler constituents and their potent political lobby.

"For how many settler votes is Netanyahu willing to pass a law that he admits will drag us to The Hague?" Zehava Galon, leader of the dovish Meretz party, wrote on Facebook ahead of the vote. "The prime minister declares that the legalization bill is dangerous for Israel and instead of standing on his hind legs to stop this shameful law, he presses ahead with it."

After years of condemnations from the Obama administration over settlement construction, Israel's government has ramped up settlement initiatives since Trump took office, announcing plans for some 6,000 new homes in the West Bank and east Jerusalem and promising to build a new settlement for the Amona evacuees.

Trump has signaled a far more accepting approach to settlements, raising hopes in Netanyahu's government that it will be able to step up construction. The White House said little as Netanyahu announced plans during Trump's first two weeks in office to build over 6,000 new settler homes. But after Netanyahu announced his plan to establish a new settlement for the first time in two decades, Trump indicated that he, too, might have his limits.

"While we don't believe the existence of settlements is an impediment to peace, the construction of new settlements or the expansion of existing settlements beyond their current borders may not be helpful in achieving that goal," the White House said.

The Palestinians want the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip — territories Israel captured in the 1967 Mideast war — for their future state. Much of the international community views settlements as illegal and an obstacle to reaching peace with the Palestinians. Shortly before leaving office, President Barack Obama allowed the U.N. Security Council to pass a resolution declaring settlements illegal. Obama cited the Israeli outpost legislation as a reason for not vetoing the resolution.

Before the law passed, the U.N. Mideast envoy, Nickolay Mladenov, called on lawmakers to vote against

the law, saying that "it will have far-reaching legal consequences for Israel and greatly diminish the prospects for Arab-Israeli peace."

Associated Press writers Bradley Klapper in Washington and Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations contributed to this report.

Amnesty International says in a report that Syrian authorities have killed at least 13,000 people since the start of the 2011 uprising in mass hangings at a prison north of Damascus known to detainees as "the slaughterhouse."

By SARAH EL DEEB, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Syrian authorities have killed at least 13,000 people since the start of the 2011 uprising in mass hangings at a prison north of Damascus known to detainees as "the slaughterhouse," Amnesty International said in a report Tuesday.

It covers the period from 2011 to 2015, when Amnesty said 20-50 people were hanged each week at Saydnaya Prison in killings authorized by senior Syrian officials, including deputies of President Bashar Assad, and carried out by military police.

The report referred to the killings as a "calculated campaign of extrajudicial execution."

Amnesty has recorded at least 35 different methods of torture in Syria since the late 1980s, practices that only increased since 2011, said Lynn Maalouf, deputy director for research at Amnesty's regional office in Beirut.

Other rights groups have found evidence of massive torture leading to death in Syrian detention facilities. In a report last year, Amnesty found that more than 17,000 people have died of torture and ill-treatment in custody across Syria since 2011, an average rate of more than 300 deaths a month.

Those figures are comparable to battlefield deaths in Aleppo, one of the fiercest war zones in Syria, where 21,000 were killed in the province since 2011.

"The horrors depicted in this report reveal a hidden, monstrous campaign, authorized at the highest levels of the Syrian government, aimed at crushing any form of dissent within the Syrian population," Maalouf said.

While the most recent data is from 2015, Maalouf said there is no reason to believe the practice has stopped since then, with thousands more probably killed.

"These executions take place after a sham trial that lasts over a minute or two minutes, but they are authorized by the highest levels of authority," including the Grand Mufti, a top religious authority in Syria, and the defense minister, she said.

Syrian government officials rarely comment on allegations of torture and mass killings. In the past, they have denied reports of massacres documented by international human rights groups, describing them as propaganda.

The chilling accounts in Tuesday's report came from interviews with 31 former detainees and over 50 other officials and experts, including former guards and judges.

According to the findings, detainees were told they would be transferred to civilian detention centers but were taken instead to another building in the facility and hanged.

"They walked in the 'train,' so they had their heads down and were trying to catch the shirt of the person in front of them. The first time I saw them, I was horrified. They were being taken to the slaughterhouse," Hamid, a former detainee, told Amnesty.

Another former detainee, Omar Alshogre, told The Associated Press the guards would come to his cell, sometimes three times a week, and call out detainees by name.

Alshogre said a torture session would begin before midnight in nearby chambers that he could hear.

"Then the sound would stop, and we would hear a big vehicle come and take them away," said Alshogre,

who spent nine months in Saydnaya. Now 21, he lives in Sweden.

Speaking in an interview from Stockholm via Skype, Alshogre described how he was forced to keep his eyes closed and his back to the guards while they abused or suffocated a cellmate.

The body often would be left behind, or there would be a pool of blood in the cell for other prisoners to clean up.

"We can tell from the sound of the prisoner as he dies behind us. He dies a meter away. I don't see anything, but I see with my ears," said Alshogre, who at age 17 moved among nearly 10 detention facilities in Syria for two years before landing in Saydnaya.

Alshogre survived nine months in the prison, paying his way out in 2015 — a common practice. He suffered from tuberculosis and his weight fell to 35 kilograms (77 pounds).

Two cousins detained with him in western Syria didn't survive, dying a year apart in a military intelligence detention facility. The younger one died in Alshogre's arms, deprived of food and so weak he was unable to walk to the bathroom on his own.

Still, Alshogre said nothing could have prepared him for Saydnaya.

At one point, Alshogre was called out by his guards "for execution," he said. He was brought before a military trial and told not to raise his gaze at the judge, who asked him how many soldiers he had killed.

When he said none, the judge spared him.

Death in Saydnaya was always present, "like the air," Alshogre said.

Once when he was deprived of food for two days, a cellmate handed him his food ration — and died days later.

"This is someone who gave me his life," he said. Another cellmate died of diarrhea, also common in the prison.

"Death is the simplest thing. It was the most hoped for because it would have spared us a lot: hunger, thirst, fear, pain, cold, thinking," he added.

"Thinking was so hard. It could also kill," said Alshogre, who keeps a photo of one of his tormentors on the wall of his home.

