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Thursday, Feb. 16

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

United Methodist: UMW at 1:30 p.m.

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

School Lunch: Turkey gravy, mashed potatoes, corn, fruit.

Senior Menu: Scalloped potatoes and ham, green peas, Mandarin orange salad, whole wheat bread.

GBBB at Milbank: C game at 5:15 p.m. with JV and varsity to follow.

JHBBB: Hosts Webster with 7th grade at 6 p.m. and 8th grade at 7 p.m.

Friday, Feb. 17

School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza, fruit, juice, milk.

School Lunch: Spaghetti with meat sauce, mixed vegetable, fruit, carrots and dip, toast.

Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes and gravy, broccoli, cherry crisp, whole

Apts for Rent

1 bedroom apartment for rent. Move in by Feb. 28th and get a FREE 32" Flat Screen TV! All utilities included except A/C, for \$600. Please call or text 239-849-7674 .

Open: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave.

The cardboard/paper

recycling trailer at the school is **OPEN**

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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.

Harry Implement Inc.

PO Box 841

Ferney, SD

57439



Dakota Outdoors



Erik Dean

402 N Main St
Aberdeen, SD 57401
605.229.0123

dakoutdoors@midconetwork.com

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Groton Prairie Mixed

Team Standings: Foxes 6, Cheetahs 6, Chipmunks 4, Shih Tzus 3, Coyotes 3, Jackelopes 2

Men's High Games: Doug Jorgensen 223, Brad Waage 204, Mike Siegler 204, Roger Spanier 203, 202

Women's High Games: Angie Carlson 183, Lori Giedt 178, Lori Wiley 178, Sue Stanley 166

Men's High Series: Roger Spanier 596, Brad Waage 580, Doug Jorgensen 542

Women's High Series: Lori Giedt 465, Vicki Walter 460, Sue Stanley 455

GROTON KIWANIS CLUB

Reed Litch introduced Jay Peterson, Groton; manager of Sand Lake Refuge, who gave a power point presentation of his work, actually covering several counties, for Wednesday's Kiwanis program.

Lee Schinkel introduced his guest, Kelly Kampa, who told of her new Groton business, Karma's salon and boutique, on west side of Main Street.

Next week's program leader will be Tom Mahan, followed by Lee Schinkel

Gov. Daugaard Signs Bills Into Law

PIERRE, S.D. – Gov. Dennis Daugaard signed the following bills into law yesterday:

HB 1012 – An Act to revise certain provisions related to wind and solar easements.

HB 1021 – An Act to revise certain provisions regarding the education provided for children in certain residential treatment centers.

HB 1036 – An Act to revise certain provisions concerning voter registration and notices of boundary changes for local elections.

HB 1046 – An Act to revise various trust and trust company provisions.

HB 1051 – An Act to establish and revise certain provisions regarding virtual representation.

HB 1057 – An Act to revise when improvement districts shall hold an election of board members.

SB 26 – An Act to revise the state automated victim notification system.



Call or Text
Paul at
397-7460
or Tina at
397-7285
for
membership
Information

Cracks Can Cause Hazards in Trees

Inspection from industry certified arborists can prevent severe property damage

Tree failure is a major cause of property damage, especially after high-winds. If the wind is strong enough, even healthy trees can be uprooted or broken. But it might not take a storm or high winds to cause a cracked or rotted tree to fail under its own weight.

"Homeowners worried about trees falling and damaging property should call a qualified arborist for an on-site inspection," advises Tchukki Andersen, BCMA, CTSP* and staff arborist with the Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA). Andersen notes that trees are genetically designed to withstand storms, but all trees can fail – and defective trees fail sooner than healthy trees.

"To a professional arborist," notes Andersen, "certain defects are indicators that a tree has an increased potential to fail."

Cracks in tree trunks can be one of the major indicators of an unstable tree. Most cracks are caused by improper closure of wounds or by the splitting of weak branch unions. They can be found in branches, stems or roots, and vary in type and severity:

There are horizontal and vertical cracks. Horizontal cracks run across the grain of the wood and develop just before the tree fails, making them very difficult to detect. Vertical cracks run with the wood grain along the length of the tree and may appear as shear or ribbed cracks.

Shear cracks can run completely through the stem and separate it into two halves. As the tree bends and sways in the wind, one half of the stem slides over the other, elongating the crack. Eventually the enlarging crack causes the two halves of the stem to shear apart.

Ribbed cracks are created as the tree attempts to seal over a wound. Margins of the crack meet and mesh but are reopened due to tree movement or extremely cold temperatures. Thicker annual rings are created in order to stabilize the developing crack at the location of the wound. This forms the ribbed appearance over a period of many years.

These cracks put a tree at high risk of failure, and are especially dangerous when combined with other defects or with advanced decay.

A qualified arborist can determine the potential for failure by measuring the shell thickness in a few locations around the tree's circumference, determining the width of the crack opening, and looking for the presence of any other type of defect.

What is the risk?

Cracks are hazardous because they compromise the structure of the tree. They can eventually split the stem in two, and are very dangerous when combined with internal decay. The presence of multiple cracks and decay indicates a potentially hazardous tree.

Find a Professional

A professional arborist can assess your landscape and work with you to determine the best care for your trees. Contact the Tree Care Industry Association, a public and professional resource on trees and arboriculture since 1938. TCIA has more than 2,300 member tree care firms and affiliated companies who recognize stringent safety and performance standards and who are required to carry liability insurance. TCIA also has the nation's only Accreditation program that helps consumers find tree care companies that have been inspected and accredited based on: adherence to industry standards for quality and safety; maintenance of trained, professional staff; and dedication to ethics and quality in business practices. For more, visit www.tcia.org or www.treecaretips.org.

An easy way to find a tree care service provider in your area is to use the "Locate Your Local TCIA Member Companies" program. You can use this service by calling 1-800-733-2622 or by doing a ZIP Code search on www.treecaretips.org.

*Board Certified Master Arborist, Certified Treecare Safety Professional

Board to reach out to communities for middle/high school project information

The Groton Area School Board decided Wednesday night to have three community meetings to further present the board's proposed middle/high school construction project. Meetings will be held in Groton, Columbia and Bristol. The dates have yet to be finalized, but they are looking at February 27, March 6, 9 and 14.

The board heard from Tom Grimmond from Dougherty & Company about financing options. Paybacks ranged from 22 to 30 years, ranging from 77 cents per \$1,000 valuation for a 22-year payback to 67 cents per \$1,000 valuation for a 30-year payback. The board agreed that a shorter pay-back would be better than a longer one and would like figures for an 18-year payback and a 20-year payback. The renovation projected cost for the middle/high school project is estimated at \$14 million.

The second draft of the 2017-18 school calendar was presented and will be going back to the drawing board. Due to construction at the elementary school, the school year will be starting on September 5. August 18th is the final day for most of the construction, but then all of the classrooms have to be restored to teaching condition before school starts. Superintendent Joe Schwan said he does not like the school calendar for next year, but said it's only a one-year deal due to construction and will make it work. The last day of school is set for May 24, 2018, with little room given for snow days. The board hashed over eliminating one vacation day to help provide a cushion. There was discussion on eliminating the Wednesday before Thanksgiving and the first day of Spring Break. The board agreed to eliminate the first day of spring break, which will move up the last day of school to May 23. Schwan said he did not want school to continue after Memorial Day. There are also other contingency dates in case it's a bad winter. Makeup Day #1 would be giving up Monday, Feb. 19 (President's Day) if a day of school is missed prior to January 12. Makeup Day #2 would be Monday, April 2 (Easter Monday) if a day of school is missed before March 2. There will be no spring conferences next year.

The fee for the Summer driver's education program will remain at \$250. It's been the same since 2011. In addition to Shaun Wanner, Joel Guthmiller is getting certified to teach Driver's Ed.

Sarah Honerman submitted her resignation to the board effective at the end of the school year.

The Health Food Service Inspection report was presented for the Groton Area Elementary School. The report gave a 99 out of 100 rating. There was a missing thermometer in one of the coolers. "It was a good inspection," Schwan said.

There are two student teachers at the elementary school. Eliza Jacob is working with Ann Gibbs in kindergarten and Emily Cruse is working with Cody Swanson in music. Also, there will be two pre-admission field experience students - Kiana Kokales will work with Renee Swisher and Breanna Marzahn will work with Susan Fjeldheim. These will be a two-day experience.

OST will be sponsoring a Math Family Night on March 6 from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Elementary Gym. There will be a free will donation with juice, pizza and cookies being served. The Kindergarten Roundup is set for Friday, March 31.

The district has applied for a grant through Monsanto for \$25,000. It is an America's Farmers Grow Rural Education Grant. They are looking at bringing zSpace Technology to the Groton Area School District. If you want to see what this looks like, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMTruT9a7qw> It is a 3-D visualization which would have many learning opportunities.

Thus far, Grant Rix and Steve Smith have submitted their petitions for school board. Their positions are up this year. The last day to submit a petition is 5 p.m. on February 24th. They are for three-year terms.

Today in Weather History

February 16, 1969: Freezing drizzle and thick fog formed a heavy glaze on utility lines resulting in several broken power and telephone lines across northern South Dakota.

1899 - Washington D.C. received 1.26 inches of rain in six hours atop a snow cover more than 30 inches deep making it the soggiest day of record. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1903 - The temperature at Pokegama Dam MN plunged to 59 degrees below zero to establish a state record. (David Ludlum)

1943 - Record cold prevailed in the northeastern U.S. The mercury plunged to 43 degrees below zero at Concord NH, and to -39 degrees at Portland ME. The morning low of -32 degrees at Falls Village CT established a state record, yet the afternoon high that day was 20 degrees above zero. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A winter storm produced snow and ice in the Ohio Valley and the Appalachian Region. Snowfall totals in Virginia ranged up to 14 inches around Farmville, while Granville NC reported eight inches of sleet and ice. Freezing rain in eastern North Carolina caused extensive damage to power lines. Gales lashed the coast of Virginia and North Carolina. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Santa Ana winds in southern California gusted to 50 mph in the Rancho Cucamonga area. Quiet weather prevailed across the rest of the nation. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A surge of arctic air produced all-time record high barometric pressure readings of 31.08 inches at Duluth MN, 30.97 inches at Chicago IL and 30.94 inches at South Bend IN. Readings of 31.00 inches at Milwaukee WI and 30.98 inches at Rockford IL tied their all-time records. Unseasonably warm weather prevailed across the southeastern U.S. Highs of 81 degrees at Athens GA, 87 degrees at Charleston SC, 85 degrees at Macon GA, and 86 degrees at Savannah GA were records for February. (The National Weather Summary)

1903: The temperature at Pokegama Dam, Minnesota plunged to 59 degrees below zero to establish a state record. This record was held until February 2, 1996, when the temperature at Tower fell to 60 degrees below zero.

1990 - Strong thunderstorms developing ahead of an arctic cold front produced severe weather across the southeastern U.S. between mid morning on the 15th and early evening on the 16th. Thunderstorms spawned thirteen tornadoes, including one which, prior to dawn on the 16th, injured eleven persons near Carrollton GA. There were also 121 reports of large hail or damaging winds. A late afternoon thunderstorm on the 15th produced baseball size hail at Jackson MS, and prior to dawn on the 16th, a thunderstorm produced high winds which injured four persons at Goodwater AL. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



livestream

Upcoming Events

Thursday at Milbank

Girls' Basketball

JV at 6:30, Varsity at 8:00

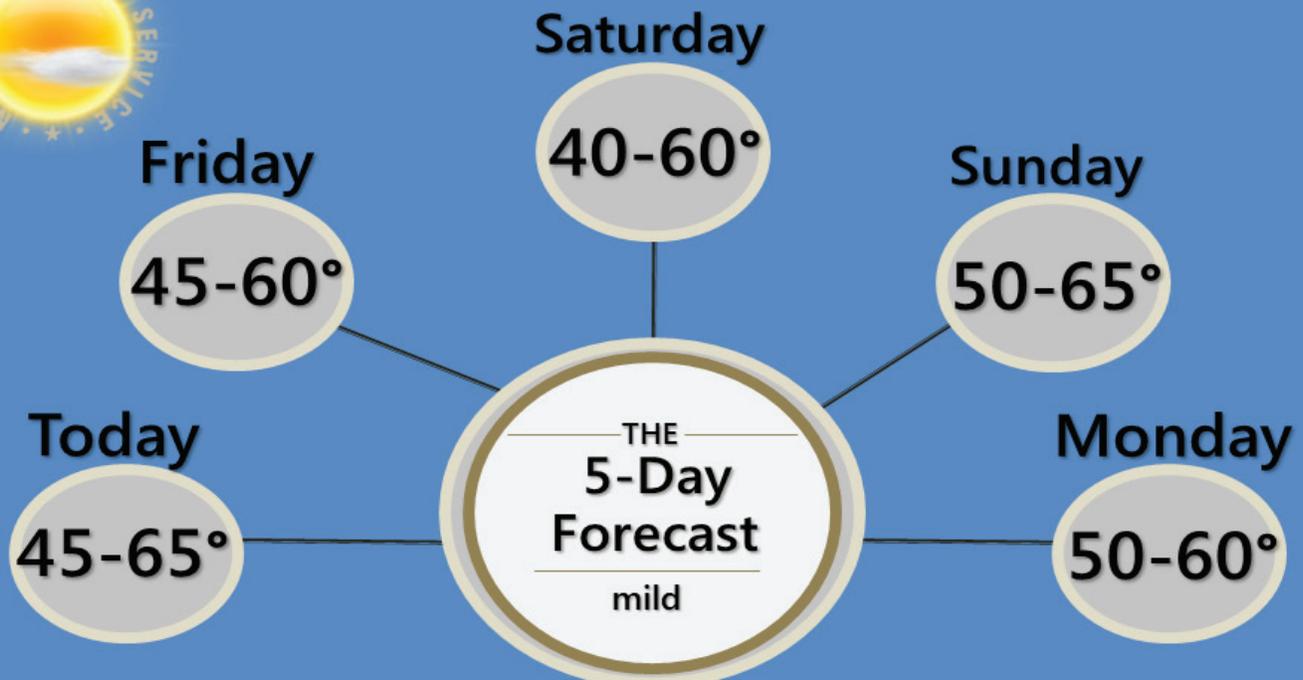
gdilive.com

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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
						
Mostly Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny
High: 51 °F	Low: 30 °F	High: 51 °F	Low: 30 °F	High: 51 °F	Low: 34 °F	High: 59 °F

Above Normal Temperatures Continue!



Next Precipitation Chances?
Sunday night into Monday

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



Updated: 2/16/2017 5 AM Central

Published on: 02/16/2017 at 5:11AM

Temperatures through the weekend will feel more like early April rather than mid-February with highs in the 40s and 50s. Some locations will see highs in the 60s at times.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 45.1 F at 3:54 PM

Low Outside Temp: 22.3 F at 7:44 AM

High Gust: 22.0 Mph at 1:02 PM

Rain: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 56° in 1981

Record Low: -40 in 1936

Average High: 28°F

Average Low: 8°F

Average Precip in Feb.: 0.27

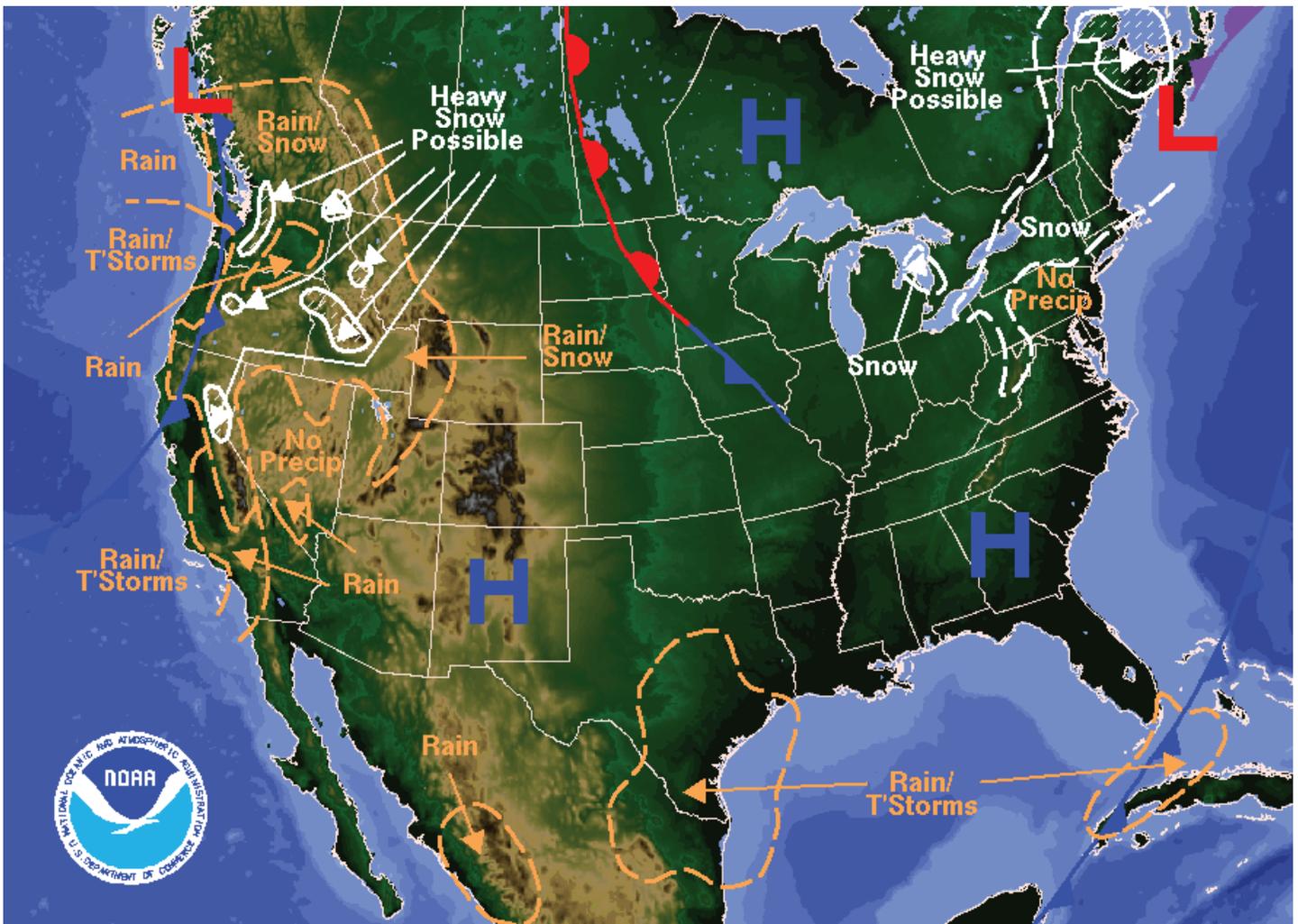
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.74

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 6:02 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:31 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Thu, Feb 16, 2017, issued 4:20 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts



ANSWERING THE RIGHT QUESTION

A young student was sitting before Socrates anxiously wanting to learn from "the master." With a penetrating glaze he asked, "Where can I find the best things in life?"

