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Public Meeting Dates Set

The dates and locations for the public meetings concerning the proposed building project at Groton Area MS/HS have been finalized:

- Monday February 27th – Columbia American Legion – 7:00 PM
- Monday, March 6th – Bristol Community Center – 7:00 PM
- Thursday, March 9th – Groton Community Center – 7:00 PM

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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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 wheat bread.

Debate: at Watertown

BBB hosts Milbank Area: C game at 5:15 p.m. with JV and Varsity games to follow. JH Pep band to perform.

Saturday, Feb. 18

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship at Rosewood Court at 10 a.m.

Debate: at Watertown

Show Choir: at Aberdeen

Wrestling: Regional at Sioux Valley starting at 10 a.m.

Sunday, Feb. 19

DI Dessert Theatre at Groton Elementary

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 Brush

Brooms, Brushes, Mops, Can Liners, Paper Products.

Get Ready for Spring With
Wash Brushes & Squeegees

397-9337

104 N. Main, Groton

Receiving housing benefits?

A trip to Social Security may not be necessary

Social Security is constantly evolving to make your life easier. If you are currently receiving benefits from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and are reapplying for benefits, or are assisting someone with their application, a trip to the Social Security office is probably not necessary even if verification of Social Security benefits is needed.

Because of a data exchange established between Social Security and HUD, most people do not need to contact Social Security for a benefit verification letter. HUD administrators processing a Re-certification Application for Housing Assistance can use their Enterprise Income Verification (EIV) System to verify Social Security and Supplemental Security Income benefits.

Public housing agencies, private owners, and management agents administering HUD rental assistance programs may get registration information about EIV by logging onto the following websites: go.usa.gov/x97mH or go.usa.gov/x97m6.

If you are a new applicant for housing assistance, you can provide your HUD administrator with your Social Security award letter, Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) notice, SSA-1099, or other SSA benefit document.

We created these data exchange agreements to help you get the support you need at the first point of contact, even if that's not with Social Security. If you need to provide proof of Social Security benefits yourself, we have another way to save you a trip to Social Security. You can obtain an instant benefit verification letter with a my Social Security account at www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount.



The advertisement is a composite image. On the left, there is a white metal gym machine with a black seat and a barbell. On the right, there is a row of treadmills in a gym setting with orange walls and a window with blinds. At the bottom center, there is a logo for 'GDI Living Fitness' featuring a red heart with a white ECG line. Below the logo, the address '25 Main St., Downtown Groton' is written in yellow. To the right of the images, there is a white box containing contact information in black text.

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

GDI Living Fitness
25 Main St., Downtown Groton

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Girls Varsity Stats vs. Milbank Area

VISITOR: Groton Area (11-8)

| NO | PLAYER | TOT-FG | | 3-PT | | FT | FTA | REBOUNDS | | | PF | TP | A | TO | BK | S | MIN | |
|---------------|------------------|--------|----|------|----|----|-----|----------|-----|-----|----|----|----|----|----|---|-----|-------|
| | | P | FG | FGA | FG | | | FGA | OFF | DEF | | | | | | | | TOT |
| 41 | Bjerke, Jessica | F | 3 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 11 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 32:00 |
| 53 | Doeden, Jennie | F | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 19:24 |
| 11 | Wanner, Audrey | G | 3 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 7 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 2 | 11 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 32:00 |
| 13 | Stange, Harleigh | G | 2 | 6 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 24:44 |
| 21 | Koehler, Katie | G | 0 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 24:00 |
| 15 | Maine, Payton | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0:00 |
| 23 | Hanson, Miranda | | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 15:16 |
| 33 | Gengerke, Gia | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0:00 |
| 35 | Stange, Alex | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0:00 |
| 43 | Holm, Taylor | | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 12:36 |
| TEAM REBOUNDS | | | | | | | | 1 | 5 | 6 | | | 2 | | | | | |
| Team Totals | | | 12 | 32 | 3 | 9 | 9 | 14 | 9 | 18 | 27 | 11 | 36 | 5 | 20 | 2 | 9 | 160 |

Total FG% - 1st: 8/20 0.400 2nd: 4/12 0.333 Game: 0.375 Deadball
 3-PT FG% - 1st: 3/5 0.600 2nd: 0/4 0.000 Game: 0.333 Rebounds
 Total FT% - 1st: 0/0 0.000 2nd: 9/14 0.643 Game: 0.643 (2,0)

HOME: Milbank Area (12-7)

| NO | PLAYER | TOT-FG | | 3-PT | | FT | FTA | REBOUNDS | | | PF | TP | A | TO | BK | S | MIN | |
|---------------|--------------------|--------|----|------|----|----|-----|----------|-----|-----|----|----|----|----|----|---|-----|-------|
| | | P | FG | FGA | FG | | | FGA | OFF | DEF | | | | | | | | TOT |
| 10 | Rick, Molly | F | 4 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 9:41 |
| 45 | Mielitz, Caryssa | C | 4 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 31:10 |
| 5 | Cummins, Gabbi | G | 4 | 11 | 3 | 8 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 13 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 27:56 |
| 12 | Schuelke, Mackayla | G | 1 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 29:18 |
| 24 | Thue, Taylor | G | 2 | 6 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 24:00 |
| 3 | Mertens, Karlee | | 1 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 15:54 |
| 4 | Vander Wal, Katie | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0:00 |
| 20 | Kasuske, Kylie | | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0:00 |
| 22 | Finley, LaChasity | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0:50 |
| 30 | Seffrood, Sophia | | 1 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 9:07 |
| 32 | Hooth, Shea | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0:00 |
| 34 | Hoeke, Mikaela | | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 12:04 |
| 40 | Engebretson, Jaecy | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0:00 |
| TEAM REBOUNDS | | | | | | | | 1 | 3 | 4 | | | 0 | | | | | |
| Team Totals | | | 17 | 48 | 5 | 17 | 10 | 13 | 12 | 15 | 27 | 13 | 49 | 5 | 13 | 3 | 20 | 160 |

Total FG% - 1st: 6/24 0.250 2nd: 11/24 0.458 Game: 0.354 Deadball
 3-PT FG% - 1st: 2/7 0.286 2nd: 3/10 0.300 Game: 0.294 Rebounds
 Total FT% - 1st: 2/4 0.500 2nd: 8/9 0.889 Game: 0.769 (1,0)

Technical Fouls: Groto (0)
 : Milba (0)

OFFICIALS :
 ATTENDANCE : 0

| SCORE BY PERIODS | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 4th | TOTAL |
|------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| Groton Area | 9 | 10 | 9 | 8 | 36 |
| Milbank Area | 12 | 4 | 14 | 19 | 49 |

Last FG: Groton Area 4th- 8:00, Milbank Area 4th- 0:12
 Largest lead: Groton Area by 6 3rd- 0:00, Milbank Area by 14 4th- 0:12
 Score tied: 7 times, Lead changed: 3 times



Smart Banking Regulations Benefit South Dakota Families

The 115th Congress hasn't taken an extended break since swearing-in day on January 3, and while much of our time these first six weeks have been focused on confirming President Trump's Cabinet nominees, we have also been busy introducing legislation to provide regulatory relief for South Dakota families and businesses. Most recently I introduced two pieces of legislation that seek to ease the regulatory burden on banks and other financial institutions, so they can more easily provide loans and other services to South Dakotans.