Officials investigating the abuse of children at institutions across Australia have revealed that seven percent of priests in Australia's Catholic Church were accused of sexually abusing children over the past several decades

By KRISTEN GELINEAU, Associated Press

SYDNEY (AP) — Seven percent of priests in Australia's Catholic Church were accused of sexually abusing children over the past several decades, a lawyer said Monday as officials investigating institutional abuse across Australia revealed for the first time the extent of the crisis.

The statistics were released during the opening address of a hearing of Australia's Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The royal commission — which is Australia's highest form of inquiry — has been investigating since 2013 how the Catholic Church and other institutions responded to the sexual abuse of children over decades.

The commission has previously heard harrowing testimony from scores of people who suffered abuse at the hands of clergy. But the full scale of the problem was never clear until Monday, when the commission released the statistics it has gathered.

Commissioners surveyed Catholic Church authorities and found that between 1980 and 2015, 4,444 people reported they had been abused at more than 1,000 Catholic institutions across Australia, said Gail Furness, the lead lawyer assisting the commission. The average age of the victims was 10.5 for girls and 11.5 for boys.

Overall, 7 percent of priests in Australia between 1950 and 2010 were accused of sexually abusing

children, Furness said.

In the United States, where the clergy abuse scandal erupted into public view, 5.6 percent of clergy were accused of molesting children between 1950 and 2015, according to reports by U.S. bishops that were analyzed by BishopAccountability.org, which tracks data on abusive priests.

Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Truth Justice and Healing Council, which is coordinating the Australian Catholic Church's response to the inquiry, said the data reflected "a massive failure" by the church to protect children.

"These numbers are shocking, they are tragic and they are indefensible," a tearful Sullivan told the commission. "As Catholics, we hang our heads in shame."

The Vatican has watched the proceedings closely. Cardinal George Pell, who was Australia's most senior Catholic before becoming Pope Francis' top financial adviser, has testified at previous hearings about how church authorities responded to allegations of child sex abuse during his time in Australia.

Several senior Australian Catholics will testify over the next few weeks. The commission's final report is due by the end of this year.

About a quarter of Australians identify as Catholic.

AP Religion Writer Rachel Zoll contributed from New York.

Chicago's Shedd Aquarium has euthanized a more than 90-year-old Australian lungfish due to old age

By CARYN ROUSSEAU, Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — An Australian lungfish that entranced visitors to Chicago's Shedd Aquarium for more than 80 years has been euthanized due to old age, the popular tourist attraction announced Monday.

Granddad, who was 4-foot-long and weighed 25 pounds, had stopped eating and started showing signs of organ failure. He was euthanized on Sunday. A necropsy — or animal autopsy — found conditions consistent with old age, aquarium officials said.

"For a fish who spent much of his time imitating a fallen log, he sparked curiosity, excitement and wonder among guests of all ages who would hear his story," said Bridget C. Coughlin, Shedd Aquarium's president and chief executive officer.

Shedd estimates Granddad was more than 90 years old. The aquarium acquired him from the Sydney Aquarium in Australia during a 1933 collecting expedition and Granddad was one of two lungfish that attracted visitors during that year's A Century of Progress International Exposition in Chicago. Aquarium officials estimate more than 104 million people saw Granddad over eight decades.

Rob Vernon, a spokesman for the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, said the nonprofit group is unaware of any older fish kept by a zoo or aquarium that it accredits in the U.S. or eight other countries.

"Granddad lived a pretty relaxed life, enjoyed interactions with us, including gentle pats along his back, and loved to eat his leafy greens," said Michelle Sattler, who was Granddad's caretaker for more than 30 years.

Lungfish can live up to 100 years and are a protected species in Australia. The species has existed for more than 380 million years and has not changed for 100 million years, according to the aquarium. Lungfish, as the name suggests, can breathe air. The fish was euthanized with an overdose quantity of anesthetic that was added to his tank.

Follow AP reporter Caryn Rousseau on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/carynrousseau>

Tom Brady doesn't want to talk about "Deflategate."

By KYLE HIGHTOWER, AP Sports Writer

HOUSTON (AP) — Tom Brady doesn't want to talk about "Deflategate." He'd rather reflect on a night he will never forget and how much it meant to his mother.

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The New England quarterback spoke Monday hours after he won his fifth Super Bowl ring and fourth MVP trophy. He called the 34-28 overtime victory over the Atlanta Falcons a "hell of a game" for his mother, who has been dealing with an undisclosed health issue and was not able to attend any other games this season.

"It was great. She's been through a lot," Brady said. "Way harder than I went through last night. Way harder than everyone on our team went through last night. My dad's been there every step of the way. They set such a great example for me.

"All families go through challenging times personally. But she has a lot of support and a lot of love. I'm just happy last night to be able to celebrate with her."

What was missing from the celebration was Brady's game jersey, which he said disappeared from the locker room. Texas' lieutenant governor asked the Texas Rangers to help Houston police look for the jersey.

Brady joked that he expects to spot it soon in an online auction.

He would not say whether his fifth championship meant more to him than the others because of his four-game suspension stemming from the Deflategate scandal.

Coach Bill Belichick said it would be "inappropriate" to suggest that Brady put in more effort this season for any reason.

"To insinuate that this season was somehow different, that this year he competed harder or did anything to a higher degree than anything he has in the past I think is insulting to the tremendous effort and leadership and competitiveness that he's shown for the 17 years that I've coached him," Belichick said.

Brady had another uneventful interaction with NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell during a photo with the MVP trophy.

He said teammate James White was more deserving of the award because of his three touchdowns in Sunday's victory, including the winning 2-yard run.

Two years ago, Brady gave the truck he received for winning MVP honors to Malcolm Butler for the rookie cornerback's game-saving interception in the Patriots' Super Bowl win over the Seahawks.

He hinted Monday that he may not keep the next vehicle either.

"I think James White deserves it. It would be nice for him," Brady said. "It took a real team effort. ... We faced a lot of adversity this year and overcame it with a lot of mental toughness."

That said, he is definitely keeping the trophy.

When the news conference concluded, Brady looked down and grasped the silver football and cradled it under his arm as he walked off the stage.

"I'm taking it home," Brady said.

For more NFL coverage: <http://www.pro32.ap.org> and http://www.twitter.com/AP_NFL

Follow Kyle Hightower on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/khightower>

Messages about America, inclusiveness _ and, yes, even "four years of awful hair" _ kept bubbling up in Super Bowl 51 ads

By MAE ANDERSON, AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Messages about America, inclusiveness — and, yes, even "four years of awful hair" — kept bubbling up in Super Bowl 51 ads from Airbnb, the NFL and a line of personal care products. But there was still plenty of escapism and light humor for those who weren't into the politics.