The young student was struck with the breadth of the question. He thought of the various places that had the best fabrics and finest robes. Then he thought of the market places that had the finest merchandise. Then he thought of the restaurants that had the best food and drinks.

As he was about to answer, Socrates held up his hand as if to interrupt the student's thoughts and asked, "Must we not first, however, ask what the best things are?" That question changed Plato's life forever.

David once said, "You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence, and the pleasures of living with you forever."

Most individuals spend most of their time searching for the "best things of life" – things that will bring them joy, satisfaction and happiness. He realized that in spite of everything he possessed, God was the one who could make a difference in life and bring him peace and completeness. He realized that only God would be able to comfort him in his moments of distress and discouragement.

Everything in life is temporary except God. We must make worshiping Him the best thing in our lives.

Prayer: Help us, Heavenly Father, to place You at the center of our lives. May we find contentment within us knowing that we have found the way, the truth and the life. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 16 You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

News from the Associated Press

South Dakota State rallies late to beat IUPUI 81-67

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Mike Daum scored 26 points and grabbed nine rebounds and South Dakota State rallied in the second half to beat IUPUI 81-67 on Wednesday night.

Daum was 7 of 12 from the floor and drained all 12 of his free throws (13-16, 6-8 Summit). Reed Tellinghuisen added 16 points including four 3-pointers, Chris Howell added another 16 points with a team-high 12 rebounds, and Michael Orris had 13 points and seven assists.

South Dakota State trailed 15-8 midway through the first half and was down 33-26 at the break.

Tellinghuisen sank a pair of 3-pointers early in the second half as part of a 14-7 surge that evened it up at 40 with 15:47 to go. Another rally late included two more Tellinghuisen 3-pointers and two dunks by Daum and gave the Jackrabbits a 75-66 edge with 55 seconds left.

Matt O'Leary scored 23 points for the Jaguars (11-16, 5-8).

State, feds address cleanup at oil pipeline protest camp

By BLAKE NICHOLSON, Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — Federal and state officials announced plans Wednesday to accelerate cleanup at a camp in southern North Dakota that has housed hundreds and sometimes thousands of Dakota Access pipeline opponents.

Officials fear the camp near the Cannonball River will soon flood due to warm weather and rapid snow-melt. They worry trash and debris left behind by people who have left in recent weeks might pollute the Missouri River and other nearby waterways.

"With the amount of people that have been out there and the amount of estimated waste and trash out there, there is a good chance it will end up in the river if it is not cleaned up," Corps spokesman Capt. Ryan Hignight said.

Local and federal officials estimate there's enough trash and debris in the camp to fill about 2,500 pickup trucks. Garbage ranges from trash to building debris to human waste, according to Morton County Emergency Manager Tom Doering.

The camp on federal land near the pipeline route has dwindled to a few hundred people as the battle over the \$3.8 billion project to move North Dakota oil to Illinois has largely moved into the courts. The Standing Rock Sioux and others believe a pipeline leak under the Missouri River would contaminate water for millions of people. Developer Energy Transfer Partners says the pipeline is safe.

The tribe has asked protesters to leave the area, and has been coordinating cleanup at the camp since late last month. Chairman Dave Archambault said at the time it was being funded from \$6 million in donations the tribe received to support its pipeline fight.

Gov. Doug Burgum, State Engineer Garland Eberle and state Environmental Health Chief Dave Glatt on Tuesday issued a statement pushing for an accelerated cleanup.

"We're really fighting the clock," Doering said Wednesday. "There's more garbage down there than anybody anticipated."

Corps officials and a contractor will travel to the site later this week to assess the situation, though actual cleanup work won't happen until the area is deemed safe for workers, Hignight said. The camp area has seen frequent and sometimes violent clashes between protesters and police.

North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum said the state could start lining up additional contractors as early as Thursday. Who would pay the cost could be decided later, he said.

"I don't want to sit around and argue about who's going to pay for it while we've got buildings floating down the Missouri River," he said.

Doering said local authorities are hoping for a presidential disaster declaration to open up the prospect

of federal aid.

The Corps said earlier this month it will close the camp Feb. 22 — next Wednesday — to get people out of harm's way and safeguard the environment. Burgum on Wednesday issued an evacuation order to complement the Corps deadline, though he said arresting people would be a last resort.

Hignight said the Corps was still working out details about how the shutdown would be handled. Once it's accomplished, crews will "clean up the land to a pre-protest state," he said.

The effort will be funded through the Corps budget, meaning taxpayers ultimately will foot the bill.

Follow Blake Nicholson on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/NicholsonBlake>

North Dakota pipeline protest spurs South Dakota legislation

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Dennis Daugaard's office is pursuing legislation to make it clear that the governor's emergency response powers apply to destructive protests, create new trespassing penalties and make it a crime to obstruct highways based on lessons North Dakota learned from large demonstrations over the Dakota Access pipeline last year.

Officials including Daugaard have talked with Gov. Doug Burgum's administration to hear about North Dakota's experience handling the protests and what the state would have done differently, Chief of Staff Tony Venhuizen told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

"We've seen what we've seen in North Dakota, and we want to be prepared," Venhuizen said. "We certainly understand that there may be people who want to peacefully protest, and it's nobody's intention to prohibit that or prevent that, but those need to be controlled so that they don't endanger public safety or public property or private property."

A spokesman for Burgum didn't immediately return a telephone message requesting comment.

The South Dakota bill would allow the governor to declare an area a "public safety zone" if an event occurs that may consume significant public resources, poses a threat to property and threatens the health and welfare of the public.

The governor's emergency authority includes assuming control over emergency management functions, declaring an emergency in a stricken area and helping local authorities give relief and controlling access to designated emergency areas. The governor can mobilize state resources and coordinate local resources in an emergency, Venhuizen said.

The proposal would make it aggravated criminal trespass, a misdemeanor, to defy a posted order not to enter a public safety zone. The sentence would be at least 10 days in county jail, and a second offense within two years would be a felony.

The bill also would make it a misdemeanor for someone to stand in the highway to stop traffic. It's set to be discussed in a Senate committee next week.

That will ensure the public has time to read it and give testimony, Venhuizen said.

The disputed four-state pipeline could be moving oil in as little as a month, though opponents, including the Standing Rock and Cheyenne River Sioux, are promising to continue fighting the \$3.8 billion project.

An encampment near the construction in southern North Dakota drew thousands of protesters last year in support of the tribes, leading to occasional clashes with law enforcement and more than 700 arrests. The camp has thinned, but law enforcement continues to maintain a presence. The cost to taxpayers has reached \$33 million, the state's Joint Information Center reported Monday, and the protests have created an unprecedented burden for the state's court system.

The South Dakota proposal would let the state Supreme Court's chief justice in an emergency streamline the process for out-of-state attorneys to be allowed to defend people who are arrested, Venhuizen said. He said a huge number of cases in the state could require more defense attorneys than could reasonably be expected to come from within just South Dakota.

In North Dakota, lawmakers recently defeated a bill prompted by protesters who blocked roads during

the Dakota Access pipeline demonstrations. The bill said a driver who "unintentionally" caused an injury or death to a person blocking a road would not be charged.

Libby Skarin, policy director for the American Civil Liberties Union of South Dakota, said protest is often unpopular, but it's a fundamental the country was built on.

"We know that there have been a spate of anti-protest bills that have been popping up all over the country," Skarin said. "The idea that this bill could be some sort of pre-emption against potential protest activity is really concerning."

Court rejects landowner challenge to Dakota Access pipeline

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — A district court judge has ruled against 14 Iowa landowners who sued to block the Dakota Access pipeline from crossing their property, concluding that the Iowa Utilities Board properly approved a permit for its construction.

Judge Jeffrey Farrell says in a decision filed Wednesday that the board adequately considered whether the pipeline provides a public convenience and necessity and its decision to grant a license was supported by state law and evidence.

The landowners challenged the board's decision claiming it was illegal to take farmland for a pipeline that provides no public service to Iowans.

The pipeline moves oil out of North Dakota across South Dakota and Iowa and into Illinois.

The attorney for the landowners, Bill Hanigan, says the decision will be appealed to the Iowa Supreme Court.

Panel passes bill capping out-of-state money for initiatives

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A bill that aims to restrict the flow of out-of-state money into South Dakota ballot question campaigns has passed its first legislative test.

The House State Affairs Committee voted Wednesday to send the bill to the full chamber. It would limit ballot question campaigns to \$100,000 in out-of-state contributions per general election cycle.

House Speaker Mark Mickelson, a supporter, says it's a narrow, "well-crafted" restriction on out-of-state interests contributing to a ballot measure. Gov. Dennis Daugaard's office testified in favor of the bill.

Republican Rep. David Lust, who opposed it, says it "fails almost on its face constitutionally."

Since Election Day, Republicans have frequently complained about out-of-state interests experimenting with South Dakota's laws and constitution. Out-of-state donors pumped over \$10 million into campaigns for or against the state's questions.

Pipeline exec compares Dakota protesters to terrorists

By MATTHEW DALY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A top executive at the company building the controversial Dakota Access pipeline on Wednesday compared pipeline opponents to terrorists.

Joey Mahmoud, executive vice president of Texas-based Energy Transfer Partners, said protesters have "assaulted numerous pipeline personnel," destroyed millions of dollars' worth of construction equipment and even fired a pistol at law enforcement during months of demonstrations against the 1,200-mile pipeline, which will carry North Dakota oil to an Illinois terminal.

Mahmoud said in written testimony to Congress that the protest movement "induced individuals to break into and shut down pump stations on four operational pipelines. Had these actions been undertaken by foreign nationals, they could only be described as acts of terrorism."

Mahmoud omitted the comment about terrorism as he read his testimony aloud to a House energy subcommittee Wednesday. The comment was included in written remarks submitted to the panel.

The chairman of the Cheyenne River Sioux, one of two tribes suing to stop the project, called Mahmoud's comments unfair.

"The majority of them are there in prayer," Chairman Harold Frazier said of pipeline opponents. "From

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what I've seen (law enforcement officers) are the terrorists."

Law enforcement has used tactics such as rubber bullets, tear gas and water sprays against protesters during clashes in southern North Dakota near the pipeline route, Frazier said, adding that he personally has been hit by rubber bullets and tear gas.

Mahmoud, the pipeline executive, also blasted the Obama administration, which twice delayed the project last year.

"The Department of the Interior, and most likely senior members of the White House staff, interfered deeply and inappropriately in the waning stages of the regulatory process," he told lawmakers. "Even a company as large as Energy Transfer is helpless in the face of a government which will neither obey nor enforce the law."

Mahmoud called the delays "politically motivated actions" that were "accompanied by a host of half-truths and misrepresentations in both social and mainstream media."

Mahmoud also targeted the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, whose reservation lies near the pipeline's route and who say the pipeline threatens their water supply and tribal artifacts.

The company reached out to the tribe more than two years ago but has been continually rebuffed, Mahmoud said, adding that the project poses little threat to drinking water. The pipeline will be at least the 15th to cross the Missouri River, will employ state-of-the-art technology and will be buried more than 90 feet below the river, he said.

"To cast this as a dispute about protection of water resources is, quite simply, at variance with the facts, and it ignores universally accepted scientific and engineering practices," he said.

Chad Harrison, a councilman at-large for the Standing Rock Sioux, said the pipeline company and the government ignored the tribe's concerns for almost three years before the Obama administration paused the project last September. On Dec. 4, then-assistant Army secretary for civil works, Jo-Ellen Darcy, declined to issue an easement, saying a broader environmental study was warranted.

"To be clear, the tribe does not oppose economic development, energy independence or protecting our national security," Harrison said. "What we oppose is development that is undertaken without our consent and in such a way that our community, our people, our cultural sites and our natural resources are put at the most risk. We are the ones who will pay the cost when something goes wrong."

Mahmoud declined to comment after Wednesday's hearing, ignoring shouted questions as he walked away.

A federal judge on Monday refused to stop construction on the last stretch of the pipeline, which could be operational as soon as next month.

U.S. District Judge James Boasberg ruled that as long as oil isn't flowing through the pipeline, there is no imminent harm to the two tribes. Another hearing is scheduled on Feb. 27.

Associated Press writer Blake Nicholson in Bismarck, N.D. contributed to this story.

Panel votes to allow adoption agencies to refuse gay couples

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota legislative panel on Wednesday approved a bill that would protect religious adoption agencies or foster groups that won't work with same-sex couples and single parents.

The Senate Health and Human Services Committee passed the bill 5-2 despite state and federal standards that bar agencies receiving state funds from denying prospective parents based on religion, sexual orientation, marital status, race or gender. The bill now moves to the full Senate.

Six organizations currently receive state funds that force them to comply with those state and federal requirements.

The bill's supporters say the agencies shouldn't have to abandon their "sincerely held" religious views, and that the measure would allow the groups to only place children with traditional families whose views align with their own, the Argus Leader reported (<http://argusne.ws/2kTDhqU>) reported.

Republican Sen. Alan Solano, of Rapid City, said other states hold back state funding and licenses if faith-based groups refuse to work with certain prospective parents. The bill would protect agencies from that situation in South Dakota.

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Libby Skarin, policy director for the American Civil Liberties Union of South Dakota, said it's the duty of placement agencies to put the needs of abused or neglected children first. If religious groups are able to put their moral beliefs first and deny LGBTQ couples and single people, it could open the state up to legal battles, she said. Skarin also said the bill could limit the pool of prospective foster parents in South Dakota. "Freedom of religion is not a license to deny these kids loving parents," said Billy Mawhiney, a gay foster father from Sioux Falls.

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

Senate endorses plan to make it harder to alter constitution

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The state Senate has endorsed putting a constitutional amendment on the 2018 ballot that would make it more difficult to amend the South Dakota constitution.

The chamber voted 19-15 Wednesday for the measure. The amendment would increase the simple majority required for passage in an election to at least 60 percent of the votes cast.

It would also require a two-thirds vote in each chamber of the Legislature to propose a constitutional amendment. Right now, it simply takes a majority vote.

Republican Sen. Jim Bolin, the main sponsor, says that he wants to protect the South Dakota constitution. Opponent Sen. Lance Russell, a Republican, says the proposal is "affront to the voters."

It would also have to pass through the state House.

Mitchell officials: Corn murals on walls 2 years too long

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — Some officials are condemning the decision to keep murals made of corn on the exterior of Mitchell's signature tourist attraction for two years instead of one.

The nine murals alongside the walls of the city's Corn Palace stayed on for an extra year as part of a cost-saving trial run led by Mayor Jerry Toomey, the Daily Republic (<http://bit.ly/2kKi7tb>) reported. The last time the building's exterior was redecorated was in 2015, when the city spent about \$157,000.

The kernels have been picked off some of the murals by animals, and corn cobs have fallen from the walls. Corn Palace Director Scott Schmidt and Councilman Marty Barington agreed the murals should be replaced every year.

"It's an iconic structure, it's a centerpiece of our community, and I believe that's one area that you've got to keep on investing some of the taxpayers' money to make our city look good when we have all these tourists coming on in town," Barington said.

Schmidt said noted that "the murals just aren't looking the best."

"We've had a lot of corn fall off, I wouldn't say it's been a relatively horrible winter, but it's been a tough winter, so we weren't really sure what to expect with this," he said.

The newly formed Corn Palace Operational Committee is expected to meet this week to offer a recommendation on the murals' future.

The murals currently display a "Rock of Ages" theme, which is expected to be replaced after the corn for the murals is harvested. Schmidt said the city will use the South Dakota seasons theme.

Information from: The Daily Republic, <http://www.mitchellrepublic.com>

Spearfish Canyon park plan killed after tax revenue shortage

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Legislature's budget panel has axed Gov. Dennis Daugaard's Spearfish Canyon State Park plan after state tax revenues slumped below expectations for the upcoming cycle.

The Joint Committee on Appropriations Wednesday turned down Daugaard's requested \$2.5 million for a land swap between the state Office of School and Public Lands and the U.S. Forest Service.

His plan was to use the trade to gain more lands in Spearfish Canyon, and turn the area into a state

park. The idea lacked support from people living near the canyon.

Kelsey Pritchard, communications director for the governor's office, says the "top priority is a balanced budget" and money for the proposed land swap wasn't something they needed to have this year.

Amended SD refugee bill takes lawmakers out of vetting

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A bill that would require state lawmakers' seal of approval on refugee resettlements in South Dakota was amended and unanimously passed its first test.

The Senate State Affairs Committee approved amending the bill Wednesday to require private refugee resettlement groups to provide certain information about the process — like services provided, demographics and the number of refugees assisted from each country — instead of allowing lawmakers to be part of the vetting process.

All of the bill's opponents testified favorably for the amended bill. They say providing legislators with information about the resettlement process will bring more understanding and friendliness to the issue.

Sponsor and Senate President Pro Tempore Brock Greenfield worked with opponents on the amendment. He says it's important for legislators to have information on the resettlement process.

Panel approves bill to allow concealed carry without permit

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A state House panel approved a bill Wednesday that would allow people who can legally carry a concealed handgun in South Dakota to do so without a permit.

The House State Affairs Committee voted 7-6 to send it to the full chamber. It's currently a misdemeanor for someone to carry a concealed pistol or to have one concealed in a vehicle without a permit.