Many of the regulations hindering our financial institutions today are a result of the 2010 Dodd-Frank financial reform bill. Dodd-Frank was an ill-advised attempt to correct the mistakes of the 2008 recession and collapse of the housing market. Unfortunately, the end result was more than 2,300 pages of new rules and regulations on our local banks and credit unions, despite having nothing to do with the housing collapse.

I recently reintroduced the Taking Account of Institutions with Low Operation Risk (TAILOR) Act to correct Dodd-Frank's "one-size-fits-all" approach to regulating. The TAILOR Act would ease the regulatory burden on smaller financial institutions by requiring regulatory agencies to take into consideration the risk profile and business models of individual financial institutions and tailor those regulations accordingly. Additionally, it requires the regulatory agencies to provide an annual report to Congress outlining the steps they have taken to tailor their regulations. This will allow the local banks and credit unions to focus their resources on taking care of their customers, rather than spending time and money on compliance, the costs of which are ultimately passed onto the consumer in South Dakota.

I also recently introduced legislation that would dismantle the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB). The CFPB, a product of Dodd-Frank, is yet another regulatory agency with the power to promulgate sweeping new rules on financial institutions, the cost of which has been handed down to families looking to do business with their local banks and credit unions. Even more alarming, the CFPB is an unchecked, unaccountable regulatory agency with no oversight from Congress. My bill would bar the transfer of funds from the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System to the CFPB. The bill also requires the CFPB to turn over all penalty funding and other money it has received to the Treasury.

As a member of the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee, one of my top priorities has been to provide regulatory relief to financial institutions so that South Dakota families can have better access to loans and capital – capital that can be used to purchase a home, buy a new car or invest in a new business that will bring economic activity to our state. I will continue to seek policies that allow our financial institutions to better serve their customers and strengthen our communities.

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Today in Weather History

February 17, 1962: Very heavy snow of 20 to 30 inches fell across the southeastern half of South Dakota. One location had 44 inches of snowfall from the storm. Everything was shut-down due to the storm including roads, schools, and businesses. Some snowfall amounts included, 10 inches at Bryant, 11 inches at Miller, 20 inches at Mitchell, 21 inches at Redfield, 23 inches at Huron, and 32 inches at Sioux Falls.

February 17, 1972: In Minnesota, strong winds of 30 to 50 mph across southern and central Minnesota reduced visibilities to zero at times from blowing snow. Wind gusts of 90 mph were reported at Worthington and Fairmont. Snow of 2 to 6 inches fell across the state. The blizzard stopped almost all traffic from west-central through the south-central part of the state. Most schools in the area closed. Dozens to hundreds of people were stranded in almost every town. Many communities stopped all traffic from leaving town. A train was derailed by the snow at Butterfield. There were many auto accidents. In South Dakota, freezing rain followed by snow accompanied by winds of over 60 mph produced hazardous driving conditions in the area. Traffic was brought to a standstill in many areas resulting in cancellations of school and other activities. A number of accidents occurred due to the icy roads. Although the snowfall was light, strong winds caused drifting with visibilities to near zero at times.

February 17, 1991: On February 17th, a major snowstorm dumped huge amounts of snow on the most of the state from the Black Hills, southwest, central, east central, and the northeast. At the end of the storm, parts of the black hills received up to 2 feet of snow while the rest of affected area had between 8 and 15 inches. The heavy snow caused most of Interstate 90 west of the Missouri River to close, as well as many other highways in the central part of the state. Many cars and trucks skidded off the highways, causing many minor injuries. The only serious injury was a man rolled his car over after losing control near Belvidere.

1930 - Eureka, CA, reported an all-time record high of 85 degrees, a record which lasted until September of 1983. (The Weather Channel)

1936 - The temperature at McIntosh SD plunged to 58 degrees below zero to establish a state record. (David Ludlum)

1958 - The greatest snow-storm of the mid 20th century struck the northeastern U.S. The storm produced 30 inches of snow in interior New England, including more than 19 inches in 24 hours at the Boston Airport. The same storm produced up to three feet of snow in the Middle Atlantic Coast Region, with 14 inches at Washington D.C., and 15.5 inches at Baltimore MD. The storm resulted in 43 deaths and 500 million dollars damage over the Middle Atlantic Coast States. (David Ludlum)



livestream

Upcoming Events

Friday - Milbank at Groton

Boys' Basketball

Varsity at 8:00

gdilive.com

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Today



Sunny

High: 54 °F

Tonight



Partly Cloudy

Low: 31 °F

Saturday



Partly Sunny

High: 49 °F

Saturday Night



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 35 °F

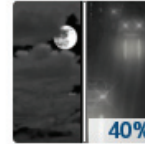
Sunday



Mostly Sunny

High: 58 °F

Sunday Night



Mostly Cloudy then Chance Rain

Low: 45 °F

Washington's Birthday



Rain Likely

High: 59 °F

Warmth Continues!

Normal, Forecast, and Record Highs for Feb. 17th

| Location | Normal | Forecast | Record |
|------------------|-----------|-----------|------------------|
| Aberdeen | 29 | 54 | 58 – 1930 |
| Watertown | 28 | 55 | 55 – 1981 |
| Pierre | 35 | 58 | 63 – 2002 |
| Mobridge | 32 | 48 | 63 – 1954 |
| Sisseton | 28 | 58 | 61 – 1981 |
| Kennebec | 37 | 62 | 71 – 1913 |
| Timber Lake | 33 | 50 | 66 - 1913 |



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD



Updated: 2/17/2017 5:12 AM Central

Published on: 02/17/2017 at 5:14AM

Abnormally warm temperatures will continue today with highs reaching the upper 40s, to the lower 60s. Breezy northwesterly winds can be expected this afternoon.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 53.0 F at 3:48 PM