As the New England Patriots edged out the Atlanta Falcons on the field in Houston, Airbnb touted inclusiveness with an ad showing faces of different ethnicities and the copy: "We all belong. The world is more beautiful the more you accept."

Coca-Cola aired a previously run ad during the pregame show in which people sing "America the Beautiful" in different languages. And Budweiser ran a 60-second spot chronicling co-founder Adolphus Busch's migration from Germany to St. Louis in 1857, prompting some critics to start a boycott campaign on Twitter.

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Even a hair care brand dipped into politics: The "It's a 10" hair brand indirectly referenced President Donald Trump's famously unruly do in its Super Bowl spot.

It's tough to be a Super Bowl advertiser, period. But this year, a divisive political climate has roiled the nation since Trump took office in January, making it even tougher for advertisers. Advertisers who paid \$5 million for 30 seconds had to walk the line with ads that appealed to everyone and didn't offend. Some were more successful than others.

"Anxiety and politics just loom over this game, so anybody who gives us the blessed relief of entertaining with a real Super Bowl commercial wins," said Mark DiMassimo, CEO of the ad agency DiMassimo Goldstein.

Several ads aimed for just that. Tide, for instance, offered a humorous ad showing announcer Terry Bradshaw trying frantically to remedy a stain while his antics go "viral" online, with the help of New England Patriot Rob Gronkowski and actor Jeffrey Tambor.

WALKING THE POLITICAL LINE

"Brands used to worry about whether their ad could be interpreted as right or wrong," said Kelly O'Keefe, a marketing professor at Virginia Commonwealth University. "Now they have to worry about whether it will be interpreted as right or left."

Plenty of ads walked that line.

An NFL spot conveyed what all advertisers hope the Super Bowl becomes: a place where Americans can come together. "Inside these lines, we may have our differences, but recognize there's more that unites us," Forest Whitaker intoned in a voiceover as workers prepped a football field and gridiron scenes played.

"The Super Bowl is shaping up as a counterpoint to the divisiveness in the United States," said Tim Calkins, a marketing professor at Northwestern University.

Airbnb's ad was one of the more overtly political, showing a variety of different faces with the tagline "We accept."

Some thought the ad was a hit. "Kudos to them for making a strong statement," said O'Keefe. But others, such as Villanova University marketing professor Charles Taylor, thought it didn't have a clear enough link to the brand and risked coming off as a "purely political statement."

Budweiser drew some criticism for the immigration theme of its ad, including calls on Twitter to boycott the brewer. That fostered debate — and banter — online, particularly over one hashtag that misspelled the company's name, #boycottbudwiser.

Other advertisers took the safest route possible by re-airing ads they've used before — an unusual, though not unprecedented, move. Coca-Cola, Google and Fiji water all aired rerun ads.

During the pre-game show, Coca-Cola ran "It's Beautiful," an ad featuring people around the country drinking the fizzy beverage and singing "America the Beautiful" in different languages.

SURPRISES

A debut Super Bowl spot by the "It's a 10" hair care brand introduced its line of men's products by joking about Donald Trump's hair.

"America, we're in for four years of awful hair, so it's up to you to do your part by making up for it with great hair," went a voiceover state as black-and-white photos of people with a wide array of hairstyles flashed by. "Do your part. ... Let's make sure these next four years are 'It's a 10.'"

Snickers got press by airing a live ad in the third quarter. On a Wild West set, actor Adam Driver seemed not to know the ad was live — and then the set fell apart (on purpose). "You ruin live Super Bowl commercials when you're hungry," the ad's tagline read.

"It went by so fast, I almost missed it," DiMassimo said. "Not sure it was worth the trouble of doing it live."

LIGHT HUMOR PLUS CELEBS

Ads with light humor and stuffed with celebrities were popular. Honda's ad made a splash by animating the yearbook photos of nine celebrities ranging from Tina Fey to Viola Davis. They make fun of their photos — Jimmy Kimmel is dressed in a blue tux and holding a clarinet, for example — and talk about "The Power of Dreams," Honda's ad slogan.

"It was a really good message and it was entertaining," said Mirta Desir, a New Orleans native who works

in education and was watching the game on Long Island.

The Tide ad with Terry Bradshaw was a hit with some viewers because of the way it tricked viewers into thinking it was part of the broadcast. "It made you think twice," said Pablo Rochat, watching in Atlanta. "There was funny dialogue and good storytelling."

T-Mobile's spots — which featured Justin Bieber and Rob Gronkowski dancing, Kristen Schaal in a "50 Shades of Grey" parody and Martha Stewart and Snoop Dogg mixing talk about T-Mobile's unlimited data plan with innuendo about Snoop's marijuana habit, won raves from some — as did an ad from antioxidant drink maker Bai featuring Justin Timberlake and Christopher Walken.

This story has been corrected to note that a T-Mobile spot featured Justin Bieber, not Justin Timberlake.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has urged British Prime Minister Theresa May to follow the American administration and impose new sanctions on Iran over a recent missile test

By JILL LAWLESS, Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday urged British Prime Minister Theresa May to follow the American administration and impose new sanctions on Iran over a recent missile test.

The two leaders met at 10 Downing St. for talks British officials tried to focus on boosting trade ties between the two countries once Britain leaves the European Union.

But as photographers captured the start of the meeting, Netanyahu told May: "I'd like to talk to you about how we can ensure that Iran's aggression does not go unanswered."

Iran and Israel are bitter enemies. Netanyahu vehemently opposes the 2015 international agreement that imposed curbs on Tehran's nuclear program in exchange for lifting sanctions. Britain backs the deal, which May has called "vital."

U.S. President Donald Trump, with whom May's government wants close ties, is also a critic of the Iran deal. His administration imposed new sanctions on more than two dozen companies and individuals after Tehran tested a ballistic missile last week.

In pointed remarks at the start of his meeting with May, Netanyahu said he wished other countries would follow the U.S. lead.

"Iran seeks to annihilate Israel, it seeks to conquer the Middle East, it threatens Europe, it threatens the West, it threatens the world," he said. "And it offers provocation after provocation."