Openly carrying a firearm in South Dakota is legal.

Republican Rep. Lynne DiSanto, the main sponsor, said she doesn't believe that she should have to lease back her constitutional right from the government to carry a gun in her handbag.

"I believe that the element of surprise as a woman is more beneficial for me to carry that way," she said. "I don't want someone to know that I'm carrying a gun."

A similar proposal passed through the House in 2015, but died in a Senate committee. Twelve states currently allow some form of the practice, according to Lars Dalseide, a spokesman for the NRA Institute for Legislative Action.

Dalseide said in an email that he's encouraged to see committee members stand up for the rights of their constituents and that he hopes to see a similar recognition of rights when the full chamber votes on the "vital" legislation.

GOP Gov. Dennis Daugaard has said he will veto the bill if it's approved by the Legislature. Representatives from law enforcement and the governor's office opposed the bill during the committee hearing.

"I really feel that our process is not burdensome," Daugaard said last week of the state's permit requirements. "It's doing an important job, and our laws are very reasonable."

At the end of December, there were roughly 96,000 active regular and enhanced permits issued in South Dakota, according to the Secretary of State's office.

South Dakota Supreme Court Justice Lori Wilbur to retire

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Supreme Court Justice Lori Wilbur has announced she will be retiring this summer.

Wilbur has been part of the state's judicial branch for nearly 25 years and has held every judicial position in the state including law clerk, magistrate judge and circuit judge. She was appointed to South Dakota's Supreme Court by Gov. Dennis Daugaard in 2011 and will step down in June.

Chief Justice David Gilbertson told KSFY-TV (<http://bit.ly/2kKcuLI>) that Wilbur is the only person in history who has held every position. He says she distinguished herself in all of them.

In a statement, Wilbur says she is "deeply grateful for the opportunity" and for the relationships she

gained in the court system.

Daugaard will appoint Wilbur's successor in the coming months.

Information from: KSFY-TV, <http://www.ksfy.com>

Pope Francis: Native people have rights over their lands

By NICOLE WINFIELD, Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis insisted Wednesday that indigenous groups must give prior consent to any economic activity affecting their ancestral lands, a view that conflicts with the Trump administration, which is pushing to build a \$3.8 billion oil pipeline over opposition from American Indians.

Francis met with representatives of indigenous peoples attending a U.N. agricultural meeting and said the key issue facing them is how to reconcile the right to economic development with protecting their cultures and territories.

"In this regard, the right to prior and informed consent should always prevail," he said. "Only then is it possible to guarantee peaceful cooperation between governing authorities and indigenous peoples, overcoming confrontation and conflict."

The Cheyenne River and the Standing Rock Sioux tribes have sued to stop construction on the final stretch of the Dakota Access pipeline, which would bring oil from North Dakota's rich Bakken fields across four states to a shipping point in Illinois.

The tribes say the pipeline threatens their drinking water, cultural sites and ability to practice their religion, which depends on pure water. The last piece of the pipeline is to pass under a reservoir on the Missouri River, which marks the eastern border of both tribes' reservations.

The company building the pipeline, Texas-based Energy Transfer Partners, has insisted the water supply will be safe.

Francis didn't cite the Dakota pipeline dispute by name and the Vatican press office said he was not making a direct reference to it. But history's first Latin American pope has been a consistent backer of indigenous rights and has frequently spoken out about the plight of Indians in resisting economic development that threatens their lands.

"For governments, this means recognizing that indigenous communities are a part of the population to be appreciated and consulted, and whose full participation should be promoted at the local and national level," Francis told the indigenous leaders Wednesday.

In the waning days of the Obama administration, amid protests over construction that led to some 700 arrests, federal agencies that have authority over the reservoir said they would not give permission for pipe to be laid until an environmental study was done.

U.S. President Donald Trump reversed course and last month instructed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to proceed with building the pipeline.

Francis' reference to prior consent is enshrined in the U.N. Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, which was adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in 2007 over the opposition of the U.S., Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Francis' strong backing for indigenous groups and refugees, his climate change concerns and criticism of the global economy's profit-at-all-cost mentality highlight the policy differences with the Trump administration that may come out if the U.S. president meets with Francis while in Italy for a G-7 summit in May. There has been no confirmation of any meeting to date, however.

AP writer Daniela Petroff contributed.

South Dakota considers bill controlling refugee resettlement

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A bill giving state lawmakers control over refugee resettlements in South Dakota will get its first hearing in a Senate committee.

The Senate State Affairs Committee on Wednesday will debate a proposal to prohibit new refugee resettlement agreements in South Dakota without prior approval from the Legislature.

The proposal would take some responsibility away from Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota, which is the state's only resettlement program. When the bill was first proposed, the organization didn't take a stance. But officials say the group regularly communicates with local officials and the governor's office, and works directly with the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement to place refugees in the state.

The bill is backed by a group of Republican lawmakers, including Senate President Pro Tempore Brock Greenfield.

Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press Capital Journal, Pierre, Feb. 10

Let's give the water study a chance

The subject of Pierre's water has been a much debated topic over the last week or so and that's probably a good thing.

Last week the Pierre City Commission announced its intention to commission a study of the options available to the city for improving its water quality. The study is expected to cost about \$80,000.

Now there's nothing in our water that will cause us an undue amount of harm. The city passed the most recent test of its water system with flying colors. We don't even have that many lead water pipes around town. Those that we do have are privately owned.

What we do have is an excess of iron and manganese, which as any resident can attest, often leads to questions about the staining on our houses and sidewalks. It's also why there's a funny taste to the water.

We all know this. We don't need to spend \$80,000 to tell us these things. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't explore options for improving the situation.

Heretofore it has been considered less expensive for each resident to buy their own water softeners and filter systems. And that may be true, for those of us who can afford such systems.

But what if there's a better way? What if this study finds that there's a less expensive way to improve our water quality? What if the study turns up a way to reduce the rates we all pay for water?

Certainly \$80,000 is a lot of money but sometimes spending, even government spending, can pay off in the long run.

American News, Aberdeen, Feb. 15

School construction better than alternative

The amount of new and remodeled schools in this region has been astounding.

Points east, west, north and south of Aberdeen have seen a super-sized amount of school construction in recent years.

With more to come, we are happy to say.

The latest school update news comes from Groton.

The Groton Area School District is moving forward with plans to renovate its elementary building to update the 1969 floor plan, Superintendent Joe Schwan said.

The project, estimated at around \$7 million, will bring the nearly 50-year-old building up to modern standards while using a structure that will likely last several more decades, Schwan said. The bids will come in Feb. 21, which will give the district a more exact price tag.

"Structurally, it's perfect," Schwan said of the elementary building. But as needs have changed, there are interior challenges with the building. Plus, the heating, cooling and electrical systems need to be updated and brought up to code.

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"The electrical load that was put in the building in the '60s isn't the same as what we require for an electrical load now," Schwan said.

Most of the work will be done over summer break with little disruptions. Work starts when school lets out.

The Groton district also is planning to ask its patrons their opinions on an approximate \$14 million project to remove and replace the oldest part of the high school. To come up with the funds, Groton will be taking the project to a bond vote in April after numerous public meetings in various communities it serves.

There is nothing like school construction to build community pride. Plus, money spent to better educate our children is money well spent.

We are proud of so many of those in our region who have heavily invested in their communities, children and themselves with school construction in recent years. It is a proud moment that says volumes about a school district and the communities it serves when a new or newly remodeled school is opened.

It also shows those school patrons have faith in their futures.

As voters and patrons of school districts, many of us have participated in heart-wrenching decisions to close schools as enrollments have dropped in decades' past. For a while, it seems like closing schools was all we heard about.

But things have seemed to have turned a corner. Making decisions to build or even not to build are great ones to have. They are much easier community conversations to have than those about closing schools.

To all those who have built or remodeled, congratulations. To those looking to do so, ask the good and hard questions, be civil and participate in the process.

And remember it always is a blessing to even debate the need for new construction in your community.

The Daily Republic, Mitchell, Feb. 13

This success is especially sweet for Mitchell gymnastics

Given the circumstances, the accomplishments of the Mitchell High School gymnastics team are nothing short of amazing.

In the past five years, coach Audra Rew has led her squads to five top-three finishes at the Class AA state meet.

The Kernels were champions three straight years from 2014 to 2016. And, over the weekend, Mitchell capped another stellar season with a state runner-up finish.

And that's just the team honors. Each season, Mitchell also had multiple gymnasts place highly during the individual portion of state. In fact, too many to try and sort out.

Mitchell gymnastics is riding a great wave and is undoubtedly the most successful athletic program at the high school right now.

But what's most impressive is the program's determination to stay afloat during uncertain times during the 2010-11 school year. School administration threatened to drop gymnastics in 2010-11 due to Title IX, which attempts to ensure activities for females are approximately equitable with activities for males. Funding was also an issue.

Mitchell School District was considering adding cheer and dance and soccer to boost its participation for female athletes, but didn't have the dollars to keep gymnastics and add other programs.

So, an agreement was made that gymnastics would assist in funding the program. To do that, the gymnastics team, parents and supporters fundraised tens of thousands of dollars through a variety of methods.

The result was success in multiple fashions.

Mitchell was able to keep its gymnastics program and has become one of the state's most competitive teams. It did so through dedication and hard work — in the gym and in the community.

There's no doubt this success tastes a little sweeter, especially given the circumstances of a once-uncertain future.

Professors fight to keep chalkboards at School of Mines

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — In an age where technology is used in many college classrooms, some math professors at the School of Mines & Technology in South Dakota are fighting to keep an old-school teaching aid.

Math and Computer Science associate professor Larry Pyeatt says he and many others in his department have a strong bias toward the old-fashioned chalkboard. So when plans were made to remodel the department's home, McLaury Hall, there was some anxiety.

Associate professor, Paul Hinker, tells KOTA-TV (<http://bit.ly/2IPk08H>) many instructors were worried they would get whiteboards. Hinker says like the marble steps that are worn with the footsteps of students past at McLaury, the chalkboards are part of tradition.

Saving the chalkboards and a part of the past is still up for discussion.

Information from: KOTA-TV, <http://www.kotatv.com>

House GOP batting around options for revamping health law

By ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With the Republican drive to craft a new health care plan sputtering, House GOP leaders are offering options to rank-and-file lawmakers for replacing President Barack Obama's health care law with a conservative approach dominated by tax breaks and a transition away from today's Medicaid program.

House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., and other House leaders planned to discuss details of their plans with lawmakers Thursday and gauge their receptiveness. The briefing was coming hours before a weeklong recess sends Congress home to energized voters — mostly Democrats — who have recently crammed town hall meetings to complain noisily about GOP efforts to repeal Obama's statute. Lawmakers are eager to have something to show constituents.

"This is complicated work. We're not going to rush it," said Rep. Greg Walden, R-Ore., chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, one of the panels helping craft the legislation.

Walden said by the end of March, his committee would start writing its part of the measure voiding much of Obama's law and substituting GOP programs. That's the most recent of several self-imposed deadlines that President Donald Trump and GOP leaders have set, but until now failed to meet, for reconfiguring the nation's health care system.

With Senate Republicans straining to coalesce around plans, new Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price met privately with GOP senators Wednesday, but participants said no specifics were discussed. Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., said lawmakers and the White House are trying to decide who should release a plan to replace Obama's law first — the White House or Congress.

Asked to characterize those discussions, Wicker said: "You go first. No, you go first."

Thursday's House GOP meeting was coming a day after the Trump administration took regulatory steps aimed at curbing Obama's law. These included making it harder for people to sign up for coverage outside of open enrollment periods and eased IRS enforcement of fines for people who don't buy insurance.

Lawmakers, aides and lobbyists who described House leaders' plans said they strongly resembled a broad outline that Ryan released last summer as a campaign document for Republican candidates to tout to voters. Most spoke on condition of anonymity because the proposals hadn't been released publicly.

In a significant departure from Ryan's summertime proposal, the options being discussed Thursday will not address Medicare, which helps pay for guaranteed health care for the elderly. Ryan has backed reshaping it into a voucher-like program that people could use to buy coverage, but Trump has said he doesn't want to revamp Medicare.

Under the ideas being discussed Thursday, the tax penalties that Obama's law imposed on people who don't buy insurance would be killed. Also eliminated would be the subsidies the government provides most people who buy coverage on the online marketplaces the statute established.

Instead, tax-favored health savings accounts would be expanded and refundable tax credits, paid in

advance, would be available to millions of Americans. With refundable credits, even people with low or no income would receive checks from the IRS.

On one of the most contentious issues, Republicans would gradually change Medicaid, which helps poor and disabled people afford health care. While it now guarantees coverage for everyone who qualifies, the options being discussed include giving money to the states generally based on the number of Medicaid beneficiaries with adjustments for the type of care they need, and states would have more power to decide who qualifies for coverage.

Republicans would provide extra money to both the 31 states that expanded Medicaid coverage under Obama's law and the 19 others — mostly dominated by the GOP — that refused to do so. That disbursement of funds has caused major rifts between GOP-led states that increased their Medicaid coverage and don't want to lose that money, and states that didn't expand but want extra funds now.

The GOP plans also include federal contributions to states for high risk pools, where people with illnesses that are expensive to cover could purchase policies.

And because of many Republicans' opposition to abortion, the retrofitted medical system would block Planned Parenthood from receiving federal payments, which comprise nearly half its annual \$1.1 billion budget.

Democrats defending Obama's law oppose all of the GOP ideas, saying they'd leave many people unable to afford health coverage.

Associated Press reporter Stephen Ohlemacher 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. WHAT'S BEEN INEVITABLE IN NEW ADMINISTRATIONS

Every recent president has had a doomed Cabinet nomination or two, and after labor candidate Andrew Puzder's withdrawal, Trump is no exception.

2. THIRD PERSON ARRESTED IN SUSPECTED KIM ASSASSINATION

Malaysian police arrest a third person in the death of Kim Jong Nam, the half brother of North Korea's leader who was reportedly poisoned at an airport in Kuala Lumpur.

3. TRUMP'S PICK FOR ISRAELI ENVOY FACES ROCKY CONFIRMATION

The son of an Orthodox rabbi, David Friedman is a fervent supporter of Israeli settlements, an opponent of Palestinian statehood and staunch defender of Israel's government.

4. DEADLY RAID IN YEMEN RAISES MORE QUESTIONS

The main figure killed in last month's U.S. raid targeting al-Qaida was a tribal leader allied to the country's U.S.- and Saudi-backed president and enlisted to fight Yemen's Shiite rebels, AP learns.

5. REPUBLICANS DRIVE TO CRAFT NEW HEALTH CARE PLAN

House GOP leaders are offering options to rank-and-file lawmakers for replacing "Obamacare" with a conservative approach dominated by tax breaks and a transition away from Medicaid.

6. CHINA CARFENTANIL BAN A 'GAME-CHANGER' FOR OPIOID EPIDEMIC

The move closes a major loophole in the global regulation of a substance so lethal it has been used as a chemical weapon and described as a terrorist threat.

7. COLORADO WARMS TO POT CLUBS, DESPITE FEDERAL UNCERTAINTY

Denver officials are working on regulations to open bring-your-own marijuana clubs, while state lawmakers are considering other cannabis-friendly measures.

8. PHENOMENON OF 'DENTAL THERAPISTS' GROWING

An increasing number of states are permitting professionals with a lower level of training to do dentists' jobs, public health advocates say.

9. SPARKS FLY OVER MAHER'S BOOKING OF YIANNOPOULOS

The "Real Time" host's decision to book the conservative provocateur on his HBO show draws quick condemnation from another guest.

10. WHO JOINED THE GREAT ONE

Jaromir Jagr registers his 1,900 career point, joining Wayne Gretzky as the only NHL players to reach the milestone as the Panthers beat the Sharks 6-5 in overtime.

French prosecutors maintain probe into candidate Fillon

By ANGELA CHARLTON, Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — French financial prosecutors decided Thursday to continue their investigation into embezzlement allegations against conservative presidential candidate Francois Fillon, saying they have too much evidence to drop the case.

Fillon's team said he will maintain his campaign pending further investigation, which centers on claims that his wife and two of his children earned as much as 1 million euros (\$1.1 million) for fake parliamentary jobs. Fillon has denied wrongdoing.

France's already unpredictable presidential campaign plunged into new uncertainty when the national financial prosecutor's office opened a preliminary investigation last month into embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds, after newspaper Le Canard Enchaîné first reported about the parliamentary jobs.

The prosecutor's office said Thursday it received the initial police report into the case Wednesday, and has decided to continue investigating.

"The numerous elements gathered already do not allow us to envisage dropping the case in its current state," the prosecutor said in a statement. "The investigations will continue."

Polls considered Fillon the front-runner for the April 23-May 7 election before the scandal erupted. Centrist Emmanuel Macron and nationalist Marine Le Pen have seen their poll numbers rise since then.

Fillon initially said he would step down from the race if he was given charges, but has recently appeared determined to continue his campaign despite the scandal.

Fillon's lawyers said the prosecutor's decision was "without justification" and accused the prosecutors of violating rules about investigative secrecy.

While it's not illegal for politicians in France to employ family members, many voters were shocked by allegations that the Fillon family's jobs were fake — and by the large sums they were paid. Fillon won the conservative primary on his reputation as an unsullied politician and his promises to slash public spending.

The prosecutor has not yet taken the case to the next level, a judicial inquiry, which would allow for preliminary charges. A judicial official stressed that prosecutors only have the initial police report and cannot make a decision on next steps until the final police report is submitted in the coming weeks.

2 women, 1 man arrested in North Korean's death in Malaysia

By EILEEN NG, Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Malaysian authorities on Thursday announced the second and third arrests in the death of the North Korean leader's half brother, whose apparent assassination this week unleashed tales of spectacular intrigue: a pair of women assailants, a broad-daylight killing and a dictator-sibling out for blood.

But investigators were still piecing together details of the case, which hinges in part on speculation that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un dispatched a hit squad to kill his estranged half brother, who loved gambling and casinos and lived abroad for years, knowing he was a hunted man.