Low Outside Temp: 28.6 F at 7:24 AM

High Gust: 17.0 Mph at 9:25 AM

Rain: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 67° in 1913

Record Low: -39 in 1903

Average High: 29°F

Average Low: 8°F

Average Precip in Feb.: 0.29

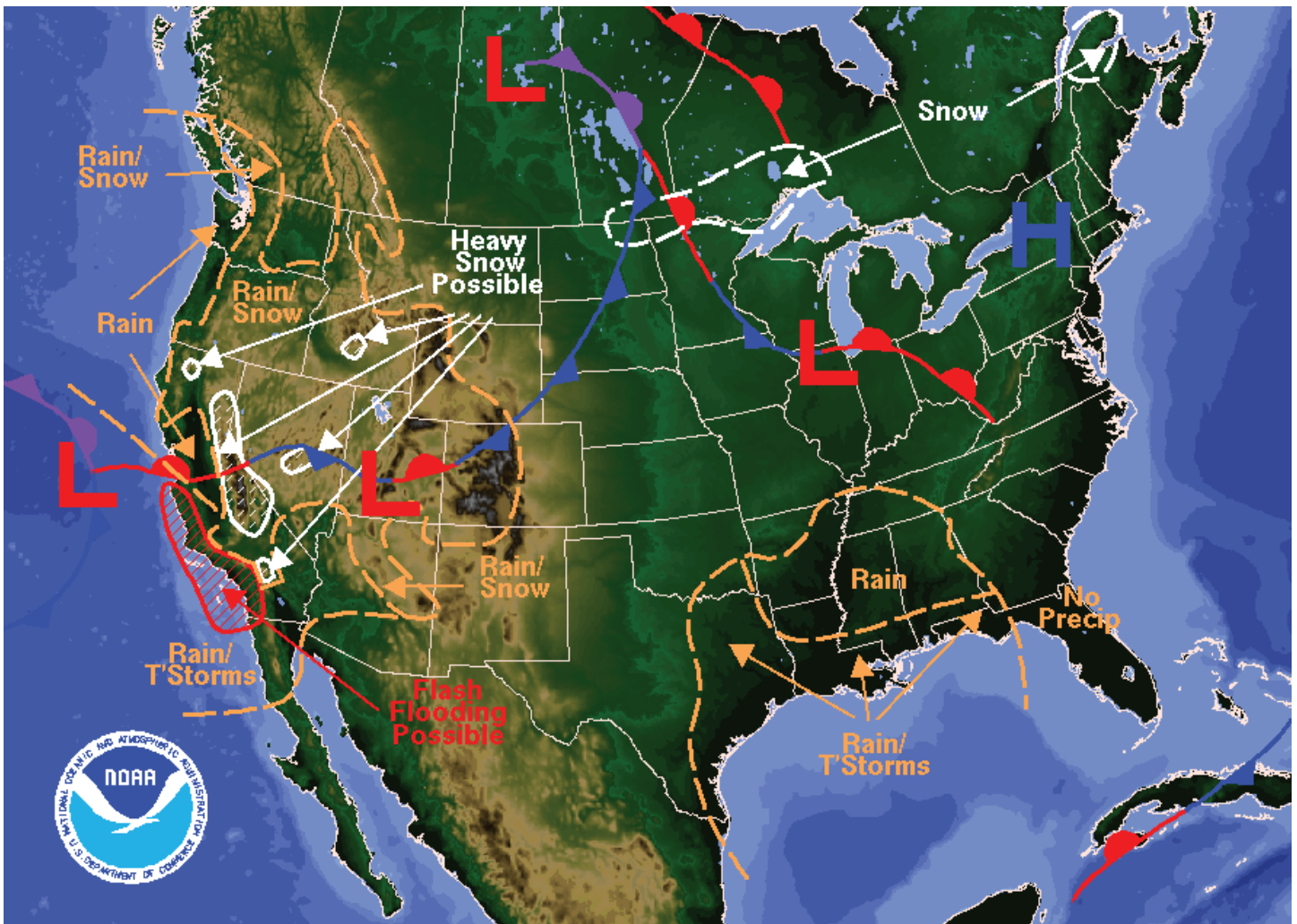
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.76

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 6:04 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:30 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Fri, Feb 17, 2017, issued 4:26 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts



THAT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE ME!

A young mother went to Mr. Duffy for him to do a portrait of her so her children would know what she looked like as a young lady. Mr. Duffy was known for his "idealized" paintings – painting his clients as they could be if they were "ideal".

When she returned after several months of waiting, she was shocked by what she saw. Angrily she said, "That doesn't look like me."

"I know," he replied graciously, "but try your best to look as lovely as it does."

Mr. Duffy saw in the mother what she could become. And so, when he painted her portrait, he brought out the best in her, the "ideal." He wanted to help her achieve her best.

One day after Andrew met and accepted Jesus as the Messiah, he brought Simon to meet Jesus. As Jesus looked intently at him He saw an "ideal" disciple and said, "You are Simon, the son of John – but you will be called Cephas (which means Peter)."

Jesus saw not only who Simon was but who he would become. That is the reason He gave him a new name. Peter was not always a "solid rock" throughout the Gospels but that is what he became "rock-solid" as he grew in Christ.

Christ always sees more in us than we see in ourselves. He sees us as we can be – rock-solid – in our walk with and witness for Him. Come. Follow Me!

Prayer: Lord, may we walk with You, in faith, believing that You have great plans for our lives. May we trust You completely and become "ideal" disciples. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: John 1:42 And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah.[a] You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone).

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News from the  Associated Press

Thursday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Canistota 72, Irene-Wakonda 62
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 59, Belle Fourche 53
Crazy Horse 67, Takini 66
Crow Creek 78, McLaughlin 49
Deuel 41, DeSmet 35
Dupree 95, Wakpala 91, OT
Faulkton 48, Sully Buttes 47
Flandreau 70, Howard 25
Gayville-Volin 63, Freeman 54
Harrisburg 71, Pierre 68, OT
Hot Springs 53, Hill City 43
Huron 77, Aberdeen Central 54
Kimball/White Lake 64, Andes Central/Dakota Christian 48
Lemmon 57, Bison 49
Lennox 76, West Central 67
Leola/Frederick 40, Eureka/Bowdle 36
Lyman 69, Wall 61
Menno 50, Freeman Academy/Marion 33
Potter County 64, Ipswich 60
Rapid City Christian 65, New Underwood 19
Rapid City Stevens 67, Rapid City Central 44
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 70, Mitchell Christian 47
Sioux Falls Christian 62, Beresford 23
Spearfish 66, Douglas 60
Sturgis Brown 74, Red Cloud 58
Vermillion 74, Madison 53
Waubay/Summit 53, Florence/Henry 51
Waverly-South Shore 58, Great Plains Lutheran 42
Wolsey-Wessington 72, Hitchcock-Tulare 31

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Central 60, Huron 31
Aberdeen Roncalli 61, Britton-Hecla 33
Burke/South Central 66, Gregory 36
Castlewood 54, Estelline 30
Corsica/Stickney 44, Kimball/White Lake 31
Crazy Horse 59, Takini 37
Dell Rapids 61, Madison 54
Dell Rapids St. Mary 37, Hendricks, Minn. 36
DeSmet 62, Deuel 40
Douglas 49, Spearfish 48
Dupree 55, Wakpala 42
Herreid/Selby Area 60, Northwestern 52
Hill City 61, Hot Springs 21

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Ipswich 53, Potter County 43
Kadoka Area 70, Bennett County 49
Langford 66, Edmunds Central 42
Lennox 58, West Central 31
Leola/Frederick 46, Eureka/Bowdle 24
Little Wound 63, Lower Brule 50
Lyman 50, Jones County 32
McIntosh 50, Lemmon 42
McLaughlin 67, Crow Creek 65
Menno 51, Freeman Academy/Marion 38
Milbank Area 48, Groton Area 36
Miller 52, Highmore-Harrold 35
Mobridge-Pollock 47, Stanley County 40
Parker 65, Tea Area 43
Parkston 38, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 29
Platte-Geddes 57, Wagner 43
Redfield/Doland 38, Clark/Willow Lake 37
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 67, Mitchell Christian 27
Scotland 53, Tripp-Delmont/Armour 44
Sioux Falls Christian 46, Beresford 41
Sioux Valley 56, Garretson 48
St. Thomas More 46, Belle Fourche 36
Sully Buttes 77, Faulkton 28
Waubay/Summit 53, Florence/Henry 51
Waverly-South Shore 48, Great Plains Lutheran 31
Webster 81, Tiospa Zina Tribal 28

SD bill inspired by unflattering teacher memes passes panel

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Parents in South Dakota may need to mind their phones in schools if a bill banning pictures and videos of unsuspecting teachers passes the Legislature.