"That's why I welcome President Trump's assistance of new sanctions against Iran. I think other nations should follow suit, certainly responsible nations."

May's office said after the meeting that the prime minister "was clear that the nuclear deal is vital and must be properly enforced and policed, while recognizing concerns about Iran's pattern of destabilizing activity in the region."

The Trump administration is also perceived as sympathetic to Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian land, an issue that caused friction between Netanyahu and former President Barack Obama.

The Palestinians claim the West Bank and east Jerusalem, captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war, as parts of a future state. They say the settlements, home to 600,000 Israelis, are making it increasingly impossible to partition the land into two states — a position that has wide international backing.

Pro-Palestinian campaigners and opposition politicians urged May to condemn Israeli settlement-building. A small group of protesters calling for an end to Israel's 50-year occupation of Palestinian lands protested outside the gates of Downing St. during Netanyahu's visit.

May said at the start of the meeting that "we remain committed to a two-state solution as the best way of brokering stability and peace." Downing St. said later that she had "reiterated the U.K.'s opposition to settlement activity."

Some fellow Republicans have taken a step back from President Donald Trump's latest comments about Russian President Vladimir Putin

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE, Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — President Donald Trump has long expressed a desire for improved relations with Moscow, but his latest comments about Russian President Vladimir Putin and the U.S. are leading some fellow Republicans to take a step back from the president — on this issue at least.

Told by Fox News' Bill O'Reilly during an interview that the Russian leader is "a killer," Trump said the U.S. has killers, too.

"What do you think? Our country's so innocent?" Trump said during the taped interview broadcast during Sunday's Super Bowl pregame show.

Trump has praised Putin and signaled that U.S.-Russia relations could be in for a makeover under his leadership, even after U.S. intelligence agencies concluded that Russia meddled in the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign to help Trump defeat Democrat Hillary Clinton.

During Putin's years in power, a number of prominent Russian opposition figures and journalists have been killed.

Trump says in the interview that he respects a lot of people, including Putin "but that doesn't mean I'm going to get along with him. He's a leader of his country. I say it's better to get along with Russia than not. And if Russia helps us in the fight against ISIS, which is a major fight, and Islamic terrorism all over the world — that's a good thing," Trump said, using an acronym for the Islamic State group. "Will I get along with him? I have no idea."

O'Reilly then said about Putin: "But he's a killer, though. Putin's a killer."

Trump responded: "There are a lot of killers. We've got a lot of killers. What do you think? Our country's so innocent?"

When O'Reilly says he doesn't know any U.S. government leaders who are killers, Trump said "take a look at what we've done, too. We've made a lot of mistakes" and then he referenced the Iraq war.

The Kremlin voiced anger over O'Reilly's characterization.

Dmitry Peskov, a spokesman for President Vladimir Putin, refused to comment on Trump's reply but lashed out at Fox, calling O'Reilly's remarks "unacceptable and offensive."

"We would like to receive an apology to the president from this respected organization," Peskov told reporters on Monday, referring to Fox News.

At home, Republicans and Democrats took exception to Trump's comparison of Russia and the U.S.

"Putin's a former KGB agent. He's a thug. He was not elected in a way that most people would consider a credible election," Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., told CNN's "State of the Union." "The Russians annexed Crimea, invaded Ukraine and messed around in our elections. And no, I don't think there's any equivalency between the way the Russians conduct themselves and the way the United States does."

Added Sen. Ben Sasse, of Nebraska, one of Trump's Republican critics: "There is no moral equivalency between the United States of America, the greatest freedom-loving nation in the history of the world, and the murderous thugs that are in Putin's defense of his cronyism."

O'Reilly also asked Trump to back up his claim that some 3 million to 5 million illegal votes were cast in the election. Trump didn't answer directly, but shifted to assert that immigrants in the U.S. illegally and dead people are on the voter rolls.

"It's really a bad situation, it's really bad," Trump said.

There is no evidence of widespread voter fraud in the Nov. 8 election. Trump won the Electoral College vote but lost the popular vote by nearly 2.9 million votes to Clinton.

Trump recently announced on Twitter that he would call for a "major investigation" into voter fraud. He said during the Fox News interview that he will set up a commission to be headed by Vice President Mike Pence and "we're going to look at it very, very carefully."

Asked earlier about Trump's promised investigation, McConnell said he saw no federal role because states historically have handled voter fraud investigations. "I don't think we ought to spend any federal money investigating that," he said on CNN.

On other issues, Trump said in the interview that:

—California's consideration of legislation to become a statewide sanctuary for people living in the country illegally is "ridiculous." He suggested withholding federal funding as a possible punishment.

—Plans to enact a complete replacement for the Affordable Care Act could slip into next year. "I would like to say by the end of the year, at least the rudiments, but we should have something within the year and the following year."

—Living in the White House is "a surreal experience in a certain way, but you have to get over it, because there's so much work to be done."

Follow Darlene Superville on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/dsuperville>

This version corrects Sen. Sasse's quote to reflect that he said "freedom-loving," not "freedom-living."

A divided Senate is set to confirm President Donald Trump's education secretary nominee, Betsy DeVos, by the narrowest possible margin

By MARIA DANILOVA and ERICA WERNER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate was poised on Tuesday to confirm President Donald Trump's nominee for education secretary by the narrowest possible margin, with Vice President Mike Pence expected to break a 50-50 tie, despite a last-ditch effort by Democrats to sink the nomination.

The vote was expected after an all-night speaking marathon by Democrats on the Senate floor, in a show of opposition to the candidacy of Betsy DeVos. She is a wealthy GOP donor who has devoted herself to promoting charter schools and private school vouchers, sparking concerns among educators that she won't be a strong champion for the nation's public school systems.

Two GOP senators, Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, have announced plans to oppose DeVos in a Senate split 52-48 between Republicans and Democrats. That will leave her with a tie vote if all other Republicans support her and all Democrats oppose her as expected, and will require Pence to put her over the top. A vice president breaking a tie on a Cabinet nomination would be a first in the history of the Senate, according to the Senate historian's office.

Sen. Jeff Merkley of Oregon took the Senate floor before dawn to urge his Republican colleagues to oppose DeVos. Merkley charged that DeVos will seek to turn public education into another huge corporation and deprive students from low-income families and children with disabilities and special needs from thriving.