The three suspects — two women and a man — were picked up separately Wednesday and early Thursday. The women were identified using closed-circuit TV footage from Kuala Lumpur International Airport, where Kim Jong Nam, who was 45 or 46, suddenly fell ill Monday morning.

He died on the way to the hospital, after telling medical workers at the airport that he had been sprayed with a chemical, said two senior Malaysian government officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

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because of the sensitive diplomatic issues involved.

Multiple South Korean media reports, citing unidentified sources, said two women believed to be North Korean agents killed him with some kind of poison before fleeing in a taxi.

One of the women suspects had Vietnamese travel documents and was picked up Wednesday at the budget terminal of the airport, the very place where the alleged attack took place. The other woman held an Indonesian passport and was arrested early Thursday.

Police said they were working to determine if the IDs were genuine. It was not immediately clear if the women, both in their 20s according to the IDs, were believed to be the alleged assassins.

A still photo of the airport CCTV video, confirmed as authentic by police, showed one of the suspects in T-shirt with "LOL" across the front.

News of the third arrest came Thursday afternoon. Police said they had detained a Malaysian man who was believed to be the boyfriend of the suspect carrying an Indonesian passport.

Medical workers also completed an autopsy on Kim Jong Nam, but the results have not been released. The findings could reveal whether he was actually was poisoned.

North Korea had objected to the autopsy but Malaysia went ahead with it anyway because the North did not submit a formal protest, said Abdul Samah Mat, a senior Malaysian police official.

On Thursday, Malaysian Deputy Home Minister Zahid Hamidi said security is a top priority for the government and the authorities had acted swiftly and efficiently.

Asked at a news conference why Malaysia failed to protect Kim Jong Nam, Zahid said: "What do you mean? Do we have to engage a bodyguard and usher him everywhere? No."

Indonesian Foreign Ministry officials said they believed one suspect was from Indonesia, and had requested consular access to her.

Kim Jong Nam was estranged from his younger brother, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, and had been living abroad for years. He reportedly fell out of favor when he was caught trying to enter Japan on a false passport in 2001, saying he wanted to visit Tokyo Disneyland.

He was the son of Kim Jong Il, North Korea's second leader, and Sung Hye Rim, an actress who analysts say was forced to divorce her first husband to live in secret with the future leader in 1970, a year before their son was born.

Analysts say Kim Jong Nam was educated in Geneva and Moscow in his early teens and became fluent in English, French and Russian. After Kim Jong Il's death in 2011, Kim Jong Nam complained that Kim Jong Un, his younger half brother and the country's new leader, was failing to treat him with respect and send him enough money, according to Cheong Seong-Chang, an analyst at South Korea's Sejong Institute.

However, Kim Jong Nam refrained from openly criticizing the North and kept a low profile after Kim Jong Un executed his uncle and former protector Jang Song Thaek, once considered the country's second-most powerful individual, in 2013.

Officials from South Korea's spy agency, the National Intelligence Service, told lawmakers that Kim Jong Nam leaves behind two sons and a daughter with two women living in Beijing and Macau.

Since taking power in late 2011, Kim Jong Un has executed or purged a number of high-level government officials.

The National Intelligence Service said that North Korea had been trying for five years to kill Kim Jong Nam. Kim Jong Nam sent a letter to Kim Jong Un in April 2012, begging for the lives of himself and his family.

"I hope you cancel the order for the punishment of me and my family," the letter said, according to the NIS. "We have nowhere to go, nowhere to hide, and we know that the only way to escape is committing suicide."

Associated Press writers Kim Tong-hyung in Seoul, South Korea, and Tim Sullivan in New Delhi contributed to this report.

Panthers' Huberdeau scores in OT, Jagr gets 1,900th point

By RICK EYMER, Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Calif. (AP) — Jonathan Huberdeau needed overtime to extend his scoring streak and help celebrate Jaromir Jagr's birthday on a night the 45-year-old veteran reached another milestone.

Huberdeau scored 1:38 into overtime after San Jose's Joe Pavelski scored twice late in the third period to tie it, and the Florida Panthers beat the Sharks 6-5 on Wednesday night.

"It was a good offensive game," said Huberdeau, playing — and recording points — in his fourth game of the year for the Panthers. "We had a good forecheck down there and there were a lot of things open."

Jagr, second on the NHL's career points list behind Wayne Gretzky, had an assist for No. 1,900th. Sharks fans gave him a nice ovation.

Nick Bjugstad and Aleksander Barkov each scored twice for the Panthers, who have won five of six games. Jussi Jokinen also scored.

"It was a crazy game, back and forth. A lot of goals scored, a fun game to be part of and Hubie came up big there at the end," Bjugstad said. "It's not necessarily the games you want to get into at this point in the season, but we found a way."

Brent Burns, Joel Ward and Marc-Edouard Vlasic also scored for the Sharks, who have lost five of six.

Roberto Luongo stopped 29 of 34 shots for Florida and had to leave the game after cramping up with 38 seconds left in the third period. He was replaced by James Reimer, who stopped two shots.

Martin Jones made 16 saves for San Jose.

"We gave up too much," San Jose's Logan Couture said. "They're a team that feeds off of turnovers. In that first period, three turnovers by us, and three basically tap-ins for them and Jones didn't have a chance on any of them. That's on us. Whether that's the forwards or the D-men, we've got to be a lot tighter defensively."

Pavelski scored first with 3:21 left in the third, then tied it with 37.4 seconds left by firing in a loose puck from the slot. Luongo was injured on the latter goal.

The teams combined to score five times in 11 minutes during the first period.

Jokinen put the Panthers on the board less than five minutes into the game off a nice pass from Reilly Smith, but the Sharks tied it 30 seconds later. Pavelski picked off a lazy pass in the Panthers' zone and fed it to Burns, who fired a long-distance shot past Luongo.

Bjugstad scored his first goal after taking a long pass from Erik Ekblad. Barkov added his first goal two minutes later.

The Sharks rallied from the 3-1 deficit with goals by Ward and Vlasic before Pavelski missed a penalty shot.

Bjugstad and Barkov each added goals in the third period before Pavelski's rally.

NOTES: Burns' goal was his 300th point with the Sharks. ... Ekblad ended a seven-game run without a point, which matched his season high. ... Barkov has a goal in each of his last three games and a point in the four games he's played since returning from injury. ... Bjugstad has goals in back-to-back games for the first time this season. ... Sharks' F Kevin Labanc has four assists in the three games he's played since returning from a short stint in the AHL. He had one assist Wednesday.

UP NEXT

Panthers: Continue their road trip with a game at Anaheim on Thursday night.

Sharks: Travel to Arizona for a game Saturday night.

Mystery deepens, questions build in N.Korea princeling death

By FOSTER KLUG, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — What do we really know about the sudden death of an exiled North Korean princeling? Aside from heated media speculation and an instant "it's-gotta-be-Pyongyang" reaction from Seoul's spy agency, not much.

As the investigation continues, the mystery of just what happened to the half brother of North Korean

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leader Kim Jong Un as he waited for a flight in a Malaysian airport only deepens. Was Kim Jong Nam poisoned? Are the two female suspects trained killers or dupes? How can we be sure that North Korea, which seems the obvious culprit, was even involved?

South Korea's National Intelligence Service — no friend to Pyongyang — and eager reporters across Asia have assembled a dramatic, almost cinematic profile of the last hour of Kim's life. But there's still a surfeit of unanswered questions.

Here are a few:

WAS HE POISONED?

This one could be answered fairly soon.

Kim complained of being sprayed in the face with some sort of chemical before he died. Presumably Malaysian authorities' autopsy, which has been completed, will determine whether poison killed Kim, and, if so, what kind.

A big question is how possible killers would have managed to quickly inflict a fatal chemical dose on someone in the middle of a busy airport.

South Korea's intelligence service says Kim almost certainly was poisoned, but it's unclear whether a needle or spray was used, and the spy agency didn't elaborate.

One possibility for the poison is neostigmine bromide, which South Korean officials said was contained in a pen-like weapon used in a failed North Korean attempt to kill an anti-Pyongyang activist in 2011.

Or it could have been cyanide or sarin gas, according to a Seoul university professor who didn't want to be identified because Kim's autopsy results weren't out yet.

Sarin gas was used in a deadly attack on Tokyo's subways in 1995.

And if it turns out that Kim wasn't poisoned? Expect furious media backtracking, and flustered explanations in South Korea from the spy agency.

WAS IT REALLY NORTH KOREA?

North Korea, of course, is the easy answer.

South Korea's spy service considers the North the bogeyman and almost immediately, in a private briefing to lawmakers in Seoul, pointed the finger at North Korean agents for the death, saying that Kim Jong Nam had been targeted for five years because of Kim Jong Un's "paranoia."

Most news media have run with this, but, so far, Malaysian officials have provided no solid links to North Korea.

When asked Thursday if North Korea was behind the murder, Malaysian Deputy Home Minister Zahid Hamidi said, "That is speculation."

This doesn't mean that North Korea couldn't have orchestrated such an attack. It does fit a certain profile: North Korean agents have, at times, run wild in South Korea, killing defectors, sometimes with poison, and critics.

WHO ARE THE ARRESTED WOMEN?

The two women arrested in connection with Kim's death were spotted on surveillance video at the airport where Kim fell ill.

Both are reportedly in their 20s. One held an Indonesian passport. The other had Vietnamese travel documents and was seen in grainy photos waiting for a cab while wearing a white jumper emblazoned with "LOL" — internet-speak for Laugh Out Loud.

But their possible involvement in Kim's death is still unclear.

Were they simply in the wrong place at the wrong time? Were they North Korean agents, maybe even North Korean nationals using false passports? Kim Jong Nam, in one of his lowest moments, was humiliated while trying to sneak into Japan to visit Disneyland — with a Dominican passport.

Police are trying to verify if the women's travel documents are genuine, according to the Malaysian min-

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ister. Police said they have also arrested a third suspect, a Malaysian man thought to be the boyfriend of the suspect with an Indonesian passport.

If this was a carefully planned assassination — years in the making, as South Korean intelligence claims — it begs more questions: Would North Korean agents be so easily arrested — one of the women was picked up back at the airport, two days after Kim's death? Would they really take taxis from the scene of the crime?

ARE OTHER EXILED NORTH KOREANS IN DANGER?

South Korea's government said it was boosting security for high-profile defectors in the South, many of whom already have police protection.

Kim Jong Nam was long protected in his Macau base by China, according to Seoul's spy service. South Korean officials say he leaves behind two sons and a daughter between two different women living in Beijing and Macau.

Ha Taekeung, a South Korean lawmaker and North Korea human rights activist, said in a radio interview Thursday that Kim Jong Nam's son, Kim Han Sol, could be in danger because he knows sensitive secrets about Kim Jong Un's personal life.

Kim Han Sol, who lived with his father in Macao, referred to Kim Jong Un as a "dictator" in a 2012 interview.

WHAT WILL CHINA DO?

China, North Korea's most important ally, has said little officially about the death. Beijing reportedly saw Kim as a potential leader should North Korea's government ever collapse.

An editorial in Global Times, the ruling Communist Party's English-language newspaper, said Thursday that China would offer condemnation if Kim was found to have been assassinated.

"Regardless of how intense a country's political struggle might be, there is no doubt that it should never rely on assassination methods as means for its advancement," said the editorial. "Although a final conclusion has yet to emerge regarding Kim Jong Nam's sudden death, speculation remains sharply pointed at Pyongyang."

Associated Press writers Kim Tong-hyung in Seoul and Chris Bodeen in Beijing contributed to this report.

Trump White House wrestles with a crush of crises

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Less than a month into his tenure, Donald Trump's White House is beset by a crush of crises.

Divisions, dysfunction and high-profile exits have left the young administration nearly paralyzed and allies wondering how it will reboot. The bold policy moves that marked Trump's first days in office have slowed to a crawl, a tacit admission that he and his team had not thoroughly prepared an agenda.

Nearly a week after the administration's travel ban was struck down by a federal court, the White House is still struggling to regroup and outline its next move on that signature issue. It's been six days since Trump — who promised unprecedented levels of immediate action — has announced a major new policy directive or legislative plan.

His team is riven by division and plagued by distractions. This week alone, controversy has forced out both his top national security aide and his pick for labor secretary.

"Another day in paradise," Trump quipped Wednesday after his meeting with retailers was interrupted by reporters' questions about links between his campaign staff and Russian officials.

Fellow Republicans have begun voicing their frustration and open anxiety that the Trump White House will derail their high hopes for legislative action.

Sen. John Thune of South Dakota demanded Wednesday that the White House "get past the launch stage."

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"There are things we want to get done here, and we want to have a clear-eyed focus on our agenda, and this constant disruption and drumbeat with these questions that keep being raised is a distraction," said Thune.

Sen. John McCain of Arizona blasted the White House's approach to national security as "dysfunctional," asking: "Who is in charge? I don't know of anyone outside of the White House who knows."

Such criticism from political allies is rare during what is often viewed as a honeymoon period for a new president. But Trump, an outsider who campaigned almost as much against his party as for it, has only a tiny reservoir of goodwill to protect him within the GOP. His administration has made uneven attempts to work closely with lawmakers and its own agencies.

Officials have begun trying to change some tactics, and some scenery, with the hope of steadying the ship. The White House announced Wednesday that Trump, who has often mentioned how much he loves adoring crowds and affirmation from his supporters, would hold a campaign-style rally in Florida on Saturday, the first of his term.

The event, according to White House press secretary Sean Spicer, was being "run by the campaign" and it is listed on Trump's largely dormant 2016 campaign website. No other details were offered.

To be sure, pinballing from one crisis to the next is not unprecedented, particularly for a White House still finding its footing. But the disruptions that have swirled around Trump achieved hurricane force early and have not let up.

On Wednesday his choice for labor secretary, fast food CEO Andy Puzder, withdrew his nomination while the administration continued to navigate the fallout from the forced resignation of national security adviser Michael Flynn. Flynn was ousted on grounds that he misled the vice president about his contacts with a Russian ambassador.

Flynn's departure marked the return of an issue Trump is not likely to move past quickly. The president's relationship with Moscow will continue to be scrutinized and investigated, sometimes apparently fueled by leaks from within his own administration.

Trump on Wednesday blasted what he called "illegal leaked" information.

Not just leaks, but also legal woes, have derailed Trump's early efforts.

After the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals rejected his immigration ban last week, Trump emphatically tweeted "SEE YOU IN COURT!" and the administration vowed that it would re-appeal the block and either revise its original executive order or write a new one from scratch.

But confusion soon followed. After first indicating they would not take a temporary restraining order request to the Supreme Court, administration staffers squabbled audibly, behind closed doors, over the accounts emerging in news reports.

When the dust settled, a new statement was printed out and handed to journalists, stating, "to clarify," that all options were still on the table. But despite Trump's vow to have a plan in place by Tuesday, one has not emerged.

The collapse of the ban, which poured fuel on simmering staff rivalries, was followed by a period of stark inaction by a White House suddenly put on the defensive. Trump did sign legislation Tuesday that rolled back a financial regulation, but his administration has not issued any executive orders in days.

House Republicans have been nudging the White House to get behind Speaker Paul Ryan's tax overhaul, which includes a border adjustability plan of which Trump has been skeptical. GOP aides believed they were making progress, but the matter has been overshadowed by the flood of controversies.

Other possible executive actions have been bandied about, from a task force on allegations of voter fraud to steps to strengthen cybersecurity, but have yet to be released. Key legislative items such as a massive plan to rebuild roads and bridges and an overhaul of the tax law remain works in progress.

"He's a one-man band for all practical purposes, it's how he ran his business," said Bill Daley, a former White House chief of staff under Obama. "When you try to take that and everything revolves around that and he is the beginning, middle and end of everything, that is a tough model. His campaign was the same way."

Trump's new administration has also been plagued by ethics brushfires that are taking up the time and

energy of communications and legal staff members.

In one incident that sparked bipartisan condemnation and calls for ethics investigations, White House counselor Kellyanne Conway said on TV that people should "go buy Ivanka's stuff" — an endorsement that came after the president disparaged Nordstrom for dropping his daughter Ivanka Trump's fashion line. And congressional Republicans also are demanding to know more about the security measures in place at Mar-a-Lago, Trump's weekend White House in Palm Beach, Florida, where resort members photographed him during a dinnertime national security strategy session after North Korea conducted a missile test.

"When you are the White House, every day is a crisis. Crisis is routine," said Ari Fleischer, who was President George W. Bush's first press secretary. "But when they all come right on top of each other, particularly at the start of an administration, it starts to create the feeling that they don't know how to run the place."

Additional reporting contributed by Julie Pace, Erica Werner, Ken Thomas, Vivian Salama and Julie Bykowicz.

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Problem nominations hard to avoid, history shows

By NANCY BENAC, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It was pretty much inevitable.

Every recent president has had a doomed Cabinet nomination or two, and President Donald Trump is no exception.

On Wednesday, Trump's choice for labor secretary, fast food CEO Andrew Puzder, withdrew his name after Republicans expressed concern over his failure to pay taxes promptly on a former housekeeper who wasn't authorized to work in the U.S. Democrats also had complained about Puzder's business record and remarks about women and workers at his company, which owns Hardee's and Carl's Jr.

Puzder was Trump's first Cabinet-level nominee to withdraw. The president also ousted his first national security adviser, Michael Flynn, after just weeks on the job because Flynn wasn't truthful about his contacts with Russian officials during the transition.

Barack Obama, Bill Clinton and both Bush presidents all had to come up with new names after nominees for their Cabinets ran into trouble.

And experts on filling top federal jobs say Trump's nominees have been subjected to less scrutiny during the nomination process than those of past presidents, which inevitably leads to unpleasant surprises.

A number of Trump's choices "have certainly pushed the boundaries of acceptable behavior," says Darrell West, director of governance studies at the Brookings Institution. "You would like for the nominees to be forthcoming but many of them don't volunteer key information unless they really have to."

Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin, for example, was approved by the Republican-controlled Senate this week despite his failure to disclose nearly \$100 million in assets on forms he filed with the Senate Finance Committee. Mnuchin called that lapse an oversight. Democrats also complained that the former banker had made much of his fortune by foreclosing on families during the financial crisis.