The House Education Committee on Wednesday approved a bill that would make it a Class 2 misdemeanor for non-students to use electronic listening or recording devices in classrooms.

Sponsor Rep. Susan Wismer, a Democrat from Britton, says the bill was originally intended to address problems arising from juvenile justice reform in schools but was amended extensively.

Rob Monson, executive director of School Administrators of South Dakota, says he had the bill amended to deter unflattering memes that parents have made of teachers without their knowledge.

The Argus Leader reports (<http://argusne.ws/2lcB4Fy>) that memes have appeared on social media and the bill would give school officials more power.

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

North Dakota Senate OKs bills aimed at pipeline protesters

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — A trio of North Dakota House measures influenced by the dispute between Dakota Access pipeline protesters and law enforcement sailed through the Republican-led Senate Thursday, though some Democrats called the bills an overreaction and unnecessary.

The Senate voted 33-12 in favor of a measure that makes it a crime for adults to wear masks in most cases. The Senate also approved bills that increase penalties for rioting and trespassing by even wider margins.

The masks and trespassing measures were slightly amended by the Senate. The legislation now returns

to the House to see if representatives will agree with Senate changes to the bill. If they do not, a conference committee of three House members and three senators will attempt to strike a compromise.

Republicans said none of the measures infringe on the right to peacefully protest.

Sen. Tim Mathern, D-Fargo, called legislation aimed at rioting "knee-jerk." Under the proposal, those convicted of participating in a riot involving more than 100 people could be sentenced to up to 10 years in prison and a \$20,000 fine — double the current penalties for a lower-end felony. Participation in smaller riots, currently a misdemeanor, would be upgraded to a felony carrying up to five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.

North Dakota has been the center of protests against the \$3.8 billion, four-state pipeline, in large part because of objections of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe in the southern part of the state.

There have been more than 700 protest-related arrests in North Dakota since mid-August.

Tyndall bakery owners find success for longtime business

By CAITLYNN PEETZ, Daily Republic

TYNDALL, S.D. (AP) — When Ed and Carol Radack took over as owners of the Tyndall Bakery nearly 10 years ago, they had to learn plenty of new skills and undertake unique tasks.

For Ed, he had to learn how to operate the bakery's machinery, perfect his management and interpersonal skills and . how to text.

"I never thought I'd have to do that," Ed said. "But now I'm to the point where I have a flip phone and might have to upgrade to one of those fancier ones next time."

The Daily Republic (<http://bit.ly/2iNBxjP>) reports that the couple has run the bakery for almost a decade with the help of one other full-time employee, Liza Pilhal, and a handful of high school students who work part-time. The students often have hectic schedules trying to be involved in dozens of activities while also maintaining good grades and supporting jobs, and eventually Ed, who coordinates schedules, learned the value of a single text. Though he's quick to admit his messaging skills could use some work.

"They send a three-sentence message in a minute and it takes me 15 minutes to type, 'OK,'" Ed joked.

In May, it will be 10 years since the couple took over the Tyndall Bakery — a longstanding staple in the Bon Homme County town. It is unclear exactly how long the bakery has been operating in Tyndall, but documents show its history dates back at least 100 years to 1917.

The bakery has shifted ownership several times and, as its most recent managers, Ed and Carol experienced some growing pains after taking the reins. The most challenging, Carol said, was the customers' adjustment to the new management style and sometimes slightly different products. But, overall, she said it was a "minor hiccup" compared to the rewards she's reaped.

"If something isn't selling, we don't keep it," Carol said. "You get some people who are upset about it — once or twice a year, maybe, but otherwise 99.9 percent of people are understanding. The people are great."

And the Springfield native has had plenty of time to think about her likes and dislikes in running a business.

With no former management experience and a 23-year career working in a factory in her back pocket, Carol has missed only one day of work in the past 10 years and works an average of 80 to 100 hours each week.

The lone day of work she missed came in December, when she fell ill. And, even though she's battled through illness before, Carol said that time was different.

"I just knew this time I wasn't going to be able to make it," Carol said. "I guess one day out of the 10 years isn't so bad."

While a single absence may seem like a tiny blip in the bakery's day-to-day operations, Ed and Carol disagree. When Carol is gone, Ed and the other employees can't make certain products because, even after a decade, Carol is the only person who has access to recipes. The recipes have been passed down from owner to owner, and come with a hefty price tag — about \$2,000.

On the rare occasion Carol is gone, Ed is still able to open the store but isn't able to bake many fresh products, and is instead forced to operate with a limited supply.

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Aside from holidays and other special occasions, the bakery is open 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 6 a.m. to noon on Saturday, but Carol will open her doors for anybody who stops by while she's in the shop.

As co-business owners, Ed and Carol spend nearly all of their time together. But, Carol said she can't imagine running the business with anybody else.

"It works better that it's a husband-and-wife team. You know what your goals are and what you want," Carol said. "It's tough sometimes because 24/7 you're with them, but I think to make this work it needs to be with someone you love."

And as for the future of the Tyndall Bakery, Carol said area residents don't have to worry.

For Carol, 10 years hasn't been long enough, so the bakery is likely here to stay.

"As long as we're making a profit and still having fun — which I'm sure we will — and we're able, we'll be here," she said. "It's a lot of work, but we really, truly enjoy it."

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

Senate GOP leader: Protest bill needs legislative oversight

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The Senate GOP leader says that Gov. Dennis Daugaard's public safety legislation that was spurred by North Dakota's oil pipeline protests likely needs to allow for future legislative oversight to pass.

South Dakota Senate Majority Leader Blake Curd said Thursday that the proposal should include provisions that allow the Legislature to consider in the future whether the powers in the bill continue to be necessary.

The measure would make it clear that the governor's emergency response authority applies to destructive protests, create new trespassing penalties and make it a crime to obstruct highways.

The Republican governor says he wouldn't oppose a sunset provision in the measure. Daugaard's office has said the proposal is based on lessons North Dakota learned from large demonstrations over the Dakota Access pipeline last year.

Restaurants face higher costs, lower workforce

By PATRICK ANDERSON, Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Shonna Haugen likes to say she's creating the "anti-kitchen."

Haugen opened Old Soul Café in July, away from downtown, in a small storefront in the middle of a Minnesota Avenue strip mall in a place where there is no pedestrian traffic.

She serves breakfast and lunch — no dinner — which means there are fewer hours she needs to be open. Her staff is trained to cover both front- and back-of-the-house, they divvy up tips evenly, and Haugen calls them family.

"I'm trying to bring everything I enjoyed into this kitchen, and I think if you do that, you're going to have employees who stay," Haugen said. "The longer people stay, the more well-run a business is, so that's my ultimate goal."

The Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2kDd50I>) reports that signs indicate an end to a vibrant era of restaurants in the United States, but restaurant owners in Sioux Falls are keeping the faith despite growing costs and a surging shortage of workers. Their trick: hard work, efficiency and embracing outside-the-box business models.