"That's the vision we are fighting for that is about to be deeply damaged, should the reins of public education be handed over to an individual who wants to destroy public education," Merkley said. "That is why I am encouraging my colleagues to search your hearts, step aside from party politics and pay to play in politics and fight for the children of the united states of America."

Emotions ran high ahead of the vote as constituents jammed senators' phone lines with calls and protesters gathered outside the Capitol, including one person in a grizzly bear costume to ridicule DeVos' comment during her confirmation hearing that some schools might want guns to protect against grizzlies. Her opponents also charge that DeVos has no experience to run public schools, having never attended one or sent her children to a public school.

But Republicans accused Democrats of slow-walking DeVos and other qualified nominees to placate liberal base voters who still haven't come to terms with Trump's election.

"It seems this gridlock and opposition has far less to do with the nominees actually before us than the man who nominated them," said Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky. "Enough is enough."

In addition to DeVos, Republicans hope to confirm a series of other divisive nominees this week: Alabama Republican Sen. Jeff Sessions as attorney general, GOP Rep. Tom Price of Georgia as health secretary and financier Steven Mnuchin as treasury secretary.

In each case Democrats intend to use the maximum time allowed under the Senate's arcane rules to debate the nominations, which may result in a late-night votes this week and delay Mnuchin's approval until Saturday.

Republicans complain that previous presidents have been able to put their Cabinets in place more quickly. Democrats say it's Trump's fault because many of his nominees have complicated financial arrangements and ethical entanglements they claim they have not had enough time to dissect. Thus far, six Cabinet and high-level officials have been confirmed, including the secretaries of state, defense, homeland security and transportation.

The clash over nominees has created a toxic atmosphere in the Senate that mirrors the tense national mood since Trump's election, with Democrats boycotting committee votes and Republicans unilaterally jamming nominees through committee without Democrats present. Yet there is little suspense about the final outcome on any of the nominees because Democrats themselves changed Senate rules when they were in the majority several years ago so that Cabinet nominees can now be approved with a simple majority, not the 60 votes previously required.

Republican Donald Trump wants to relax restrictions on the political activity of churches

By **BILL BARROW**, Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Republican President Donald Trump's pledge to scrap limits on church political activity could have sweeping effects that extend beyond his conservative supporters to more liberal congregations, including the black evangelical church that has long been a key component of the Democratic Party's electoral machinery.

Yet many prominent black religious leaders say they like the law the way it is. And across the spectrum there are questions about whether churches could be pulled into the campaign finance vortex and effectively become "dark money" committees that play partisan politics without disclosing donors.

"This opens up a can of worms that would undermine the church's moral authority," said the Rev. Raphael Warnock, senior pastor at Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church, where civil rights icon the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. once preached.

In South Carolina, the Rev. Darrell Jackson doubles as a state senator. He allows politicians to attend Bible Way Church services in Columbia, but says he doesn't even ask his parishioners to vote for him. "That's crossing a sacred line," Jackson said.

Trump reignited the issue last week when he used the National Prayer Breakfast to repeat his campaign pledge to "totally destroy" a rarely enforced 1954 law that threatens religious and many other nonprofit entities with loss of their tax-exempt status if they engage in explicit electioneering, such as endorsing candidates or spending money advertising in a ballot initiative campaign.

The president frames the so-called "Johnson amendment," named for its original sponsor, then-Sen. Lyndon Johnson, as an assault on religious freedom.

The law does not actually prevent churches or their leaders from weighing in on issues of the day.

Republican and Democratic politicians are fixtures in pews during election season. Theologically conservative evangelicals often emphasize opposition to abortion and same-sex marriage and their unyielding support for Israel — all Republican hallmarks. More liberal evangelicals often tout "social justice," advocating policies that reflect the Democratic Party. Voices of the Roman Catholic and mainline Protestant churches can be found in both camps.

Warnock said faith and politics necessarily mix.

"You can't advocate for the poor," he said, "without being political." But he said there's a difference between pushing policy and backing candidates.

Indiana University professor Brad Fulton, who studies political activity in the U.S. religious community, cited research that suggests liberal congregations actually have become more politically active in recent years. Conservative evangelical congregations, meanwhile, appear to have become less so in the decades since the Christian Coalition and Moral Majority movement blossomed to the benefit of Republicans. Those conclusions come from the National Congregations Study, an academic project that tracks activities includ-

ing hosting political speakers, registering voters and distributing issue-based voter guides.

Fulton said that, of course, some black evangelicals want to make explicit endorsements, while some white evangelicals are wary.

But many prominent black pastors note that their movement never worked in an organized way to jettison the Johnson rule when Democrats were in the White House or in charge on Capitol Hill. Most of the loudest voices for repeal are white conservative evangelicals who cast the law as an unconstitutional muzzle.

The Rev. Mark Harris, a Trump supporter and senior pastor of Charlotte First Baptist Church in North Carolina, said a repeal would "lift a cloud of confusion" he says silences too many pastors. Harris endorsed Trump from his pulpit last fall and participates in Pulpit Freedom Sundays, periodic occasions where hundreds of evangelical ministers openly flout Internal Revenue Service regulations for churches.

The conservative Family Research Council is among the national lobbying groups backing a proposal, now pending in Congress, to allow pastors to back candidates and take positions in their official capacity. Its backers insist they don't want to give churches unfettered freedom to spend money in the political arena.

Warnock called the distinction "naive." Even a narrow tweak, he said, could foster an atmosphere where campaign financiers "purchase endorsements" from churches and secretly funnel money through offering plates for partisan advertising. Unlike political committees that back specific candidates, religious entities don't have to disclose donors publicly.

Fulton, the Indiana professor, said the "much larger implications" of Trump's idea have nothing to do with "verbal endorsements," but instead the possibility of religious entities financing political campaigns and ballot initiatives in "unlimited amounts, while maintaining their tax exempt status."

Moreover, contributions to churches are tax-deductible for the donors, unlike contributions to entities legally structured as political committees. That raises the possibility of tax write-offs effectively subsidizing political activity that is now disallowed.

The White House did not respond to questions about whether Trump wants only a narrow allowance for endorsements or more sweeping changes.

In North Carolina, meanwhile, Trump-supporter Harris shrugged off any concerns about pastors or their congregations being compromised: "I don't see the church becoming one big Super PAC."