Past presidents can attest to the pitfalls of failing to check out nominees thoroughly and of letting a problem appointment fester.

Obama took three tries to find a secretary of commerce. New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson withdrew his name after the word surfaced that a grand jury was investigating allegations of wrongdoing in the awarding of contracts in his state. Republican Sen. Judd Gregg of New Hampshire backed out citing "irresolvable differences" with the policies of the Democratic president.

Obama's first choice to lead the Department of Health and Human Services, former Senate Democratic leader Tom Daschle, withdrew his nomination when it came out that he owed \$140,000 in back income taxes and interest.

Remember Linda Chavez? Probably not.

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That's because George W. Bush did the smart thing in 2001 when it emerged that his choice for labor secretary had housed an immigrant living in the country illegally. Bush quickly cut Chavez loose, making clear he would not defend her. She withdrew her nomination just three days after the issue surfaced.

Contrast that with Clinton's long, frustrating search for an attorney general in 1993.

First, he nominated lawyer Zoe Baird. When word leaked that she had hired people in the U.S. illegally as household workers and failed to pay their Social Security taxes, Clinton blamed a slipshod review process. Next, he settled on federal Judge Kimba Wood. Her nomination never went forward after the disclosure that she had hired a babysitter who was in the country illegally, even though Wood broke no laws and had paid the required Social Security taxes.

The drama dragged on for almost two months, casting a shadow over Clinton's inauguration. It was Feb. 11 when he finally nominated his eventual attorney general, Janet Reno.

A few months later, Clinton jettisoned the nomination of old friend Lani Guinier as an assistant attorney general after critics said her writings were too liberal. "I had not read her writings," Clinton said. "In retrospect, I wish I had." That drama stretched out over five weeks, and left women and blacks outraged that Clinton had abandoned Guinier after letting her twist.

Paul Light, an expert on the federal government at New York University, said experience shows that the lure of a Cabinet appointment sometimes proves irresistible to people who should know better.

"Hubris knows no limits when you're invited to serve," he said. Light said plenty of nominees have asked him whether they could get confirmed despite serious blots on their records.

Clinton was far from alone in running into problem nominations.

President George H.W. Bush's effort to make former Texas Sen. John Tower his defense secretary went down in flaming defeat.

In January 1989, Tower seemed headed to confirmation despite reports of a drinking problem and womanizing. Then came fresh allegations about Tower that gave new life to the opposition. Bush still refused to back down, pushing the nomination all the way to a vote in the full Senate, which rejected Tower, 53-47.

For Jimmy Carter, it was his choice of former Kennedy administration figure Ted Sorensen for CIA chief that turned sour. Sorensen withdrew his name on the eve of his Senate confirmation hearing, blaming "scurrilous and unfounded personal attacks." Criticism had centered on Sorensen's past handling of classified materials, and his registration for noncombatant status with his draft board.

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Trump's pick for Israel ambassador faces rocky confirmation

By **RICHARD LARDNER, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — David Friedman, the firebrand attorney President Donald Trump picked to be his ambassador to Israel, faces a rocky confirmation hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee after Trump signaled a dramatic shift in strategy for pursuing peace in the Middle East.

Friedman's hearing, scheduled for Thursday, already promised to be contentious. The son of an Orthodox rabbi, Friedman is a fervent supporter of Israeli settlements, an opponent of Palestinian statehood and staunch defender of Israel's government.

Five former U.S. ambassadors to Israel have declared Friedman unqualified for job, citing his "extreme, radical positions" that include accusing former President Barack Obama and the entire State Department of anti-Semitism.

The ambassadors, who served Republican and Democratic presidents, also said in a letter sent Wednesday to committee members that Friedman characterized supporters of J Street, a liberal Jewish group, as "kapos," the Jews who cooperated with Nazis during the Holocaust.

"We believe the committee should satisfy itself that Mr. Friedman has the balance and the temperament required to represent the United States as ambassador to Israel," they wrote. The letter opposing Fried-

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man's nomination was signed by Thomas Pickering, William Harrop, Edward Walker, Daniel Kurtzer and James Cunningham.

The drama surrounding Friedman's confirmation is heightened by Trump's refusal to explicitly endorse the two-state solution that has been American policy since 2002. Trump, with visiting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu by his side at the White House on Wednesday, withheld clear support for an independent Palestine and declared that he could support a one-state solution that produces peace.

The president's stance, which separated him from recent American presidents, also immediately distanced the United States from the prevailing position held by much of the world.

J Street, which worked closely with the Obama administration and advocates a two-state solution, called Trump's remarks "both meaningless and dangerous."

"How can there be a negotiation, let alone an agreement, when there is no longer a consensus on what the end goal should be?" said Jeremy Ben Ami, J Street's president. The group has opposed Friedman's nomination because of what it said is "his consistent record of extreme and offensive attacks on senior U.S. officials, on American diplomats and on liberal American Jews."

But Sen. Jeff Flake of Arizona, a Republican member of the Foreign Relations Committee, downplayed Trump's statement. "He said we should leave it to those who are negotiating, the Israelis and the Palestinians," Flake said. "It didn't strike me as a big break from the past."

Flake, who met Wednesday with Friedman, said he's inclined to support his nomination, noting that a president deserves broad deference on whom he selects to serve in key government posts.

All serious Middle East peace negotiations in recent decades have assumed the emergence of an independent Palestine. The alternatives appear to offer dimmer prospects for peace, given Palestinian demands for statehood. Dozens of countries, including the U.S., reaffirmed their support for a two-state accord at an international conference in Paris last month, just before Trump's inauguration.

For decades, the U.S. has opposed Israeli settlement-building in lands it seized in the 1967 Mideast war. Friedman runs a nonprofit that raises millions of dollars for Beit El, a settlement of religious nationalists near Ramallah. Beit El runs a right-wing news outlet and a yeshiva whose dean has provocatively urged Israeli soldiers to refuse orders to uproot settlers from their homes.

Friedman also has waded into the divisive subject of moving the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, a shift favored by conservatives that Trump endorsed during the presidential campaign. Upon being selected by Trump, Friedman said he looked forward to carrying out his duties from "the U.S. embassy in Israel's eternal capital, Jerusalem."

But the embassy move is vehemently opposed by the Palestinians and has sparked fears of a renewed outbreak of violence.

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

Life near Oroville Dam now shadowed by fears and concerns

By JOCELYN GECKER and MARCIO J. SANCHEZ, Associated Press

OROVILLE, Calif. (AP) — Northern California residents, who had spent days at evacuation shelters, were allowed to return to their homes but many stayed only long enough to pack valuables before fleeing an approaching storm that will test recently repaired spillways at the nation's tallest dam. Authorities say the immediate danger has passed for the nearly 200,000 people living downstream of the Oroville Dam. They said the Lake Oroville water level was 26 feet below the emergency spillway by Wednesday night. But new storms are forecast to hit Oroville, which is about 70 miles north of Sacramento, and not everyone is sticking around to find out if the repairs hold. Here's what residents say about living below the dam:

'I JUST COULDN'T SLEEP'

A 34-year-old who lives blocks away from the levee said he had to leave after spending a restless night

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thinking about what could happen to him if it fails.

"I tried to sleep here last night, and I just couldn't sleep," said Matthew Prumm. He estimates that "there would be a 30-foot wall of water coming from the spillway."

He said Wednesday that friends kept sending text messages, including one that said: "If you're still in town, get the hell out because I know people who say it's going to breach if the storm is heavy enough."

Prumm left home around midnight to stay with his parents, who live at a higher elevation. He's got a house in the mountains and will stay there at least until the upcoming storms pass.

"I packed bins and loaded them into my car. I had to feed my chickens and tend to a few things. I'm not hanging out here for long."

'I WILL NOT STAY HERE'

Chantel Ramirez, 35, returned home Wednesday but didn't plan to stay the night.

The mother of two packed as many clothes, family pictures and keepsakes as her car could hold and was heading south to stay with relatives.

"My car is completely packed," she said. "I will not stay here until the evacuation is completely lifted." Authorities lifted the evacuation order but left a warning in effect and have told residents to be prepared to leave again on a moment's notice.

Her house in downtown Oroville is three blocks from the river, which is so swollen "it can't hold much more," she said.

"We don't know if we'll have a house to return to," Ramirez said before leaving with her 16-year-old and 10-year-old.

'GOING TO BE PREPARED'

Leanne Fowler has lived in the shadow of the Oroville Dam her whole life and says her family is not leaving.

"When we were in school they talked about if the dam breaks or if there were problems," said the 35-year-old woman. "It was always something we talked about but would never happen."

Fowler, her husband and their 13-year-old son live alongside the Feather River.

"We've been having a rough go," she said, adding that her house burned down last August and the family has been sleeping on their property in a camper. Fowler is also eight months pregnant and has preeclampsia.

She says they plan to stay but are heeding the warning to be ready in case disaster does strike.

"We just are going to be prepared. We're going to have stuff packed up and ready to go," she said. "Nothing is worse than being told, 'Get out right now!'" and leaving in a panic, she said.

Gecker reported from San Francisco.

'Day Without Immigrants' protests being held across US

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Immigrants across the country are expected to stay home from school and work on Thursday to show how critical they are to the U.S. economy and way of life.

"A Day Without Immigrants" actions are planned in cities including Philadelphia, Washington, Boston, Houston, Chicago and New York. The protest gained momentum on social media and by word of mouth.

It comes in response to President Donald Trump, whose administration has pledged to increase the deportation of immigrants living in the country illegally. Trump campaigned on building a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, and blamed high unemployment on immigration. As president, he's called for a ban on people from seven Muslim-majority countries from coming into the U.S.

Organizers expect thousands of people to participate or show solidarity with workers.

China carfentanil ban a 'game-changer' for opioid epidemic

By ERIKA KINETZ, Associated Press

SHANGHAI (AP) — China is adding the deadly elephant tranquilizer carfentanil and three related synthetic opioids to its list of controlled substances effective March 1, China's National Narcotics Control Commission said Thursday.

The move closes a major loophole in the global regulation of a substance so lethal it has been used as a chemical weapon and described as a terrorist threat.

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration called China's action a potential "game-changer" that is likely to reduce supply of key chemicals driving a surge of overdoses and deaths among unsuspecting drug users in North America. After China controlled 116 synthetic drugs in October 2015, seizures in the United States of compounds on that list plunged.

"It's a substantial step in the fight against opioids here in the United States," said Russell Baer, a DEA special agent in Washington. "We're persuaded it will have a definite impact."

China has emerged as an important source country for opioids like carfentanil, which burst into public view last summer when it appeared in the North American drug supply. Dealers cut fentanyl into heroin and other drugs to boost profit margins.

Beijing has taken a precedent-setting approach to regulation, even controlling chemicals, like fentanyl, that are not widely abused domestically. Chinese drug enforcement authorities have described the synthetic drug threat as a "world-wide problem" and urged "all countries to strengthen the control of new psychoactive substances and work on decreasing demand."

Beijing already regulates fentanyl and 18 related compounds. China said it is also placing carfentanil's less-potent cousins furanyl fentanyl, acryl fentanyl and valeryl fentanyl under control. All are prevalent in the U.S. drug supply, Baer said. The DEA confirmed more than 400 seizures of carfentanil across eight U.S. states from July through October. Ohio was hardest hit.

In October, The Associated Press identified 12 Chinese companies that offered to export carfentanil around the world for a few thousand dollars a kilogram (2.2 pounds), no questions asked. That same month China began evaluating whether to add carfentanil and the three other fentanyl to its list of controlled substances. Usually, the process can take nine months. This time, it took just four.

Both the DEA and U.S. State Department have pressed China to make carfentanil a controlled substance. Though Beijing has said U.S. assertions that China is the top source of fentanyl lack evidence, the two countries have been deepening cooperation as the U.S. opioid epidemic intensifies.

U.S. opioid demand is driving the proliferation of a new class of deadly synthetic drugs, made by nimble chemists to stay one step ahead of new rules like this one. As soon as one substance is banned, others proliferate. After Beijing tightened its focus on fentanyl late last year, the AP documented how Chinese vendors began to actively market alternative opioids, like U-47700.

"We don't think their scheduling actions will end with just these four," Baer said.

Associated Press researcher Fu Ting contributed to this report from Shanghai.

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Malaysia arrests 2nd suspect in North Korean's death

By EILEEN NG, Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Malaysian police have arrested two women in the death of Kim Jong Nam, the half brother of North Korea's leader who was reportedly poisoned this week by a pair of female assassins as he waited for a flight in Malaysia, police said Thursday.

The women were picked up separately Wednesday and early Thursday and were identified using CCTV footage from Kuala Lumpur International Airport, where Kim Jong Nam suddenly fell ill Monday morning before he died on the way to the hospital.

The woman arrested Thursday was holding an Indonesian passport that identified her as 25-year-old

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Siti Aishah, a Malaysian police statement said.

The other suspect held Vietnamese travel documents bearing the name Doan Thi Huong, 28. Still photos of the CCTV video, confirmed as authentic by police, showed her in a skirt and long-sleeved white T-shirt with "LOL" emblazoned across the front.

There was no immediate way to determine if the IDs were genuine or if the women were believed to be the alleged assassins.

Investigators are trying to shed light on a death that set off waves of speculation over whether North Korea dispatched a hit squad to kill a man known for his drinking, gambling and complicated family life.

Medical workers completed an autopsy late Wednesday, but it was not immediately clear if or when Malaysia would release the findings publicly.

North Korea had objected to the autopsy but Malaysia went ahead with the procedure anyway as the North did not submit a formal protest, said Abdul Samah Mat, a senior Malaysian police official.

Kim Jong Nam, who was 45 or 46, was estranged from his younger brother, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, and had been living abroad for years. He reportedly fell out of favor when he was caught trying to enter Japan on a false passport in 2001, saying he wanted to visit Tokyo Disneyland.

According to two senior Malaysian government officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the case involves sensitive diplomacy, the elder Kim told medical workers before he died that he had been attacked with a chemical spray at the airport. Multiple South Korean media reports, citing unidentified sources, said two women believed to be North Korean agents killed him with some kind of poison before fleeing in a taxi.

Since taking power in late 2011, Kim Jong Un has executed or purged a number of high-level government officials in what the South Korean government has described as a "reign of terror."

South Korea's spy agency, the National Intelligence Service, said Wednesday that North Korea had been trying for five years to kill Kim Jong Nam. The NIS did not definitively say that North Korea was behind the killing, just that it was presumed to be a North Korean operation, according to lawmakers who briefed reporters about the closed-door meeting with the spy officials.

The NIS also cited a "genuine" attempt by North Korea to kill Kim Jong Nam in 2012, the lawmakers said. The NIS told them that Kim Jong Nam sent a letter to Kim Jong Un in April 2012, after the assassination attempt, begging for the lives of himself and his family.

The letter said: "I hope you cancel the order for the punishment of me and my family. We have nowhere to go, nowhere to hide, and we know that the only way to escape is committing suicide."

Although Kim Jong Nam had been originally tipped by some outsiders as a possible successor to his late dictator father, Kim Jong Il, others thought that was unlikely because he lived outside the country, including recently in Macau.

He also frequented casinos, five-star hotels and traveled around Asia, with little say in North Korean affairs.

But his attempt to visit Tokyo Disneyland reportedly soured North Korea's leadership on his potential as a successor. Kim Jong Nam had said he had no political ambitions, although he was publicly critical of the North Korean regime and his half brother's legitimacy in the past. In 2010, he was quoted in Japanese media as saying he opposed dynastic succession in North Korea.

Among Kim Jong Un's executions and purges, the most spectacular was the 2013 execution of his uncle, Jang Song Thaek, once considered the country's second-most powerful man, for what the North alleged was treason.

Associated Press writers Hyung-jin Kim in Seoul, South Korea, and Tim Sullivan in New Delhi contributed to this report.

Trump slams intel officials, media over Flynn and Russia

By JULIE PACE, AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Wednesday blamed the media and “illegally leaked” intelligence information for bringing down his national security adviser Michael Flynn, one day after the White House said Trump had asked Flynn to resign because he misled Vice President Mike Pence about his contacts with Russia.

Flynn’s ouster has sparked a new swirl of controversy over Trump’s potential ties to Moscow. Flynn resigned Monday night — at the behest of Trump, the White House later said — after reports that he had discussed sanctions with Russia’s ambassador to the U.S. before the inauguration, despite previously denying those conversations to Pence and other top officials.

But in Trump’s first public comments on Flynn, he appeared to side with his former aide, saying it was “really a sad thing that he was treated so badly.”

Trump is said to favor Vice Admiral Robert Harward, a former Navy SEAL, as his next national security adviser, according to a White House official. Harward met with top White House officials last week and has the backing of Defense Secretary Jim Mattis.

Flynn’s ouster was a blow to a White House struggling to find its footing in Trump’s first weeks in office. The questions about Russia only deepened late Tuesday when The New York Times reported that U.S. agencies had intercepted phone calls last year between Russian intelligence officials and members of Trump’s 2016 campaign team. Current and former U.S. officials who spoke to the Times anonymously said they found no evidence that the Trump campaign was working with the Russians on hacking or other efforts to influence the election.

Trump didn’t directly address the veracity of the report during a news conference with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, but lashed out at what he called the “criminal act” of leaking information. Earlier Wednesday, Trump tweeted that “classified information is illegally given out by ‘intelligence’ like candy. Very un-American!”

The president ignored shouted questions about whether his advisers were in touch with Russian officials. His spokesman Sean Spicer said he wasn’t aware of any such contacts and panned the Times report for relying on “unnamed sources.”

Democrats called for an independent investigation into Trump’s Russia ties and urged Republicans to join them.

“This is a moment for Republicans to put country ahead of party,” Connecticut Sen. Chris Murphy said. “There’s only one or two times like this in your political career where you face a moment like this where what’s good for your country may not be good for your party.”

GOP lawmakers, led by Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, resisted, saying that the existing congressional committees will continue their investigations into Russian interference in the presidential election.

The chairmen of the House committees on oversight and the judiciary sent a letter Wednesday to the Justice Department’s inspector general urging him to investigate the leaks that led to Flynn’s removal. “We have serious concerns about the potential inadequate protection of classified information here,” Reps. Jason Chaffetz and Bob Goodlatte wrote.