A story published late December by Thrillist pointed to an unraveling of the restaurant industry in larger markets, reporting a 3 percent drop in independent restaurants nationwide last year. In many cases, businesses closed under the weight of increasing costs for food, space and staff.

In Sioux Falls, Lone Star Steakhouse and Rookie's at the District went out of business last week.

New openings in the market continue to outweigh closings, however. The increased competition has caused a hiring challenge, especially for cooks and servers.

But local owners find hope in a flourishing downtown and a growing interest in independently owned

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restaurants, even in a city that has long favored chains.

After training in San Francisco and working in restaurants in Germany and the Twin Cities, Tina Kuehn returned home, only to find a scene that didn't fit.

"There were places that were independently owned, but not a whole lot of places cooked from scratch," Kuehn said. "There was always a heavy usage of cans or frozen."

So, she opened Kristina's Cafe and Bakery in 1993, in the heart of downtown. From her spot on the corner of Phillips and 12th avenues, Kuehn watched as the city's food scene began to evolve.

Sanchez Taquitos opened up next door, and then came Touch of Europe across the street.

Even still, Kuehn was wayward. She sold her space in 2001, bought it back a year later under the name of Café 334, and then sold it again in 2008.

Her internal dilemma was rooted in philosophy and cost. Her old restaurants, located in the heart of downtown, were bigger and needed more workers to operate.

"I wanted to get back to that small size of the restaurant, where I was doing a little bit more of the cooking," Kuehn said. "I foresaw that staffing was an issue for me, and managing all that wait staff."

She employed about two dozen people at Cafe 334. Her staff is about half that size at K Restaurant, which continues to operate at 8th & Railroad Center.

The number of dining options available to Sioux Falls consumers exploded, thanks in part to Kuehn and a few former employees who branched out on their own.

"It's just amazing coming off of Phillips Avenue," Kuehn said. "All the places that have opened up. It's just wonderful."

Sioux Falls' blossoming restaurant industry appeared to hit a ceiling in 2015. That was the first time in years city health inspectors noted a decrease in the number of food service facilities.

Even though the count ticked up again in 2016, a number of establishments hit hard times. Last year was no cake walk for local restaurants. Little Coalinga closed its doors to diners after 35 years of serving downtown's east bank.

Fiero Pizza and Fiero Fire Chicken shuttered their 41st Street location. Macho Nacho Mexican Grill closed on the east side. And both Khorasan Kabob House and Zesty's Pizza remain only as memories, despite relocation rumors.

News of Tre Lounge closing broke just days into 2017. It was the second property jettisoned by local firm Pinnacle Hospitality in a matter of months. Pinnacle sold Foley's Fish Chop and Steak House to Vanguard Hospitality, which re-opened the location as Morrie's Steakhouse.

Early last year, Pinnacle also ended management of Elements on 8th, the restaurant once located in the Hilton Garden Inn downtown.

Mounting costs of health care and hourly wages have added pressure for all local restaurants, said Randy Derheim, a former vice president of Pinnacle, who retired in May.

His decision to retire was "a direct result of reduced revenue," Derheim said. Owning a restaurant in this city means being involved directly in the day-to-day operations, and Derheim saw more potential in Pinnacle's hired workforce than he saw in himself.

It was either stay on and replace a skilled manager, or step down, Derheim said.

"These are tough decisions for business owners to make," he said.

If there is one sign of trouble ahead for the Sioux Falls food scene, it's the absence of workforce.

Sioux Falls' city leaders boast about the jobless rate, which hovers well under 3 percent, but there's a downside to a rate that low, Haugen points out.

"It's not just restaurants," she said. "Everyone's hiring."

The workforce shortage is a gaping wound in the side of an otherwise healthy industry. The number of food-service job openings in the four-county metro area has skyrocketed, according to the state's listing service, quintupling in the years since the recession.

Meanwhile, the average pay for cooks, chefs, servers and almost any position available has steadily increased. The hourly wage for a person in South Dakota's food service industry climbed to \$10.16 in 2015, a two-dollar jump from what it was before the recession.

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Then, there's health care. At its peak Pinnacle operated four restaurants in Sioux Falls and employed 150 people, Derheim said, which means it was required to provide health insurance under the tenets of President Barack Obama's health care law.

"I think on a national level, what you see, is you see companies that you think would never close restaurants closing restaurants," Derheim said.

Michael Haskett sees something else when he looks through the window of his downtown restaurant, even facing the old storefront of Taqueria San Francisco, another eatery that closed last year.

Haskett came up in the industry by working in kitchens, starting with a job in high school making pizza at Gigglebees.

He's found enough success with M.B. Haskett Delicatessen to shrug off the workforce shortage, but he's not ignorant to persistent problems in the industry.

It's always been rough, he said. Margins are razor thin, debt is persistent, and workers rarely pull in a living wage. Brutal as recent times may seem, brutality is nothing new for commercial kitchens.

"This historically has been an abusive industry," Haskett said. "It doesn't (expletive) pay enough."

Look no further than local history. Derheim has lived in the community for more than 30 years.

"And all the restaurants that I enjoyed in my earlier years in Sioux Falls with the exception of one, which would be Minervas, no longer exist," Derheim said.

Now, in a market riding high on a growing hunger for well-prepared food, the number of restaurants is creating greater competition for the same consumers, and for the same pool of capable workers.

"There's always another job," Kuehn said. "There's always another place opening up."

Instead of an abandoned storefront, what Haskett sees is potential when he looks out from M.B. Haskett's front window onto Phillips.

Downtown is thriving, he said. Restaurant owners might be riding an economic bubble, but he thinks the bubble here will continue to grow, and that's not necessarily a bad thing, as long as it comes with lessons.

"I think the restaurant industry and those with passion for the industry need to educate the consumer," Haskett said.

Haskett and the other owners driving the current restaurant revolution seem to know what they're getting into, and are willing to experiment with business models that are more efficient and have less overhead.

Haskett opened his restaurant in the dead of winter, limiting his menu to what equipment was immediately available: some crockpots and a crepe maker. It wasn't until after his following picked up, in 2014, that he remodeled, putting in new kitchen gear that would allow him to increase his offerings.

"It was a long, hard slog," Haskett said. "People came here because we were playing loud punk music and serving good food."

Haugen incorporated catering into her business model because it gives her an opportunity to earn more revenue in a short period of time. Old Soul only serves food in the breakfast and lunch hours, but Haugen opens the doors later for special events. Hosting parties helps with word-of-mouth, she said.

Kuehn only serves dinner on Friday and Saturdays. She also caters and offers cooking classes during the week. She hosts special events such as the pop-up dinner she organized Monday to drive interest.

It's a more predictable model.

"You know who's coming," Kuehn said. "You know who's serving."

The industry needs newcomers such as Haugen to succeed, Derheim said. Tried and true establishments are necessary for a robust food scene, but so is reinvention. That's what inspired Pinnacle executives to put Tre up for sale this month — it was time for someone else to breathe new life into the space, Derheim said.

But quality is also key.

"You better come out of the gate with a strong product, and you better come with a commitment to excellence," Derheim said.

Investors who dabble in dining because they have money and think owning a restaurant is romantic are often doomed to fail. Instead, the industry rides on the shoulders of "truly dedicated fools" like him, Haskett said.