Associated Press writer Jeffrey Collins in Columbia, South Carolina, contributed to this report. Follow Barrow on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/BillBarrowAP>.

Robert Kraft may have earned his fifth ring as owner of the Patriots through Sunday night's thrilling comeback victory over the Falcons, but one of those rings has an unlikely owner, Russian President Vladimir Putin

HOUSTON (AP) — Of the five Super Bowl rings Robert Kraft has earned as owner of the New England Patriots, one of them has an unlikely owner: Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Kraft took part in a recent NFL Network series of interviews about Super Bowl rings and retold a story about his ring from 2005's Super Bowl 39. He says he was on a business trip to Russia later that year when he showed the ring to Putin. Kraft says Putin put on the ring and didn't give it back.

A Putin spokesman said in 2013 that the ring was a gift and the Russian leader would send Kraft a replacement if he wanted. The spokesman says Kraft's ring is on display at the Kremlin.

For more NFL coverage: <http://www.pro32.ap.org> and http://www.twitter.com/AP_NFL

At \$250 million, a new mega mansion in the exclusive Bel Air neighborhood of Los Angeles is the most expensive home listed in the United States

By AMANDA LEE MYERS, Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — At \$250 million, a new mega mansion in the exclusive Bel Air neighborhood of Los Angeles is the most expensive home listed in the United States.

The passion project of developer and handbag tycoon Bruce Makowsky, the four-level, 38,000-square-foot mansion built on spec includes 12 bedroom suites, 21 bathrooms, five bars, three gourmet kitchens, a spa and an 85-foot infinity swimming pool with stunning views of Los Angeles. There's also a 40-seat movie theater, a bowling alley, and a fleet of exotic and vintage cars worth \$30 million.

According to Makowsky, only 3,000 people in the world could afford to buy it.

The Associated Press recently interviewed Makowsky inside the mansion. Here's what he had to say about why he built it and who would spend \$250 million on a house.

Q: Why did you build this house?

A: "After being on major mega yachts across the world and on beautiful private aircraft, it didn't make sense to me people were spending \$350 million on a boat, \$100 million on a plane and they're living in \$20 million and \$30 million homes ... The homes have not kept up with the toys. So my feeling is if you're going to spend over 12 hours a day in your home it should be the most amazing experience in the world."

Q: What is it like being inside the house?

A: "I would say it's the eighth wonder of the world. I've had a couple people come in here and say it's in the top seven — one of the other seven could go away ... Every single inch of this house is breathtaking. It's a sensory overload. I've shown this house about 25 times now. People go in and use just about every adjective on half of the lower level. There's no more adjectives. They just become numb. Every single thing in this house makes you feel like you're in heaven."

Q: How did you reach \$250 million for the listing price?

A: "The reason it's \$250 million is because of all the work for the past four years of having 300 people inside here, the art curations inside the house. We have over \$30 million worth of cars, exotic sports cars and vintage cars ... We have a 270-degree view from the snow-covered mountains all the way down to L.A. Seven full-time staff come with the house, which is crazy. So if you want the best chef in the world, you have her, and if you want a masseuse we have you all hooked up ... We have water features that go completely around the house. We have stones from 50 different quarries from around the world, the most beautiful precious stones running through the house ... I truly believe the value is here."

Q: Why would someone spend so much money on a house, even with all these amenities?

A: "It's the kind of thing where I can't sell it. Somebody has to fall in love with it and die over it. And when a person sitting with \$2 billion, \$5 billion or \$20 billion in the bank and it's just a number, do they really want to enjoy every second of their life — because this isn't rehearsal, this is real life — or do they just want to look at a number in the bank?"

Behind some of the world's most reputed concert halls is a Japanese engineer whose finesse in shaping sound is so perfectly unobtrusive that all listeners hear is the music _ in all its subtlety, texture and fullness

By YURI KAGEYAMA, Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Behind some of the world's most reputed concert halls is a Japanese engineer whose finesse in shaping sound is so perfectly unobtrusive that all listeners hear is the music — in all its subtlety, texture and fullness.

Yasuhisa Toyota's talents are coveted as classical music venues are increasingly designed in "vineyard style," where audiences surround the stage to hear the performers up close and enjoy an almost-interactive experience, feeling more like a part of the music and being able to be seen and respond to it.

Toyota's Nagata Acoustics has just 20 employees globally, but it dominates acoustics work for halls in

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Japan and is expanding abroad. He's designed the acoustics for orchestras in Los Angeles, Helsinki, Paris and Shanghai. Another of his projects, the Elbephilharmonie concert hall in Hamburg, opened Jan. 11.

Still, when asked to summarize the reason for success, Toyota hesitates. So many factors are involved in fine-tuning acoustics, and each hall has a different design, creating fresh challenges.

"No one can explain in one word why a Stradivarius violin sounds so beautiful, or how the way it was made may have shaped that beautiful sound," Toyota said in a recent interview at his Tokyo home.

"Whether sound is beautiful, clear or pleasant is extremely complex," he said. "So when we're talking about acoustics in a concert hall, there is basically that space itself."

Toyota, 64, is not a musician but was raised listening to and loving classical music. He founded his company in 1971. It has headquarters in Tokyo and Los Angeles, which is his main home these days as he oversees Nagata's projects outside Japan

Toyota coined the expression "psycho-acoustics" to describe the importance of emotions and other senses in sound. Would a pink violin, for instance, sound as good as a brown one, he asks?

"There is discussion about a formula for acoustics because sound is invisible. People don't ask those questions about visual design," said Toyota, whose carefree flair, quick wit and laugh are unusual among Japanese of his usually staid generation.

At times sounding like a Zen monk when he talks about the art of sound, Toyota says crafting acoustics requires a thorough knowledge of building materials, close collaboration with architects, comprehension of musicians' needs, computerized simulations, use of scale models of the halls and analysis of reverberating sound.

The thickness of a wall, its shape, material and curves, the fixtures hanging from the ceiling, and the musicians themselves all affect acoustics. In the old-style shoebox design of concert halls, where the audience sits in rows facing the stage, the sound is easier to control. The vineyard format is trickier.

David Howard, a bass clarinetist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, has played in several halls Toyota has worked on and says he appreciates the direct, clear and full, and intimate nature of their sound.