Flynn maintained for weeks that he had not discussed U.S. sanctions in his conversations with Russia’s ambassador. He later conceded that the topic may have come up.

Trump initially thought Flynn could survive the controversy, according to a person with direct knowledge of the president’s views, but a pair of explosive stories in The Washington Post in recent days made the situation untenable. As early as last week, he and aides began making contingency plans for Flynn’s dismissal, a senior administration official said. While the president was said to be upset with Flynn, he also expressed anger with other aides for “losing control” of the story and making his young administration look bad.

The vice president, who had vouched for Flynn in a televised interview, is said to have been angry and deeply frustrated. Pence spokesman Marc Lotter said Pence became aware that he had received “incomplete information” from Flynn only after the first Washington Post report Thursday night. At about the same time, Pence learned that the Justice Department had warned the White House last month regarding

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Flynn's conversations with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak.

Flynn, in an interview with The Daily Caller News Foundation, said Monday "there were no lines crossed" in his conversations with Kislyak.

The officials and others with knowledge of the situation were not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and requested anonymity.

Ahead of the Jan. 20 inauguration, Pence and other officials insisted publicly that Flynn had not discussed sanctions in his talks with the Russian ambassador. On Jan. 26, Acting Attorney General Sally Yates contacted White House counsel Don McGahn to raise concerns about discrepancies between the public accounting and what intelligence officials knew to be true about the contacts based on routine recordings of communications with foreign officials who are in the U.S.

The Justice Department warned the White House that the inconsistencies would leave the president's top national security aide vulnerable to blackmail from Russia, according to a person with knowledge of the discussion. The president was informed of the warnings the same day, Spicer said.

Flynn was interviewed by the FBI around the same time, according to a U.S. official who was briefed on the investigation.

Associated Press writers Vivian Salama, Jonathan Lemire, Eric Tucker, Ken Thomas, Jill Colvin, Erica Werner and Catherine Lucey contributed to this report.

Online: <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/3461508-Michael-Flynn-Resignation-Letter.html>
Follow Julie Pace at <http://twitter.com/jpaceDC> and Vivian Salama at <http://twitter.com/vmsalama>

Cardinal sent to Guam to investigate sex abuse claims

By NICOLE WINFIELD, Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The Vatican has sent conservative Cardinal Raymond Burke to the Pacific island of Guam to investigate an important case alleging sexual abuse, dispatching a seasoned jurist who has clashed repeatedly with Pope Francis for a sensitive mission halfway around the world.

The Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith back in October named Burke the presiding judge in its trial of Guam Archbishop Anthony Apuron, who is facing multiple allegations of sex abuse of altar boys in the 1970s, the Vatican press office said Wednesday.

Apuron has denied the claims and has not been criminally charged.

Burke, a Rome-based American, is due to interview a former altar boy in Guam on Thursday who says he was sexually abused by Apuron, the Pacific Daily News reported.

Such special missions are not uncommon for cardinals, and interviews with witnesses are a key part of any canonical trial.

Survivors of clerical abuse, though, have long criticized Burke's record as an archbishop in the U.S. in handling cases of abusive priests. Burke has said every act of abuse by clergy is a "grave evil." But he has also blamed gay clergy for the church's sexual abuse crisis, saying priests "who were feminized and confused about their own sexual identity" were the ones who molested children.

"Burke hasn't been open about clergy abuse in the past," Terence McKiernan, president of BishopAccountability.org, an online resource about priestly sex abuse, said in an email.

McKiernan said Burke failed to release lists of accused clerics when he was with two American dioceses, and released data from one that seemed to understate the problem. He also said Burke was reluctant "to compensate victims or provide for their care."

Burke, a top canon lawyer, had headed the Vatican's high court until 2014, when Francis removed him and named him patron of the Knights of Malta religious order. Francis recently sidelined Burke from that position after Burke was involved in the problematic ouster of a senior knight.

Burke's defense of church doctrine has made him a hero to conservative and traditionalist Catholics upset with Francis' mercy-over-morals priorities. He is one of four cardinals who has asked Francis to clarify his

controversial opening to divorced and civilly remarried Catholics.

David Lujan, an attorney for Roland Sondia, the former altar boy on Guam, confirmed his client will meet with Vatican officials visiting for Apuron's canonical trial.

Lujan said he will decide after the meeting whether Sondia will testify.

Sondia, now an adult, has publicly accused Apuron of molesting him when he was 15.

Associated Press writer Grace Garces Bordallo in Hagatna, Guam, contributed to this report.

A crush of crises all but buries the young Trump White House

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Less than a month into his tenure, Donald Trump's White House is beset by a crush of crises.

Divisions, dysfunction and high-profile exits have left the young administration nearly paralyzed and allies wondering how it will reboot. The bold policy moves that marked Trump's first days in office have slowed to a crawl, a tacit admission that he and his team had not thoroughly prepared an agenda.

Nearly a week after the administration's travel ban was struck down by a federal court, the White House is still struggling to regroup and outline its next move on that signature issue. It's been six days since Trump — who promised unprecedented levels of immediate action — has announced a major new policy directive or legislative plan.

His team is riven by division and plagued by distractions. This week alone, controversy has forced out both his top national security aide and his pick for labor secretary.

"Another day in paradise," Trump quipped Wednesday after his meeting with retailers was interrupted by reporters' questions about links between his campaign staff and Russian officials.

Fellow Republicans have begun voicing their frustration and open anxiety that the Trump White House will derail their high hopes for legislative action.

Sen. John Thune of South Dakota demanded Wednesday that the White House "get past the launch stage."

"There are things we want to get done here, and we want to have a clear-eyed focus on our agenda, and this constant disruption and drumbeat with these questions that keep being raised is a distraction," said Thune.

Sen. John McCain of Arizona blasted the White House's approach to national security as "dysfunctional," asking: "Who is in charge? I don't know of anyone outside of the White House who knows."

Such criticism from allies is rare during what is often viewed as a honeymoon period for a new president. But Trump, an outsider who campaigned almost as much against his party as for it, has only a tiny reservoir of good will to protect him. His administration has made uneven attempts to work closely with lawmakers and its own agencies.

Officials have begun trying to change some tactics, and some scenery, with the hope of steadying the ship. The White House announced Wednesday that Trump, who has often mentioned how much he loves adoring crowds and affirmation from his supporters, would hold a campaign-style rally in Florida on Saturday, the first of his term.

The event, according to White House press secretary Sean Spicer, was being "run by the campaign" and it is listed on Trump's largely dormant 2016 campaign website. No other details were offered.

To be sure, pinballing from one crisis to the next is not unprecedented, particularly for a White House still finding its footing. But the disruptions that have swirled around Trump achieved hurricane force early and have not let up.

On Wednesday his choice for labor secretary, fast food CEO Andy Puzder, withdrew his nomination while the administration continued to navigate the fallout from the forced resignation of national security adviser Michael Flynn. Flynn was ousted on the grounds that he misled the vice president about his contacts with a Russian ambassador.

Flynn's departure marked the return of an issue Trump is not likely to move past quickly. The president's

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relationship with Moscow will continue to be scrutinized and investigated, sometimes apparently fueled by leaks from within his own administration.

Trump on Wednesday blasted what he called "illegal leaked" information.

Not just leaks, but also legal woes, have derailed Trump's early efforts.

After the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals rejected his immigration ban last week, Trump emphatically tweeted "SEE YOU IN COURT!" and the administration vowed that it would re-appeal the block and either revise its original executive order or write a new one from scratch.

But confusion soon followed. After first indicating they would not take a temporary restraining order to the Supreme Court, administration staffers squabbled audibly, behind closed doors, over the accounts emerging in news reports.

When the dust settled, a new statement was printed out and handed to journalists, stating, "to clarify," that all options were on the table. But despite Trump's vow to have a plan in place by Tuesday, one has not emerged.

The collapse of the ban, which poured fuel on simmering staff rivalries, was followed by a period of stark inaction by a White House suddenly put on the defensive. Trump did sign legislation Tuesday that rolled back a financial regulation, but his administration has not issued any executive orders in days.

House Republicans have been nudging the White House to get behind Speaker Paul Ryan's tax overhaul, which includes a border adjustability plan of which Trump has been skeptical. GOP aides believed they were making progress, but the matter has been overshadowed by the flood of controversies.

Other possible executive actions have been bandied about, from a task force on allegations of voter fraud to steps to strengthen cybersecurity, but have yet to be released. Key legislative items such as a massive plan to rebuild roads and bridges and an overhaul of the tax law remain works in progress.

"He's a one-man band for all practical purposes, it's how he ran his business," said Bill Daley, a former White House chief of staff under Obama. "When you try to take that and everything revolves around that and he is the beginning, middle and end of everything, that is a tough model. His campaign was the same way."

Trump's new administration has also been plagued by ethics brushfires that are taking up the time and energy of communications and legal staff members.

In one incident that sparked bipartisan condemnation and calls for ethics investigations, White House counselor Kellyanne Conway said on TV that people should "go buy Ivanka's stuff" — an endorsement that came after the president disparaged Nordstrom for dropping his daughter's fashion line. And congressional Republicans also are demanding to know more about the security measures in place at Mar-a-Lago, Trump's weekend White House, where resort members photographed him during a dinnertime national security strategy session after North Korea launched a missile.

"When you are the White House, every day is a crisis. Crisis is routine," said Ari Fleischer, who was President George W. Bush's first press secretary. "But when they all come right on top of each other, particularly at the start of an administration, it starts to create the feeling that they don't know how to run the place."

Additional reporting contributed by Julie Pace, Erica Werner, Ken Thomas, Vivian Salama and Julie Bykowicz.

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Detained Mexican in Seattle pushed into immigration debate

By LISA BAUMANN and GENE JOHNSON, Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Lawyers for 23-year-old Daniel Ramirez Medina say he was asleep in a suburban Seattle house last week morning when immigration agents showed up to arrest his father, who authorities described as a previously deported felon.

Despite Ramirez's participation in a federal program to protect those brought to the U.S. illegally as chil-

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dren, the agents took him away as well — thrusting Ramirez into a national debate over the immigration priorities of President Donald Trump.

Some saw the detention as the opening salvo in an attack on the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, while federal authorities suggested it was simply a routine exercise of their authority.

Federal officials insisted Ramirez admitted he is a gang member. His lawyers adamantly deny that, saying he has no criminal record and is the father of a 3-year-old son who is an American citizen.

“If there is a shifting of the sands in terms of federal immigration policy, then we deserve to know that so people can prepare for what’s about to happen,” said Seattle City Councilwoman Lorena Gonzalez, who grew up in a migrant farmworker family in central Washington.

She added: “This arrest is a symbol of that uncertainty, which is continuing to grow as this president continues to be unclear about what he’s intending to do with DACA recipients.”

Ramirez was apprehended in the Seattle suburb of Des Moines. Seattle is one of the cities across the country that has declared itself a sanctuary for immigrants and promised not to assist federal authorities’ deportation efforts. However Seattle officials have stressed that federal agents “have the power and jurisdiction” to operate anywhere in the country.

Many questions about the case remain unanswered, including whether federal authorities have any evidence of gang involvement beyond his purported admission.

One of Ramirez’s lawyers, Mark Rosenbaum, said Ramirez “unequivocally denies being in a gang” and that “he was repeatedly pressured by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents to falsely admit affiliation.”

The DACA program — referred to as “Dreamers” by supporters and derided as “illegal amnesty” by critics — has protected about 750,000 immigrants since its inception in 2012. It allows young people who were brought into the country illegally as children to stay and obtain work permits.

The Department of Homeland Security said in a statement Ramirez was being held at a detention center in Tacoma pending deportation proceedings. The statement said participants can have their status revoked if they’re found to pose a threat to national security or public safety.

About 1,500 immigrants granted DACA status since 2012 have had it revoked have had it revoked because of criminal convictions or gang affiliations.

The detention of Ramirez comes as the immigrant community is increasingly uneasy about Trump’s promises to boost enforcement. In Colorado a Mexican woman trying to avoid deportation took refuge in a Denver church Wednesday after U.S. immigration authorities denied her request to remain in the country.

Trump made illegal immigration a cornerstone of his campaign, saying he will build a wall along the Mexican border and deport millions of people, although actual plans have yet to be revealed. But he has also said he wants to focus on people who have committed crimes.

During an interview with Time magazine late last year, Trump expressed sympathy for those in the DACA program.

“We’re going to work something out that’s going to make people happy and proud,” he told the magazine.

The program is considered an exercise in prosecutorial discretion by the Department of Homeland Security, which warns on its website that “deferred action may be terminated at any time.”

But Ramirez’s legal team argued in a petition to U.S. District Court in Seattle seeking his release that the government’s discretion is limited to the rules governing the DACA program. Ramirez’s arrest violated his constitutional right to due process and to be free from unlawful seizure, the lawyers argued.

ICE officials declined to immediately release any further information about Ramirez’s father. Ramirez’s brother, who is also a DACA participant and was at the house in the Seattle suburb of Des Moines at the time of the arrest, according to Ramirez’s lawyers, was not taken into custody.

Lawyers for Ramirez said they knew little about him except that he came to the U.S. from Mexico at age 7 and that he twice passed background checks for participation in the program, most recently for a two-year renewal issued last May.

A spokeswoman for Ramirez’ lawyers, Lara Bergthold, said Ramirez had previously worked as a farmworker in California before moving to Washington state in hopes of finding a better job.

Bergthold declined to say where in Mexico he came from or provide further information about his family, citing privacy concerns.

Associated Press reporters Chris Grygiel in Seattle and Amy Taxin in Los Angeles contributed.

California officials rush to drain lake as new storms begin

By JONATHAN J. COOPER and PAUL ELIAS, Associated Press

OROVILLE, Calif. (AP) — Officials raced to drain more water from a lake behind battered Oroville Dam as new storms began rolling into Northern California on Wednesday and tested the quick repairs made to damaged spillways that raised flood fears.

The three storms were expected to stretch into next week. Forecasters said the first two storms could drop a total of 5 inches of rain in higher elevation.

However, the third storm, starting as early as Monday, could be more powerful.

"There a potential for several inches," National Weather Service forecaster Tom Dang said. "It will be very wet."

Nonetheless, California Department of Water Resources chief Bill Croyle said water was draining at about four times the rate that it was flowing in and the repairs should hold at the nation's tallest dam.

About 100,000 cubic feet of water was flowing from the reservoir each second, enough to fill an Olympic-size swimming pool.

Croyle said work crews had made "great progress" cementing thousands of tons of rocks into holes in the spillways.

"We shouldn't see a bump in the reservoir" from the upcoming storms, he said.

The reservoir has dropped 20 feet since it reached capacity Sunday. Croyle said officials hope it falls 50 feet by this Sunday.

Still, officials warned residents who have returned to their homes that the area downstream of the dam remained under an evacuation warning and they should be prepared to leave if the risk increases.

Some 200,000 people were allowed to return home Tuesday after being ordered to evacuate Sunday.

Sandra Waters, 42, of Oroville initially fled her home with little more than the clothes she was wearing. Now, she's preparing for the possibility of another evacuation by gathering food, clothing and sentimental items like photographs.

"You are always cautious when you live under a big dam, but we've always been pretty confident that it was safe and that it wasn't going to fail," she said.

Butte County Sheriff Kory Honea said some homes in the evacuation zone had been burglarized and deputies had made arrests.

He also called on private drone operators to refrain from flying their devices over the dam. Private drones can interfere with the repair work, which includes helicopters, he said.

The 770-foot-tall dam is located in Oroville, a small Gold Rush-era town along the Feather River in the Sierra Nevada foothills.

The region is largely rural, with its politics dominated by rice growers, orchard operators and other agricultural interests. It's dogged by the high unemployment rates endemic to farming communities.

Dump trucks and helicopters dropped thousands of tons of rocks and sandbags to shore up the spillways over the weekend and avoid what could be a catastrophic failure and flood.

The swollen lake reached its capacity over the weekend and spilled down an unpaved emergency spillway for nearly 40 hours, leaving it badly eroded. The problem occurred six days after engineers discovered a growing hole in the dam's main concrete spillway.

Croyle said teams were working on plans for permanent repairs to the dam's main spillway that could cost as much as \$200 million.

As state officials puzzle through how to repair it, federal regulators have ordered California to figure out what went wrong.

In recent years, construction crews patched cracks — including in the area where water burrowed a huge pit last week. If the past repairs were not done properly, water could infiltrate and eventually tear through the concrete.

Inspectors with the state agency that operates and checks the dam went into the half-mile-long spillway in 2014 and 2015 and did not find any concerns, officials said.

Late Tuesday, President Donald Trump ordered federal authorities to help California recover from severe January storms — a disaster declaration that also assists state and local officials with the dam crisis.

Elsewhere in the state, officials say a reservoir in Santa Clara County is on the verge of spilling over for the first time since 2006. But unlike Oroville Dam, the Anderson Reservoir is not at risk of failure or causing major flooding, San Jose television station KNTV reported.

Elias reported from San Francisco.

Kids with ADHD have some smaller brain regions than normal

By MARIA CHENG, AP Medical Writer

LONDON (AP) — Children with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder have several brain regions that are slightly smaller than usual, more evidence that the disorder should be considered a neurological condition, a new study says.

The study, the largest review of ADHD patients' brain scans ever conducted, might also provide clues for developing new treatments.

"If you know what region of the brain is involved in ADHD, you could possibly target that part with medication," said Martine Hoogman of Radboud University in the Netherlands, the study's lead author.

ADHD causes inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity, although a given person may not show all those traits.

Hoogman and colleagues analyzed MRI scans for more than 3,200 people in nine countries aged four to 63, of whom 1,713 who had ADHD. They found that the brains of children with the condition were slightly smaller in five regions, including those that control emotions, voluntary movement and understanding.

The scientists reviewed one scan per person and found no effect from ADHD medications.

Hoogman said the findings support previous theories that the brains of people with ADHD may develop more slowly but that those differences are mostly wiped out by the time children grow up.