But mostly it rides on Sioux Falls — on the guy with a fork in his hand.

"The market will decide what works," Haskett said. "It won't be the restaurant owners."

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

Lakota filmmaker receives Sundance Fellowship

By MAX B. O'CONNELL, Rapid City Journal

PINE RIDGE, S.D. (AP) — When Willi White was an aspiring filmmaker as a teenager, the Sundance Film Festival was a dream. This year, it became a reality.

"It's overwhelming and surreal for me, because ever since I was young, Sundance has been the pinnacle of where I wanted to go in terms of my filmmaking career," White said. "Being there and experiencing it was a dream come true."

The Rapid City Journal (<http://bit.ly/2kOG4PR>) reports White, 27, won a fellowship of \$20,000 from the Sundance Native Filmmaker Program. White is a Lakota filmmaker from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, where he and producing partner Angel White Eyes started the production company Indigene Entertainment.

White was heading home to Pine Ridge from a job when he learned he was selected as a Sundance fellow.

"It was one of those moments where you'll never forget where you were," White said.

White attended the festival last month as a part of the Sundance Lab. He described the festival experience as being overwhelming, as he got a chance to see several films and to network with other filmmakers.

"Being able to see films from long form to short form that were high caliber was incredible," White said.

White gave special mention to Native and indigenous films that were shown at the festival, including "Rumble: The Indians Who Rocked the World," about the Native influence on rock music, and "Dolores," about agricultural labor activist Dolores Huerta.

The previous portion of the lab took place in June, in which White and another Native Filmmaker Lab fellow met with different filmmakers to hash out the plans for their film.

"We sat down, talked about our script and story, asked if they had any advice," White said. "It was helpful."

It was a long way from when White, as a teenager, first fell in love with film upon seeing "The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring" in theaters.

"I remember being enthralled by the whole experience," White said. "I was captivated by the world, how it was laid out, and knew I wanted to be a part of this process."

White was in seventh grade at the time, and a teacher at Red Cloud Indian School asked students to do an end-of-the-year project on different countries. White's love of "The Lord of the Rings" prompted him to make a short film about New Zealand, where the trilogy was filmed. His film was submitted to the South Dakota Media Fair and won first place in his age group.

White later made short films in high school and studied photojournalism and theater at Creighton University. He has since directed music videos (including Scatter Their Own's "Taste the Time" video) and has worked as a production assistant on "Winter in the Blood," a location assistant on the acclaimed film "American Honey," and a director's assistant on the upcoming "Woman Walks Ahead" starring Jessica Chastain.

White will use the advice, along with the grant, to make "Miye, Ukiye," which translates to "You, Me, I." The film is based on a one-act play by local artist Marcus Bear Eagle.

The film follows a young man struggling with negative aspects of himself that manifest into an evil spirit, and how the struggle helps him discover himself.

"It's about a young man trying to find balance in his life," White said. "It says that in order to be whole, you need to accept every part of yourself — the bad, the ugly — to be whole."

White said the story was based on a traditional Lakota teaching, and the lesson is that balance is required in life. Bear Eagle will play the spirit and help adapt his literary work to film.

"He shared it with me two years ago, and reading it, I knew I wanted to make it," White said. "And it wasn't until last year that it was clear we could do it."

The two are working on the script and hope to finish the short by the submission date for Sundance

shorts in October.

White still takes inspiration from fantastical filmmakers such as Steven Spielberg, George Lucas and Peter Jackson, as well as rising stars such as "La La Land" director Damien Chazelle (whose own "Whiplash" was a breakout hit at Sundance 2014). But with the help of Sundance, he's on his way to establishing his own career path.

"It's always been on my mind to be a part of Sundance," White said. "To be a fellow, to be a part of the Sundance family, is pretty incredible."

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

South Dakota House panel passes industrial hemp bill

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota residents who pass background checks and get a license from the state agriculture department would be allowed to cultivate industrial hemp under a measure a House panel approved Thursday.

The Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee voted 9-2 to approve the plan, which now heads to the full chamber for consideration. Supporter Rep. Elizabeth May, a Republican, said that hemp would be a useful product for South Dakota's agriculture industry.

The bill restricts the allowable content of THC — a main psychoactive ingredient in marijuana — for industrial hemp.

"We all have distant cousins that maybe are not very, somebody we want to be associated with, but we don't hold the whole family accountable for one individual," said May, referencing hemp's family ties to marijuana. "Industrial hemp is a very, very good, productive, useful product for our agriculture industry in South Dakota."

Hemp's comeback got a foothold in the 2014 federal farm bill, which allows state agriculture departments to designate hemp pilot projects for research in states that have approved hemp growing. Neighboring North Dakota is among many states with an industrial hemp program.

House Majority Leader Lee Qualm, a supporter, said he thinks it could be a "very viable industry for South Dakota."

But advocates in South Dakota have difficult ground to till. A hemp proposal failed last session in a Senate committee after it passed through the House, and Republican Gov. Dennis Daugaard said that he opposes it.

"I think that it's something that those who are interested in recreational use use as a door opener and try and create a slippery slope that ends up with medical marijuana and then recreational use, which I don't support," Daugaard said.

Executive agencies opposed the bill during the committee hearing. Jenna Howell, a lobbyist for the Department of Public Safety, said that having hemp plants legally grow in South Dakota would send mixed messages to youth who officials are trying to warn about the dangers of illegal drugs.

Sioux Falls start plan to address worker need

By JODI SCHWAN, Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Two overlapping circles symbolize the Sioux Falls area's new approach to addressing its need to grow and develop a workforce.

One circle represents talent attraction and retention.

The other represents talent development.

Where they overlap, economic developers have included elements such as career-based training, state policy and a talent portal.

Overseeing this new strategy is Lon Clemensen, the new vice president of workforce development for the Sioux Falls Development Foundation.

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A human resources veteran of the banking and nonprofit worlds, he sees his job as one that fosters collaboration.

"My role is really strategic and action planning, to carry out the agenda items of Forward Sioux Falls," he said.

The Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2ln5FTTr>) reports Forward Sioux Falls, which started a new five-year campaign this year, is an economic development partnership between the Sioux Falls Area Chamber of Commerce and the Sioux Falls Development Foundation largely funded by the business community.

Each five-year cycle typically has focused on a few key areas related to economic development.

This time, the emphasis is on workforce development.

The state's unemployment rate stayed below 3 percent for all of 2016. Sioux Falls was at 2 percent for much of the year, at times ranking as the nation's lowest unemployment rate for a metro area. Business leaders in a range of industry are struggling to hire, Clemensen said.

"It isn't just any one business or one industry. It's entire industries," he said. "Everybody working together is going to be what it takes to resolve this workforce development challenge."

The first item in the overlapping circles that define Forward Sioux Falls' workforce strategy is career-based training and experience.

To tackle it, Clemensen has approached his first months in the job by meeting with a range of leaders, from education to industry, learning about best practices as well as needs.

The fact-finding took him to Midwestern Mechanical Inc., where education manager Christine Therklidsen leads a program to train the commercial contractor's plumbers in-house.

"In our industry, apprenticeship works," she said. "That's the training and progression model that works for us."