"In that sense, Mr. Toyota hit a home run," he said.

Apart from the just opened Elbephilharmonie, Toyota has done the acoustics for Stanford University's Bing Concert Hall, Helzberg Hall at Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts in Kansas City, Missouri, and the Chamber Hall at the Museo Del Violino in Cremona, Italy. His first major overseas project was the Walt Disney Concert Hall, which opened in 2003, for the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

The acoustics of the hall the Los Angeles orchestra used before were so bad that musicians overplayed to compensate, and that carried over to other venues.

"The ideal environment," Howard said, "is one where I can feel unencumbered in terms of being concerned about my individual sound, and I can just play, so that the ingredients are such that I don't have to worry about it being beautiful enough, or loud enough, or clear enough, that those things are more or less taken care of for me, so that I can just make music."

Toyota's fame started with Tokyo's majestic Suntory Hall, but its 1986 opening was a nightmare, he recalls. It took time for the musicians to adjust to its finely tuned acoustics. That process can take several years. But these days, musical experts agree the acoustics in Suntory Hall are impeccable.

Toyota said he asks all musicians to play more softly while adjusting to a new venue where he's worked. "When all 80 people are nervous and playing in all directions, then there is utter chaos on stage," he said.

Japan's love for classical music and Toyota's talent were evident at a recent Japan Philharmonic Orchestra performance at Suntory Hall of Bruckner's "Symphony No. 8 in C minor."

Kikue Sugimito, a long-time Japan Philharmonic season-ticket holder, remembers being awed by the sound quality when the orchestra moved from its previous venue to Suntory Hall.

"There is a transparency about the sound here," she said.

Pietari Inkinen, the conductor, said the hall was so close to perfect any kind of piece could be played, inspiring the performers because listeners can feel the symphony "in their stomachs."

"This is really one of the best halls in the world," he said. "You can play unbelievably softly and it carries to the last row."

The architect Frank Gehry, who worked with Toyota on Disney Hall, says the aim in designing a concert hall is to make the space comfortable and interactive for all in the room.

Gehry and Toyota donated their work to build a hall, opening in March, for Berlin's Barenboim-Said Akademie, which was founded by conductor and pianist Daniel Barenboim and the American-Palestinian scholar Edward W. Said to educate and bring together young musicians, including Arabs and Israelis.

"In music, you're taking sounds and putting them together to create beauty and a feeling. When you do a building, you're taking inert materials and putting them together to create beauty and a feeling," said Gehry, who admires Japanese culture, including gagaku music and architecture, and, especially, Toyota.

"You make the space comfortable, interactive and humane so that people feel together in the room and people feel together with the orchestra. The orchestra feels the relationship with the people. And it makes it better. That was what we tried to do. We could talk about it that way," said Gehry in a telephone interview from Los Angeles.

"I love working with him — an enriching treat beyond belief," he said.

Although architects and acousticians sometimes don't get along, as they infringe by definition on each other's turf, Toyota told a story about the cross-cultural collaborative relationship he has with Gehry, joking about sharing blame equally if Disney Hall were to fail.

"So he tells me, 'Yasu, if things don't go well, let's commit harakiri together. But you have to do it first, and I'm following because I have no idea how to do it.' My response was, 'Frank, you have to do it first. If I did, there will be no one who can help you. I can help you. You should go first. I'm going after you.'"

Follow Yuri Kageyama on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/yurikageyama>
Her work can be found at <http://bigstory.ap.org/content/yuri-kageyama>

UConn remains No. 1 in The Associated Press women's basketball poll while Tennessee re-enters the Top 25

By DOUG FEINBERG, AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Holly Warlick has spent nearly three-quarters of her life at Tennessee. She's not used to seeing them unranked.

So getting back into the Top 25 after an eight-week absence meant something to the Lady Vols coach.

"I'm happy. My expectations are for us to win," she said. "I never expected us to go out of the Top 25 poll, never. I understand (why). My job is to get us back in and keep climbing back up. Sometimes it's an unreal expectation at times. So you just got to keep plugging away."

The Lady Vols returned to The Associated Press women's basketball poll Monday, entering at No. 24. The team fell out Dec. 5 and came back in by winning two of three games last week, including a two-point victory over then-No. 4 South Carolina last Monday. Tennessee lost in double overtime to Georgia on Sunday.

Finding consistency has been a problem for the Lady Vols. They have huge home victories over Notre Dame and South Carolina and losses at Mississippi and Penn State.

"We just got to finish the deal," Warlick said of Sunday's loss. "We made great progress, we got to finish the deal. We had some big wins over some great teams."

Over the past two seasons, Tennessee has been unranked for 13 weeks. That's one less than the Lady Vols had under Pat Summitt during her entire illustrious career. Tennessee was ranked for 565 consecutive weeks in the poll before that ended nearly a year ago. The Lady Vols entered the season in the Top 25 before falling out eight weeks ago.

"It's not something that we dwell on but it is expected (to be ranked)," Warlick said. "It's a great expectation here. It's in my blood. My expectations are just like Pat's."

While the Lady Vols re-entered the poll for the first time in eight weeks, UConn remained No. 1. The Huskies (22-0) have won 97 consecutive games and continue to run through opponents.

Warlick was impressed by the consistency the Huskies have shown year after year.

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"I think that's what unique about them," she said. "Their conference isn't like the SEC, they don't care. My hats off to Geno and their staff. Those kids play hard regardless of who they are playing, that's a sign of a great team."

UConn was followed by Baylor, Maryland, Mississippi State and Florida State. The Gamecocks fell to sixth. Tennessee was joined in the Top 25 by No. 21 Michigan, which earned its first ranking since 2013.

"I think it's a tremendous honor," Michigan coach Kim Barnes Arico said. "It speaks volumes to the kids in the program and their commitment to come here and put Michigan women's basketball on the map."

The Wolverines (19-5, 8-2 Big Ten) sit in third place in the conference behind Maryland and Ohio State. It's only the 16th appearance ever in the poll for Michigan. Before 2013, the last time the school was ranked was 2002.

"We're a program that doesn't have a lot of tradition. We have people like Katelynn Flaherty, who was recruited by everyone and wanted to come to Michigan to change the program."

Kansas State also re-entered at No. 25.

West Virginia, Kentucky and Green Bay all dropped out.