"By the time they become adults, the differences in their brains are not significant anymore," she said. The study was paid for by the National Institutes of Health and was published online Wednesday in the journal, *Lancet Psychiatry*.

Other experts described the findings as interesting but said there wasn't enough information to link the brain differences to behavioral problems seen in people with ADHD.

"The study confirms that there are structural differences in the brains of people with ADHD, but it doesn't tell us what they mean," said Graham Murray, a lecturer in psychiatry at Cambridge University, who was not part of the research.

"Having less brain in several regions sounds bad but it's not as simple as that," he said, pointing out that decreased brain matter can sometimes be beneficial — like in teenagers, when the outer cortex of their developing brains becomes thinner as their intellectual capacity grows.

"The brain is very good at adapting," Murray said. "Just because you have less brain volume doesn't condemn the child to not being able to function well."

Jonathan Posner, an associate professor of psychiatry at Columbia University Medical Center in New York, also said the research should help families with children diagnosed with ADHD.

"To have a solid understanding that ADHD really does originate from brain systems and that it causes alterations in the way the brain is structured and functions, is important information for reducing stigma," said Posner, who co-authored an accompanying commentary. "It will hopefully create more empathy for children who have ADHD."

Congress blocks rule barring mentally impaired from guns

By KEVIN FREKING, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress on Wednesday sent President Donald Trump legislation blocking an Obama-era rule designed to keep guns out of the hands of certain mentally disabled people.

On a vote of 57-43, the Senate backed the resolution, just one of several early steps by the Republican-led Congress to undo regulations implemented by former President Barack Obama. The House had passed the measure earlier this year. The White House has signaled Trump will sign the legislation.

The Obama rule would have prevented an estimated 75,000 people with mental disorders from being able to purchase a firearm. It was crafted as part of Obama's efforts to strengthen the federal background check system in the wake of the 2012 massacre of 20 young students and six staff at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut.

Adam Lanza, a 20-year-old man with a variety of impairments, including Asperger's syndrome and obsessive-compulsive disorder, shot and killed his mother at their home, then went to school where he killed the students, adults and himself. He used his mother's guns in the attack.

The Obama administration rule required the Social Security Administration to send in the names of beneficiaries with mental impairments who also have a third party manage their benefits.

But lawmakers, with the backing of the National Rifle Association and advocacy groups for the disabled, opposed the regulation and encouraged Congress to undertake a rarely successful parliamentary tool designed to void regulations that Congress takes issue with.

With a Republican ally in the White House, the GOP has moved aggressively on several fronts to rescind some of the Obama administration's final regulations on the environment, financial reporting and now guns. Under an expedited process established through the Congressional Review Act, a regulation is made invalid when a simple majority of both chambers pass a joint resolution of disapproval and the president signs it.

The House also voted to repeal three Labor Department regulations Wednesday, including a rule that established when states could require drug testing for certain laid-off workers seeking unemployment insurance. Critics seeking the repeal said the department crafted the regulation so narrowly that it undermined congressional intent to give states more leeway to use drug testing in their unemployment insurance programs.

On the gun rule, Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, spearheaded the repeal effort, saying the regulation unfairly stigmatizes the disabled and infringes on their constitutional right to bear arms. He said that the mental disorders covered through the regulation are filled with "vague characteristics that do not fit into the federal mentally defective standard" prohibiting someone from buying or owning a gun.

Grassley cited eating and sleep disorders as examples of illnesses that could allow a beneficiary to be reported to the background check system if they also have a third party to manage their benefits.

Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., said he didn't know how he could explain to his constituents, including those in Newtown, that Congress was making it easier rather than harder for people with serious mental illness to have a gun.

"If you can't manage your own financial affairs, how can we expect that you're going to be a responsible steward of a dangerous, lethal firearm," Murphy said.

Gun rights groups weren't the only organizations upset about the Obama administration's regulation. The American Civil Liberties Union criticized it, too. The ACLU said the rule advanced a harmful stereotype that people with mental disabilities, "a vast and diverse group of citizens, are violent." More than a dozen advocacy groups for the disabled also opposed the Obama administration's regulation.

"This heartless resolution puts the most vulnerable Americans at risk," countered Dan Gross, president of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence. "Make no mistake, this vote was really about deepening the gun industry's customer pool, at the expense of those in danger of hurting themselves or others."

On the labor rule, Mississippi, Wisconsin and Texas are among the states seeking more flexibility in using drug tests in their unemployment insurance programs. Republicans complained that the Obama administration regulation undercut that flexibility — and congressional intent.

"I am pretty certain that the people who I am privileged to represent would be very upset if they thought somebody was receiving unemployment compensation while they were on drugs, because they think that is going to make it pretty hard for that person to ever get back into the workforce, and they want to be able to identify that," said Rep. Tom Cole, R-Okla.

Democrats argued that Republicans were simply enabling states to intimidate people from seeking unemployment benefits.

"The legislation that we are debating today has nothing to do with fighting drug abuse," said Rep. Richard Neal, D-Mass. "It's about allowing states to put one more time-consuming, humiliating obstacle in the way of Americans who work hard, and were laid off from their jobs and need unemployment insurance to pay the bills while they look for new jobs."

30 days, 2 bills passed: Nebraska session marred by gridlock

By GRANT SCHULTE, Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska lawmakers like to ridicule Washington for its gridlock and partisan bickering, insisting that East Coast politicians should learn the "Nebraska way" of seeking pragmatic, common-sense solutions.

But despite having only a single, nonpartisan chamber, state senators have become so engrossed in an argument about debate rules that they have passed just two bills in a month, and there's no compromise in sight.

The deliberations in Lincoln are part of an effort to make it easier to overcome filibusters. All the talk has eaten up more than a third of the 90-day legislative session that began in January.

"This can't be Groundhog Day tomorrow," Speaker Jim Scheer said Wednesday as he implored lawmakers to work together. "We can't come with the same attitudes, the same misgivings, the same mistrust. We have to change ourselves."

If senators don't change course, the session could go down as one of the least productive in state history. Last year, senators had passed 26 bills by this point. In the 2015 session, they had approved nine measures. And in 2014, they adopted 18 proposals.

Filibusters are used by opponents when they don't have enough support to defeat bills on an up-or-down vote. The tactic has become more common in Lincoln in recent years, reaching a record-high of 24 filibusters last year, as debates grow increasingly contentious.

Because Nebraska lawmakers do not have formal party caucuses, no one can stop an individual senator or a small group from breaking ranks and mounting a filibuster. Conservative senators want to lower the threshold because it could make it easier to pass their top priorities, including a tax-cut package championed by Republican Gov. Pete Ricketts.

Progressive lawmakers and even some moderate Republicans say lowering the filibuster threshold would silence minority groups, be they Democrats in the deeply conservative state or rural senators in a Legislature where redistricting has shifted more political power to Omaha and Lincoln.

The Legislature remained at an impasse Wednesday after senators voted to continue operating under temporary debate rules from last year for another month. The vote will allow lawmakers to move on to other bills, but it does not resolve the dispute.

"It's a sad commentary on this session," said Sen. John McCollister, a Republican who is sometimes at odds with his party. "It's become so politicized. When I ran for election, one thing I talked about was how Nebraska isn't like Washington, D.C. We work together to pass legislation constructively."

The logjam is so great that some committees have not even bothered to vote on bills pending before them.

"Why disappoint folks?" said Sen. Mike Groene, the Republican chairman of the Education Committee. "You bring their bill to the floor, and it doesn't get heard."

Democratic Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks acknowledged that the filibuster has been used too frequently in recent years, but she argued that it was important to preserve minority rights. She hopes the rest of the session is more productive.

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"We could have been talking about a lot more important things," she said.

Lawmakers came close to reaching an agreement on rules earlier this week when six senators huddled in private, but the deal fell apart shortly after it was announced. Previous attempts to reach a compromise have faltered in similar fashion because neither side wants to cede any ground.

The protracted floor fight may also be a reflection of the national rancor that exploded when Republican Donald Trump won the presidency.

"The rules debate, I think, is indicative of what's happened at the federal level," said Sen. Dan Watermeier, a Republican. "We've had a change in our environment."

Nebraska voters created the one-house Legislature in 1934 with the idea that it would be a more efficient and transparent way to conduct government business. U.S. Sen. George Norris, who came up with the idea, argued that state legislatures should not be partisan because most issues they face do not break down along party lines.

The Legislature has seen a dramatic shake-up in the last four years because of term limits and a 2016 election that booted nearly half a dozen incumbents out of office. Ricketts poured more than \$116,000 of his own money into legislative races in the 2016 race to help conservative candidates.

Three centrist Republican senators lost to more conservative challengers, and two other Republicans were unseated by progressive Democrats. Because of term limits, 17 senators — more than one-third of the full Legislature — are serving their first year.

Additionally, the tone of this year's session turned sour on the first day when conservatives organized to sweep nearly all of the Legislature's committee chairmanships. Despite GOP dominance, committees have traditionally been led by a mix of Republican and Democrats. Some of those seats open this year had been sought by Democrats and moderate Republicans with more seniority.

Many of last year's filibusters were led by liberal senators blocking conservative-backed bills, such as a proposal to reinstate the winner-take-all system in presidential elections. But conservatives used them as well to derail a Medicaid expansion bill and a proposal to legalize marijuana.

Follow Grant Schulte on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/GrantSchulte> .

Trump charts new Mideast course; maybe no separate Palestine

By VIVIAN SALAMA, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Charting a striking new course for the Middle East, President Donald Trump on Wednesday withheld clear support for an independent Palestine and declared he could endorse a one-nation solution to the long and deep dispute between Palestinians and Israel.

The American president, signaling a new era of comity between the U.S. and Israel after rocky relations under President Barack Obama, said he was more interested in an agreement that leads to peace than in any particular path to get there. Standing beside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Trump broke not only with recent U.S. presidents but also distanced the United States from the prevailing position of much of the world.

While Trump urged Netanyahu to "hold off" on Jewish settlement construction in territory the Palestinians claim for their future state, he offered unwavering support for Israel, a pledge he appeared to substantiate with his vague comments about the shape of any agreement.

While it once appeared that a two-state solution was the "easier of the two" options for the Palestinians and Israel, Trump said he'd be open to alternatives. "I'm looking at two-state and one-state, and I like the one that both parties like," he told reporters. "I can live with either one."

The United States has formally backed the two-state solution as official policy since 2002, when President George W. Bush said in the White House Rose Garden that his vision was "two states, living side by side in peace and security."

In practice, the U.S. already had embraced the policy informally. President Bill Clinton, who oversaw the Oslo Accords in the 1990s that were envisioned as a stepping stone to Palestinian statehood, said before

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leaving office that resolution to the conflict required a viable Palestinian state.

Separately on Wednesday, Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas called on Netanyahu to end settlement building and expressed "willingness to resume a credible peace process." Also on Wednesday, CIA chief Mike Pompeo secretly held talks in the West Bank with Abbas, the first high-level meeting between the Palestinian leader and a Trump administration official, senior Palestinian officials said. The White House wouldn't comment on the meeting.

All serious peace negotiations in recent decades have assumed the emergence of an independent Palestine. The alternatives appear to offer dimmer prospects for peace, given Palestinian demands for statehood. Dozens of countries, including the U.S., reaffirmed their support for a two-state accord at an international conference in Paris last month, before Trump's inauguration.

In Cairo on Wednesday, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said: "There is no Plan B to the situation between Palestinians and Israelis but a two-state solution. ... Everything must be done to preserve that possibility."

At one point Wednesday, Trump noted the need for compromise in achieving any Mideast peace. Netanyahu interjected: "Both sides."

On terrorism and other matters, there appeared little daylight between the leaders.

Echoing language used by Trump over a need to combat "radical Islamic extremism," Netanyahu said that for peace to be sustainable, two "prerequisites" must be met: "Recognition of the Jewish state and Israel's security needs west of the Jordan" River.

While a two-state solution would involve Israel ceding occupied territory that is strategically and religiously significant, many in the country believe a single binational state would be even more difficult to maintain. It would mean granting millions of Palestinians citizenship and voting rights, threatening Israel's Jewish majority and its Jewish character.

Trump's campaign platform made no mention of a Palestinian state, and his inner circle included allies of the West Bank settler movement. A delegation of settlement leaders was invited to Trump's inauguration.

But after weeks of dancing around the issue of expanded Israeli settlement construction, Trump asked Netanyahu to "hold back on settlements for a bit."

In recent weeks, Netanyahu has approved construction of more than 6,000 new settler homes in the West Bank and east Jerusalem, territories Israel seized in the 1967 Mideast War. He also allowed Parliament to pass a law retroactively legalizing some 4,000 settlement homes built on private Palestinian land.

Still, Netanyahu indicated he was open to some sort of arrangement.

"We'll work something out but I'd like to see a deal be made. I think a deal will be made," he said.

And Naftali Bennet, the head of Israel's pro-settler Jewish Home Party, hailed the new atmosphere between Trump and Netanyahu, saying: "The Palestinian flag was today lowered from the mast and replaced with the Israeli flag."

American presidents have long struck a delicate balance in addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, stressing the close U.S. friendship with Israel but also sometimes calling out Israel for actions seen as undermining peace efforts, such as expanding settlements.

Trump and Netanyahu also were to discuss Iran and the president's campaign pledge to move the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. On Wednesday, Trump said that he'd like to see the embassy move and said his administration is studying the issue closely. Palestinians and Arab governments have warned that such a move could be deeply destabilizing.

After repeatedly clashing with Obama, including over a U.N. Security Council resolution in December condemning Israeli settlements, Netanyahu has seemed relieved by Trump's arrival. He even recounted his personal relationships with members of Trump's family, including son-in-law Jared Kushner, whom Trump has previously described as the man who could mediate a Middle East peace deal.

"Can I reveal, Jared, how long we've known you?" Netanyahu said with a chuckle. "I've known the president and his family and his team for a long time and there is no greater supporter of the Jewish people and the Jewish state than President Donald Trump."

Associated Press writer Jill Colvin in Washington, Josef Federman in Jerusalem and Karin Laub in Ramallah, West Bank, contributed to this report.

Cracks may offer clues to California dam's troubles

By JUSTIN PRITCHARD and ELLEN KNICKMEYER, Associated Press

Six months before rushing water ripped a huge hole in a channel that drains a Northern California reservoir, state inspectors said the concrete spillway was sound. As officials puzzle through how to repair it, federal regulators have ordered the state to figure out what went wrong at Oroville Dam.

Earlier inspection reports offer potential clues, including cracks on the spillway surface that could either be cosmetic or indicate deeper problems. In recent years, construction crews patched cracks — including in the area where water burrowed a huge pit last week. If past repairs were not done properly, water could infiltrate and eventually tear through the concrete.

Damage to the main spillway triggered a series of problems that threatened to unleash a torrent of water on cities downstream. On Tuesday, officials said the immediate danger had passed, and allowed nearly 200,000 residents to go home after evacuation orders scattered them for nearly two days.

Inspectors with the state agency that both operates and checks the dam, the nation's tallest at 770 feet, went into the half-mile-long spillway in 2014 and 2015 and did not find any concerns.

"Conditions appeared to be normal," the inspector wrote in reports from both years.

Getting into the channel affords both a closer view of cracks as well as a chance to tap it with a special hammer, with the sound telling a trained ear whether the concrete is solid or there may be erosion in the earth below. Last August, a team of inspectors only checked the channel from vistas around it, not inside. They concluded that everything looked fine.

The inspection came as California was enduring a five-year drought, and the channel rarely was used to relieve pressure on Oroville Lake, which is about 70 miles north of Sacramento. An extraordinarily wet subsequent six months changed that.

Dam managers were draining water last week from the fast-filling reservoir into the Feather River below when the pit appeared. They temporarily stopped the releases and the reservoir kept rising — pushing water over its lip and down a hillside, where erosion prompted concerns that a broader failure was imminent.

Experts said problems like the cracks in the concrete spillway and spots in nearby areas where water seeped from the reservoir through a hillside were common issues with dams. What mattered, said John Moyle, New Jersey's director of dam safety and flood control, was whether dam operators dealt with the problems carefully — patching cracks so they were watertight, and dealing with spots where water was leaking through so they didn't grow to undermine the concrete.

The Department of Water Resources declined to answer specific questions about the repair work, saying engineers were focused on ensuring public safety.

Robert Bea, professor emeritus of civil and environmental engineering at University of California, Berkeley, said it's "obvious those repairs didn't work."

"We don't have details on the repairs, but they put cement into the cracks and troweled it over," Bea said. "I call it 'patch and pray.'"

On Monday, federal regulators told the department it must enlist a group of independent consultants both to assess what went wrong and to recommend long-term fixes.

Documents and interviews show that crews were patching cracks in 2009 and 2013. A water resources department spokesman said it was normal for maintenance crews to be troubleshooting cracks in the channel during dry summer months.

One resident of the region said he saw crews in the spillway at least once a year for the past several years.

"When they have four or five trucks down there, the only thing they have to do is fill cracks," said Don Reighley, a retiree and fisherman who several times a week drives past the channel to launch his boat into the reservoir.

One of the state inspectors who went to Oroville Dam in August said authorities may never know exactly

what destabilized the spillway.

"Any type of evidence that might have been there is gone," Eric Holland of the water resources department's dam safety division said. "Everything has been washed away."

Knickmeyer reported from Sonoma, California, Pritchard reported from Los Angeles. John Flesher in Traverse City, Michigan, contributed.

Contact Pritchard at <https://twitter.com/lalanewsman> .

Yahoo issues another warning in fallout from hacking attacks

By **RAPHAEL SATTER, AP Cybersecurity Writer**

LONDON (AP) — Yahoo is warning users of potentially malicious activity on their accounts between 2015 and 2016, the latest development in the internet company's investigation of a mega-breach that exposed 1 billion users' data several years ago.

Yahoo confirmed Wednesday that it was notifying users that their accounts had potentially been compromised but declined to say how many people were affected.

In a statement, Yahoo tied some of the potential compromises to what it has described as the "state-sponsored actor" responsible for the theft of private data from more than 1 billion user accounts in 2013 and 2014. The stolen data included email addresses, birth dates and answers to security questions.