Apprentice plumbers, for instance, must have 8,000 hours of on-the-job training before testing for a journeyman's license plus time in the classroom. In Iowa, where Midwestern also has an office, the apprenticeship program must be approved by the Department of Labor and include 644 hours of classroom instruction.

So a few years ago, the company's owner, Dwayne Klarenbeek, decided to hold those classes on site. Therklidsen was hired to coordinate it, and a full-time instructor was hired.

"We kind of run like a school year," she said. "We give them summers off, because construction is so busy, so they go September through May and classes are held on Fridays. A lot of our people don't work on Friday because they put hours in during the week."

The apprentices are paid for their work and receive classes for free, other than less than \$100 for books.

There is class instruction combined with lab and safety training, and vendors come in to demonstrate tools. Therklidsen said the program is the only one of its kind in the state.

"What we found works is people find we will train on the job, and it's attractive. They're not going to go into debt getting that training and they're going to make good wages and have great career opportunities."

The first group of eight in Sioux Falls will finish four-year apprenticeships this year. Behind them, the program has filled in steadily thanks to referrals and recruiting by the company, Therklidsen said.

"We could use more, but you can't have 20 apprentices and five journeymen. You have to have journeymen to support, so as we continue to get more journeymen licensed, that allows us to bring in more apprentices," she said.

The company is starting a similar program this fall in HVAC along with program in fire protection and sprinkler fittings.

"We're very proud of what we have going on," Therklidsen said. "It's essential for our business. If we're going to continue to grow and bid jobs and help Sioux Falls grow, you need workers."

While Midwestern Mechanical's approach may provide a strong example for the trades, a new program led by Southeast Tech is trying to lift up best practices and needs in other industries.

The school is hosting a series of "sector breakfasts" to highlight opportunities for collaboration in workforce development.

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The first one Jan. 27 drew dozens of healthcare leaders for a panel discussion on needs in that field. "To me, it's a wonderful opportunity," Southeast president Bob Griggs said. "From the Southeast perspective we're trying to listen to the industry's perspective: What's working, what isn't and what are we missing."

The second item in the overlapping circles that symbolize workforce development calls for a talent portal. A group working on this for Forward Sioux Falls is prepared to launch the so-called portal, which takes the form of an online repository of information about the city housed at www.sioxfalls.com.

Clemensen calls it a "one-stop shop where it would be everything, hopefully, that a resident in Sioux Falls or an external person can learn about the city."

The portal is divided into four categories: Live, work, play and grow. Within each area, content explores aspects of Sioux Falls such as housing options, safety, cost of living, education, dining and recreation.

"It's not a jobs portal. It's telling the whole story of Sioux Falls. We will have that in an area for finding a job, but it will have links to job sites," Clemensen said.

More than two dozen members of the business community have helped create the content for the site. Stacy Wrightsman, public affairs manager at Sanford Health, worked with her husband, Dan, who is an electrician, to write about job options in Sioux Falls.

They talked about how the city's record construction activity means plenty of work for "electricians, roofers, plumbers, sheet-rockers, all these trades," she said, as well as "the personal impact to my husband as a dad and as a worker and what it means."

The range of job options in the city allows Dan, who likes not being in a "behind the computer" job to work an earlier shift and be home with the family's sons after school, they shared.

"I know what it meant to him and our family," said Wrightsman, adding the idea of a talent portal "is critical. The days of doing these types of workforce development things as a nice thing to do are kind of going away. To me, they are critical to continue the momentum of quality growth Sanford is experiencing as well as Sioux Falls is experiencing."

Rachell Henning, office administrator at Woods, Fuller, Shultz & Smith PC, agreed. She wrote a section on youth activities for the talent portal.

"That's one that's near and dear to my heart, because I have two young girls and we have been able to take advantage of the different opportunities presented, so I thought it was a good opportunity to share what it's meant to us," she said.

From a human resources perspective, the portal will be helpful, she said.

"It takes a lot of work off HR to try and communicate all the great things about the community," she said. "I think it's a great resource and a unique approach."

Expect the new Forward Sioux Falls workforce development approach to also include new outreach to underutilized populations.

That includes refugees and immigrants.

"I'm excited about where the collaborative opportunities are," said Betty Oldenkamp, president and CEO of Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota.

At LSS, much of the work has centered around connecting people with entry-level jobs. Through expanded partnerships, Oldenkamp sees opportunity to "really focus on growing the earning potential of folks, getting them the skill set it will take for them to advance."

The agency already works with 100 employers and sees opportunity to go further and build synergy with higher education, she said.

"It's not something we can do alone," she said. "We're hoping that our ethnic populations are one piece of this, but we also see this opening doors for high school kids we work with in a youth mentoring program."

Griggs, at Southeast Tech, said he has similar hopes for collaboration.

"We need to get out to these populations that don't see Southeast as an opportunity or an option," he said. "We had good conversations with LSS and the Multicultural Center to tie into some of the resources they have for training and interpretation."

One initial conversation with Clemensen also led him to consider a potential partnership between Southeast and the Glory House that would connect instructors with former inmates looking to better themselves.

"We're looking at education as an opportunity to lift people up and provide opportunities for them,"

Griggs said.

While many of the potential collaborations are still being explored, Clemensen said they are good early indications of how he is hoping to address workforce development.

"I think by getting business leaders together with education and government and nonprofits, creative ideas start to flow," he said.

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

Labrador returned to South Dakota family by Humane Society

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A dog is back with the South Dakota family who raised him thanks to the people who recently adopted him at the Sioux Falls Humane Society.

Janeen Rang and her husband raised 5-year-old Jake, a yellow Labrador mix, who went missing from their Turner County farm on Feb. 2. Jake wasn't microchipped, the Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2kC8M5w>) reported.

The Humane Society held the dog for a week before putting him up for adoption. He was adopted on Feb. 8 by another family.

But when Jake's adoptive family saw that the Rangs put out a plea to the Humane Society to consider returning the dog to his original home, the family gave him back, according to the shelter's director, Kori Baade.

"I think the family got really lucky that the adoptive family was so heartfelt," Baade said. "It turned out well."

Baade said the Humane Society followed city ordinance for strays, and that Jake's adoption through the shelter was legal. He said the agency received dozens of threatening phone calls about the dog.

Rang said there's no animosity toward the shelter. She said she's grateful the agency did its job.

"If they hadn't taken him, who knows what could've happened to him," she said. "He could have been hit (by a car). Who knows. They did their job and we're so grateful. It was just an unfortunate circumstance."

While Baade said she's happy Jake is back with his family, she hopes to turn the publicity more positive in the future.

"Every Valentine's Day from now on, we want to do an event called 'Love Your Pet' to talk about making sure everyone's pets are microchipped," she said.

The Rangs brought Jake back home Wednesday. The family said they hope the incident with Jake is a lesson to other pet owners to get their animals properly ID'd.

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

Minor flooding still appears likely at pipeline protest camp

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — The latest spring flood outlook from the National Weather Service calls for only minor flooding in the area of Dakota Access pipeline protesters' encampment in North Dakota.

Thursday's update is similar to one issued three weeks ago. The numbers still indicate that parts of the camp could end up underwater, but there's little chance of major or even moderate flooding through May.