This story has been corrected to show that West Virginia fell out of the Top 25, not Texas A&M.

To find the poll online: <http://collegebasketball.ap.org/ap-womens-basketball-poll-week-14>

Asian stocks are lower after Wall Street declined and oil rebounded

By **JOE McDONALD, AP Business Writer**

BEIJING (AP) — Asian stock markets were mostly lower Tuesday and oil prices rebounded after declines that dragged Wall Street lower.

KEEPING SCORE: Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index lost 0.3 percent to 18,929.75 and Sydney's S&P-ASX 200 retreated 0.1 percent to 5,612.10. The Shanghai Composite Index lost 0.3 percent to 3,147.20 and Hong Kong's Hang Seng shed 0.2 percent to 23,310.59. Seoul's KOSPI lost 0.1 percent to 2,074.55 most benchmarks in Southeast Asia fell, though shares rose in New Zealand and Singapore.

WALL STREET: Energy companies led the price slide as oil declined, snapping a three-day winning streak for the Standard & Poor's 500 index. Phone company and real estate stocks were also fell. Technology and industrial companies eked out tiny gains. With just over half of all the companies in the S&P 500 having reported quarterly results, most have posted annual earnings growth. The Dow Jones industrial average fell 0.1 percent to 20,052.42. The S&P slid 0.2 percent to 2,292.56. The Nasdaq composite index gave up or 0.1 percent to 5,663.55.

ANALYST'S TAKE: "The exuberance demonstrated in the wake of Trump ordering a review of regulation faded in a lackluster session," Alex Furber of CMC Markets said in a report. "Markets are still waiting to hear more from the Trump administration on tax cuts, deregulation and infrastructure," Furber said. "Rising political uncertainty in Europe is also influencing sentiment."

ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. crude gained 17 cents to \$53.18 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract slumped 82 cents on Monday to close at \$53.01. Brent crude, used to price international oils, rose 19 cents to \$55.91 in London. It plunged \$1.09 in the previous session to \$55.72.

FRENCH ELECTIONS: Francois Fillon refused to drop out of the presidential race despite a scandal over possible no-show jobs for his relatives knocked him out as favorite in the April-May voting. A former premier in 2007-12, Fillon has a reputation as low-key and reliable but has been hurt by an investigation into whether political jobs he gave to his wife, son and daughter were genuine. Fillon has rejected the accusation and said the hiring was "legal and transparent." Officials of the far-right National Front, including leader Marine Le Pen, also are under investigation for their use of aides in the European parliament.

CURRENCY: The dollar gained to 111.83 yen from Monday's 111.74 yen. The euro declined to \$1.0724 from \$1.0738.

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Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Feb. 7, the 38th day of 2017. There are 327 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 7, 1817, America's first public gas street lamp was lighted in Baltimore at the corner of Market and Lemon streets (now East Baltimore and Holliday streets).

On this date:

In 1795, the 11th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, dealing with states' sovereign immunity, was ratified.

In 1857, a French court acquitted author Gustave Flaubert of obscenity for his serialized novel "Madame Bovary."

In 1931, aviator Amelia Earhart married publisher George P. Putnam in Noank, Connecticut.

In 1936, President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized a flag for the office of the vice president.

In 1948, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower resigned as Army chief of staff; he was succeeded by Gen. Omar Bradley.

In 1962, President John F. Kennedy imposed a full trade embargo on Cuba.

In 1971, women in Switzerland gained the right to vote through a national referendum, 12 years after a previous attempt failed.

In 1984, space shuttle Challenger astronauts Bruce McCandless II and Robert L. Stewart went on the first untethered spacewalk, which lasted nearly six hours.

In 1986, the Philippines held a presidential election marred by charges of fraud against the incumbent, Ferdinand E. Marcos. Haitian President-for-Life Jean-Claude Duvalier (doo-VAHL-yay') fled his country, ending 28 years of his family's rule.

In 1991, Jean-Bertrand Aristide (zhahn behr-TRAHN' ahr-ihs-TEED') was inaugurated as the first democratically elected president of Haiti (he was overthrown by the military the following September).

In 1992, European Community members signed the Maastricht Treaty, which led to creation of the euro.

In 1999, Jordan's King Hussein died of cancer at age 63; he was succeeded by his eldest son, Abdullah.

Ten years ago: U.S. officials confirmed a new security operation was under way in Baghdad; U.S. armor rushed through streets, and Iraqi armored personnel carriers guarded bridges and major intersections. A Marine CH-46 Sea Knight helicopter was shot down by insurgents northwest of Baghdad, killing all seven people on board. The Food and Drug Administration approved alli (AL-eye), a diet pill that could be bought without a prescription.

Five years ago: In a setback for Republican presidential hopeful Mitt Romney, Rick Santorum swept GOP caucuses in Minnesota and Colorado and a non-binding primary in Missouri. A federal appeals court ruled California's ban on same-sex marriage was unconstitutional, but gave gay marriage opponents time to appeal the decision before ordering the state to allow such weddings to resume.

One year ago: Von Miller forced two fumbles to set up Denver's two touchdowns and the Broncos defense frustrated Cam Newton all game to carry Peyton Manning to his second NFL championship with a 24-10 victory over the Carolina Panthers in Super Bowl 50. North Korea defied international warnings and launched a long-range rocket that the United Nations and others called a cover for a banned test of technology for a missile that could strike the U.S. mainland.

Today's Birthdays: Author Gay Talese is 85. Former Sen. Herb Kohl, D-Wis., is 82. Reggae musician Brian Travers (UB40) is 58. Comedy writer Robert Smigel (SMY'-guh) is 57. Actor James Spader is 57. Country singer Garth Brooks is 55. Rock musician David Bryan (Bon Jovi) is 55. Actor-comedian Eddie Izzard is 55. Actor-comedian Chris Rock is 52. Actor Jason Gedrick is 50. Actress Essence Atkins is 45. Rock singer-musician Wes Borland is 42. Rock musician Tom Blankenship (My Morning Jacket) is 39. Actor Ashton Kutcher is 39. Actress Tina Majorino is 32. Actress Deborah Ann Woll is 32.

Thought for Today: "A cruel story runs on wheels, and every hand oils the wheels as they run." — Ouida (Marie Louise de la Ramee), English writer (1839-1908).

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