The catastrophic breach raised questions about Yahoo's security and destabilized the company's deal to sell its email service, websites and mobile applications to Verizon Communications.

The malicious activity that was the subject of the user warnings revolved around the use of "forged cookies" — strings of data which are used across the web and can sometimes allow people to access online accounts without re-entering their passwords.

A warning message sent to Yahoo users Wednesday read: "Based on the ongoing investigation, we believe a forged cookie may have been used in 2015 or 2016 to access your account." Some users posted the ones they received to Twitter.

"Within six people in our lab group, at least one other person has gotten this email," Joshua Plotkin, a biology professor at the University of Pennsylvania, said. "That's just anecdotal of course, but for two people in a group of six to have gotten it, I imagine it's a considerable amount."

Plotkin said in a telephone interview that he wasn't concerned because he used his Yahoo email for messages that were "close to spam." In the message he posted to Twitter, he joked that "hopefully the cookie was forged by a state known for such delicacies."

AP Writer Paisley Dodds contributed to this story.

Champion Cubs get started with fanfare, big expectations

By **JANIE McCAULEY, AP Baseball Writer**

MESA, Ariz. (AP) — Back home in Las Vegas this winter, Kris Bryant finally understood just how much the Cubs championship meant far beyond the Windy City.

He felt the constant love from fans just by seeing people in the streets wearing Chicago gear. Or when many recognized him and offered congratulations for his huge part in the franchise's first title in 108 years.

He's hard to miss at 6-foot-5, too.

"I didn't really realize how many fans we had around the country and I really got a sense of that this year," Bryant said Wednesday, when the World Series champs held their first pitchers and catchers workout of spring. "It was kind of hard to even go places in my hometown. I was just seeing Cubs hats everywhere driving my car down the road or guys running in a Cubs hat. I'm like, 'This is crazy.' It really shows what we did, and it's something that we can be proud of."

Jake Arrieta gets it. He experienced the same thing, and he can't always hide behind his signature bushy

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brown beard.

"Kris can't go anywhere without getting recognized," Arrieta quipped. "He's got beautiful hair and being 6-foot-6 it's a little hard to stay hidden for him. But the beard for me kind of gives me away. I was able to fly under the radar for a couple weeks without facial hair but it came back pretty quickly."

Now that this group has its banners and baseball's bragging rights until a new winner is crowned next fall, the Cubs want to do it again. Keep flying that W in Wrigleyville.

No doubt the fanfare has reached the Arizona desert, where the Cubs were a main attraction in Mesa when they formally began 2017.

Around Sloan Park and the club's adjacent training complex, there are signs of winning: Large decorative baseballs declaring "2016 World Series Champions" and banners hanging from light posts that read "2016 World Champs."

Manager Joe Maddon has a firm but good-natured message. He is encouraging the Cubs to stay "uncomfortable," to keep pushing. He absolutely believes the "psychological crap" he speaks of matters greatly.

"The hangover component, I already started talking about it today not using the word hangover, but just addressing the method by which we're going to be able to get back there and do it again," Maddon said. "It's important that we, staff, manager, deliver the message but then the peer group delivers the message also that we don't stand or put up with anything less than that same kind of attitude that got us there. Having said all that, one of the main components of us getting there is we have fun here, and I want us to continue to have fun."

Bryant has repeatedly re-watched the jaw-dropping 8-7, 10-inning Game 7 win against Cleveland and also a film on the Cubs ending their drought at long last.

"Oh, yeah. I'll be watching that for the rest of my life," he said. "Going through what we did last year and winning the whole thing it just makes you want to go through it all over again. Playing in the Game 7, that's the most stressful game you can probably play in in sports. I think all our nerves heading into this year are pretty calm that we played in one of the most stressful games in the history of this game. I think we'll be fine."

Arrieta's spring start was immediately a success.

"I'm glad to have the blood test done. I didn't pass out this year, which was nice," the ace right-hander said.

He loves the energy surrounding the team from every angle.

"You get the goosebumps and the positive nervous anxiety to start another year," Arrieta said. "The appreciation from the fans all across the country continues to pour in and that's a really good feeling. There's support in California to Florida, where I'm at in Texas. I'll randomly get, people will walk up and I'll get a pat on the back from lifelong Cubs fans or people that just had an appreciation for what we were able to do and just like to come up and say hello. It feels great to say you're a world champion, but to be able to try and repeat and do it all again would be a little bit more special for us."

And Bryant is clear about one thing as a new season begins:

"It's still like a World Series tour," he said. "We've got to turn the page."

Pentagon boss to NATO nations: Increase military spending

By LOLITA C. BALDOR, Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — In an ultimatum to America's allies, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis told fellow NATO members Wednesday to increase military spending by year's end or risk seeing the U.S. curtail its defense support — a stark threat given Europe's deep unease already over U.S.-Russian relations.

Echoing President Donald Trump's demands for NATO countries to assume greater self-defense responsibility, Mattis said Washington will "moderate its commitment" to the alliance if countries fail to fall in line. He didn't offer details, but the pressure is sure to be felt, particularly by governments in Europe's eastern reaches that feel threatened by Russian expansionism.

Trump's Russia policy remains a mystery for many of America's closest international partners. As a can-

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didate, the Republican president steered clear of criticizing Moscow for its 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region and repeatedly praised Russian President Vladimir Putin, saying he wanted a new era of cooperation between the former Cold War foes.

But that possibility grew murkier this week as Trump fired his national security adviser, Michael Flynn, over the retired Army lieutenant general's communications with Russia before Trump took office. The departure of Flynn, who also promoted the idea of working with Moscow, has added to speculation about how the U.S.-Russian relationship might evolve.

Amid the uncertainty from Washington, the Kremlin may be testing the West's resolve. A U.S. defense official said this week that Russia has deployed a cruise missile in violation of a Cold War-era nuclear arms control treaty. And violence has sporadically re-ignited in eastern Ukraine, where the U.S. and its partners say Moscow continues to back a separatist insurgency.

"No longer can the American taxpayer carry a disproportionate share of the defense of Western values," Mattis told the alliance's 27 other defense ministers, according to a text of his remarks. "Americans cannot care more for your children's future security than you do."

The entire alliance seemed to hang on Mattis' every word Wednesday. Officials crowded around televisions at the NATO meeting in Brussels to watch the retired general's initial appearance with Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg. Defense ministers clustered around Mattis as he entered the meeting room.

Citing danger from Russia, Mattis told the closed meeting of ministers they must adopt a plan this year that sets dates for governments to meet a military funding goal of 2 percent of gross domestic product. He called the funding increase a "fair demand" based on the "political reality" in Washington, an apparent reference to Trump's past criticism of NATO as "obsolete" and his much-touted "America First" mantra.

Noting the threat posed by the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria, Mattis said: "Some in this alliance have looked away in denial of what is happening."

"We have failed to fill gaps in our NATO response force or to adapt," he added.

Trump has challenged the alliance to take on a greater share of military costs, even rattling European nations by suggesting the U.S. might not defend allies unwilling to fulfill their financial obligations as NATO members.

Mattis didn't go that far, and Wednesday's focus appeared to be on simply increasing military funding if not fully reaching the target. Many European governments face hostility to more military spending, especially as their slow economic recoveries force belt-tightening elsewhere.

The United States is by far NATO's most powerful member, spending more on defense than all the others combined. It devoted 3.61 percent of American GDP last year to military spending, according to NATO estimates — a level that has somewhat tapered off in recent years.

Germany, by contrast, spent 1.19 percent of its overall budget on defense. Ten countries commit even less, and seven — including Canada, Italy and Spain — would have to virtually double military spending to reach the target. Luxembourg would require a fourfold increase to get close.

Along with the U.S., the other countries that do reach NATO's benchmark for military spending are Britain, Estonia, Poland and debt-ridden Greece.

British's defense chief, Michael Fallon, said Mattis appeared to welcome a British proposal to create a road map for increased spending. "An annual increase that we're asking them to commit to would at least demonstrate good faith," he said.

Asked about Mattis' ultimatum, NATO chief Stoltenberg said allies need time to develop plans. Many are already talking about increasing commitments, he said.

"This is not the U.S. telling Europe to increase defense spending," Stoltenberg said, noting that allies committed three years ago already to increase spending over the next decade. He said: "I welcome all pressure, all support, to make sure that happens."

Despite the sharpness of his demand, Mattis appeared to recognize Europe's worries and its leaders' desire for clarity on America's commitment to NATO.

In a brief public statement, made while standing alongside Stoltenberg, Mattis called the alliance "a

fundamental bedrock for the United States and for all the trans-Atlantic community.”

Associated Press writer Lorne Cook contributed to this report.

Pastafarian colander pic strains legality for Dutch license

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — A Dutch court has upheld a mayor’s refusal to issue a driver’s license to a man who submitted a photo of himself wearing a colander on his head.

According to a court statement Wednesday, the man wanted the photo on his license as an expression of his Pastafarian faith.

Pastafarians belong to the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster, a parody group that began in the U.S. in 2005 protesting religion encroaching into the nation’s public schools.

The mayor of the Dutch city of Eindhoven last year rejected the man’s request, in part because he ruled that the group couldn’t be considered a genuine religion. Religious headdresses are allowed on Dutch passport photos.

The court agreed, saying that Pastafarian faith “did not show sufficient seriousness to be considered a religion.”

Pope Francis: Native people have rights over their lands

By **NICOLE WINFIELD, Associated Press**

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis insisted Wednesday that indigenous groups must give prior consent to any economic activity affecting their ancestral lands, a view that conflicts with the Trump administration, which is pushing to build a \$3.8 billion oil pipeline over opposition from American Indians.

Francis met with representatives of indigenous peoples attending a U.N. agricultural meeting and said the key issue facing them is how to reconcile the right to economic development with protecting their cultures and territories.

“In this regard, the right to prior and informed consent should always prevail,” he said. “Only then is it possible to guarantee peaceful cooperation between governing authorities and indigenous peoples, overcoming confrontation and conflict.”

The Cheyenne River and the Standing Rock Sioux tribes have sued to stop construction on the final stretch of the Dakota Access pipeline, which would bring oil from North Dakota’s rich Bakken fields across four states to a shipping point in Illinois.

The tribes say the pipeline threatens their drinking water, cultural sites and ability to practice their religion, which depends on pure water. The last piece of the pipeline is to pass under a reservoir on the Missouri River, which marks the eastern border of both tribes’ reservations.

The company building the pipeline, Texas-based Energy Transfer Partners, has insisted the water supply will be safe.

Francis didn’t cite the Dakota pipeline dispute by name and the Vatican press office said he was not making a direct reference to it. But history’s first Latin American pope has been a consistent backer of indigenous rights and has frequently spoken out about the plight of Indians in resisting economic development that threatens their lands.

“For governments, this means recognizing that indigenous communities are a part of the population to be appreciated and consulted, and whose full participation should be promoted at the local and national level,” Francis told the indigenous leaders Wednesday.

In the waning days of the Obama administration, amid protests over construction that led to some 700 arrests, federal agencies that have authority over the reservoir said they would not give permission for pipe to be laid until an environmental study was done.

U.S. President Donald Trump reversed course and last month instructed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to proceed with building the pipeline.

Francis’ reference to prior consent is enshrined in the U.N. Declaration on the rights of indigenous peo-

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ples, which was adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in 2007 over the opposition of the U.S., Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Francis' strong backing for indigenous groups and refugees, his climate change concerns and criticism of the global economy's profit-at-all-cost mentality highlight the policy differences with the Trump administration that may come out if the U.S. president meets with Francis while in Italy for a G-7 summit in May. There has been no confirmation of any meeting to date, however.

AP writer Daniela Petroff contributed.

Asian stocks mixed on upbeat US data, rate hike expectations

By **YOUKYUNG LEE, AP Business Writer**

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Asian stocks were mixed Thursday as investors took profit amid expectations that the Federal Reserve could raise interest rates more aggressively than expected following upbeat U.S. economic data.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's Nikkei 225 fell 0.5 percent to 19,349.97 while South Korea's Kospi edged down 0.1 percent to 2,081.32. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index gained 0.4 percent to 24,086.18 and Shanghai Composite Index rose 0.2 percent to 3,219.22. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 inched down 0.1 percent to 5,805.00. Stocks in Taiwan and Indonesia were lower but in Singapore and the Philippines they were higher.

ANALYST'S TAKE: "After another good run on Wall Street, the attention turns to Asian markets to assess if the global rally can be sustained," Jingyi Pan, a market strategist at IG in Singapore, said in a daily commentary. "Asian markets could once again see some profit-taking in today's session."

US ECONOMY: On Wednesday, reports of stronger retail sales and inflation showed that the U.S. economy was stronger than expected. Consumer prices rose 2.5 percent in January from a year earlier, the highest rate since March 2012. Inflation at the consumer level was the highest in years. The data give the Federal Reserve more encouragement to raise interest rates, and economists said the possibility is increasing that it may happen at the central bank's next meeting in March.

WALL STREET: The Standard & Poor's 500 index rose 11.67 points, or 0.5 percent, to 2,349.25. The Dow Jones industrial average rose 107.45 points, or 0.5 percent, to 20,611.86. The Nasdaq composite rose 36.87, or 0.6 percent, to 5,819.44.

CURRENCIES: The dollar fell to 113.88 yen from 114.02 while the euro was flat at \$1.0615.

OIL: Benchmark U.S. crude fell 6 cents to \$53.05 per barrel. The contract finished 9 cents lower at \$53.11 a barrel on Wednesday. Brent crude, the international standard, added 1 cent to \$55.76 a barrel in London.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Feb. 16, the 47th day of 2017. There are 318 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 16, 1862, the Civil War Battle of Fort Donelson in Tennessee ended as some 12,000 Confederate soldiers surrendered; Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's victory earned him the moniker "Unconditional Surrender Grant."

On this date:

In 1804, Lt. Stephen Decatur led a successful raid into Tripoli Harbor to burn the U.S. Navy frigate Philadelphia, which had fallen into the hands of pirates during the First Barbary War.

In 1868, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks was organized in New York City.

In 1923, the burial chamber of King Tutankhamen's recently unearthed tomb was unsealed in Egypt by English archaeologist Howard Carter.

In 1937, Du Pont research chemist Dr. Wallace H. Carothers, inventor of nylon, received a patent for the

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synthetic fiber, described as "linear condensation polymers."

In 1945, American troops landed on the island of Corregidor in the Philippines during World War II.

In 1959, Fidel Castro became premier of Cuba a month and a-half after the overthrow of Fulgencio Batista.

In 1961, the United States launched the Explorer 9 satellite.

In 1968, the nation's first 911 emergency telephone system was inaugurated in Haleyville, Alabama.

In 1977, Janani Luwum, the Anglican archbishop of Uganda, died in what Ugandan authorities said was an automobile accident, although it's generally believed that he was shot to death by agents of Idi Amin (EE'-dee ah-MEEN').

In 1987, John Demjanjuk (dem-YAHN'-yuk) went on trial in Jerusalem, accused of being "Ivan the Terrible," a guard at the Treblinka Nazi concentration camp. (Demjanjuk was found guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity, but the conviction ended up being overturned by the Israeli Supreme Court.)

In 1996, 11 people were killed in a fiery collision between an Amtrak passenger train and a Maryland commuter train in Silver Spring, Maryland. Former California Governor Edmund G. "Pat" Brown died in Beverly Hills, California, at age 90.

In 1998, a China Airlines Airbus A300-600R trying to land in fog near Taipei, Taiwan, crashed, killing all 196 people on board, plus six on the ground.

Ten years ago: The Democratic-controlled House issued a symbolic rejection of President George W. Bush's decision to deploy more troops to Iraq, approving the nonbinding resolution by a vote of 246-182. An Italian judge indicted 25 suspected CIA agents and a U.S. Air Force lieutenant colonel in the kidnapping of an Egyptian terror suspect, Osama Moustafa Hassan Nasr, who was taken from Italy to Egypt, where he was allegedly tortured. (The Americans were later convicted in absentia.)

Five years ago: A federal judge in Detroit ordered life in prison for "underwear bomber" Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab (OO'-mahr fah-ROOK' ahb-DOOL'-moo-TAH'-lahb), a Nigerian who had tried to blow up a packed Northwest jetliner. New York Times correspondent Anthony Shadid, a two-time Pulitzer Prize winner, died of an apparent asthma attack in Syria while reporting on the uprising against its president; he was 43. Hall of Fame catcher Gary Carter died in West Palm Beach, Florida, at age 57.

One year ago: Former U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali (BOO'-trohs BOO'-trohs KHAL'-ee), 93, died in Cairo. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia's courtroom chair was draped in black to mark his death, a tradition dating to the 19th century. The Czech Museum of Music presented a cantata, "A Salute to the Recuperating Ophelia," a rare piece of music written in three parts by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Antonio Salieri and an unknown composer, Cornetti, that was considered lost for more than 200 years. CJ the German shorthaired pointer won best in show at the Westminster Kennel Club.

Today's Birthdays: Jazz/pop singer/actress Peggy King is 87. Actor Jeremy Bulloch is 72. Actor William Katt is 66. Rhythm-and-blues singer James Ingram is 65. Actor LeVar Burton is 60. Actor-rapper Ice-T is 59. Actress Lisa Loring is 59. International Tennis Hall of Famer John McEnroe is 58. Rock musician Andy Taylor is 56. Rock musician Dave Lombardo (Slayer) is 52. Actress Sarah Clarke is 46. Rock musician Taylor Hawkins (Foo Fighters) is 45. Olympic gold medal runner Cathy Freeman is 44. Actor Mahershala Ali is 43. Singer Sam Salter is 42. Electronic dance music artist Bassnectar is 39. Rapper Lupe Fiasco is 35. Actress Chloe Wepper is 31. Pop-rock singer Ryan Follese (FAHL'-eh-say) (Hot Chelle (SHEL) Rae) is 30. Rock musician Danielle Haim (HYM) is 28. Actress Elizabeth Olsen is 28. Actor Mike Weinberg is 24.

Thought for Today: "The heart may think it knows better: the senses know that absence blots people out. We have really no absent friends." — Elizabeth Bowen, Irish-born author (1899-1973).