The outlook doesn't include flood risks associated with ice jams, which can't be predicted. That's what has state and federal officials worried. They're working to help the Standing Rock Sioux get the camp near the Cannonball River cleaned up and cleared out before any flooding.

Some in the camp say the flood fears are overblown, and many say they might seek higher ground but they're not leaving.

Keystone XL developer renews effort to build in Nebraska

By GRANT SCHULTE, Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — The developer of the Keystone XL pipeline said Thursday that it is once again seeking state approval for a route through Nebraska.

TransCanada said it has filed an application with the state commission that regulates oil pipelines.

The Canadian company's previous attempts to start construction in Nebraska have been thwarted by activists and some landowners who worry that it could damage property and contaminate groundwater supplies. Opponents have already met to discuss how they might be able to halt the project.

In a statement, the company said its project will emphasize safety and respect for the environment. TransCanada said its preferred route would avoid an area the state defines as the Nebraska Sandhills, an ecologically sensitive region of grass-covered sand dunes with high water tables.

"This application has been shaped by direct, on-the-ground input from Nebraskans," TransCanada CEO Russ Girling said in a statement. "The thousands of Nebraskans we have met over the last eight years understand the value of this project and what it means to the state."

The Keystone XL would travel from Canada through Montana, South Dakota and Nebraska, where it would connect with an existing Keystone pipeline network to carry crude oil to Texas Gulf Coast refineries.

Republican President Donald Trump has said he supports the pipeline, and last month he signed executive memos to make it easier for the project to move forward.

Pipeline opponents may have a tougher time blocking it than before, since Trump is now president. Former President Barack Obama rejected a federal permit for the project largely because of environmental concerns raised by the project's critics.

In Nebraska, opponents plan to focus initially on elected state officials who have the power to reject the project within Nebraska.

The pipeline opposition group Bold Nebraska will launch a letter-writing campaign this month aimed at the Nebraska Public Service Commission, an elected, five-member board that will review the project. The current commission is comprised of four Republicans and one Democrat.

The commission regulates "common carriers," such as a taxis and pipelines, that are used to transport goods, energy or people. Commissioners generally take about seven months to approve or deny an application, but they can postpone a decision for up to a year. Their decision hinges on whether they believe the project serves a public interest, based on evidence presented at a public hearing.

"We will follow all aspects of the law as we fulfill the duties assigned to us by the Legislature," said Jeff Pursley, the commission's executive director.

According to a 2014 report by the U.S. State Department, Keystone XL would support about 42,100 jobs, including about 3,900 workers directly involved in construction. Workers, including those indirectly supported by the pipeline, would earn about \$2 billion.

Once construction ends and oil starts flowing, the pipeline would support just 35 permanent jobs, according to the report.

Opponents thwarted the project in Nebraska with a series of lawsuits and activism that at one point led then-Gov. Dave Heineman to call a special legislative session. This time, they may try to draw from a national wave of anti-Trump activism.

"We have to be as proactive as possible," said Linda Anderson, Bold Nebraska's state director. "But I think we can do it again."

If pipeline opponents can't stop the construction of the pipeline, they at least want it to run along the same route as an earlier Keystone pipeline that already runs through eastern Nebraska, said Jane Kleeb, a longtime opponent of the project.

"It's a very frightening prospect that a foreign corporation can use eminent domain against landowners for their private gain," said Kleeb, the director of an umbrella group that includes Bold Nebraska.

Kleeb said 82 landowners in Nebraska still haven't agreed to let the pipeline run through their property. TransCanada has said it has secured agreements with roughly 90 percent of the state's property owners.

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

Lawmakers roll back bill to control refugee resettlements

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota lawmakers have neutered a measure that would have required the Legislature's approval for refugee resettlements in South Dakota.

A Senate committee Wednesday approved changes that simply would require private refugee resettlement agencies to provide an annual report to the governor and Legislature.

The State Affairs Committee voted unanimously to send the bill to the floor. Sen. Brock Greenfield, the main sponsor, says it's important for legislators to have information on the resettlement process.

The report would have to include services provided, demographics and the number of refugees assisted from each country.

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.

Jets' Revis charged after fight in Pittsburgh last weekend

PITTSBURGH (AP) — New York Jets cornerback Darrelle Revis was charged with four first-degree felonies and one misdemeanor after allegedly being involved in a fight with two men last weekend.

According to a docket sheet filed Thursday night, the 31-year-old Revis is facing two counts of aggravated assault, along with charges of robbery, conspiracy to commit aggravated assault and terroristic threats — a misdemeanor — after the incident Sunday at 2:43 a.m.

Revis' attorney, Blaine Jones, said in a statement while the charges were still pending that Revis was "physically assaulted while at that location by a group of at least five people." He added that the Jets cornerback "feared for his safety" and sought medical attention, but didn't offer details about the severity of Revis' injuries.

Jones told The Associated Press that once a warrant was issued, he would arrange for Revis to turn himself in.

"One of the other guys initiated physical contact," Jones said. "Darrelle was walking away. He was in fear for his life and fear for his safety."

But in a statement earlier Thursday, Pittsburgh police said the alleged fight started when a 22-year-old man from Kittanning, Pennsylvania, not identified in the statement, spotted a man who he believed to be Revis walking along East Carson St. After Revis confirmed he was the NFL player, the man started recording the interaction. Revis grabbed the phone and tried to delete the video. Another 21-year-old man from Ross Township tried to help the other man, but Revis tossed the phone into the road, the statement says.

An argument ensued, ending with another man helping Revis, according to the police statement. Police say the 22-year-old man and the 21-year-old man claimed they were punched and knocked out. According to police, the two men regained consciousness and spoke to authorities.

Witnesses told police that the two men were unconscious for about 10 minutes. The responding officers viewed the video on the phone and confirmed that the person was Revis.

In his statement, Jones said that Revis, an Aliquippa native, was in the Pittsburgh area to visit family and friends last weekend. During the time of the incident, Jones said Revis "went by a location in the Southside that he is in the process of developing." That is when, according to Jones, Revis was assaulted.

The Jets said in a statement that the team is aware of the incident and has spoken to Revis, but issued no further comment.

Revis was a star at the University of Pittsburgh and was drafted No. 14 overall by the Jets in 2007. He quickly established himself as one of the top players at his position — and in franchise history — while also earning the nickname, "Revis Island" for his penchant for routinely shutting down opposing teams' top receivers.

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His second tenure with New York, after stints with Tampa Bay and New England, might be over after two seasons. Revis is scheduled to make \$15 million, including a \$2 million roster bonus due on March 11, next season — but that would be a lofty salary for an aging player who admittedly had a subpar year that he attributed to age and injuries.

The Jets would still owe him \$6 million if they cut him as part of the \$39 million in guarantees in the five-year, \$70 million deal he signed with New York in 2015. Revis, who could perhaps agree to a pay cut, has also entertained the idea of making a position change to safety.

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

Remember Nixon? There's history behind Trump's press attacks

By NANCY BENAC, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Thomas Jefferson railed against newspapers as “polluted vehicles” of falsehood and error. Richard Nixon tangled with reporters in the toxic atmosphere of Watergate, considering them the “enemy.” Bill Clinton publicly condemned “purveyors of hatred and division” on the public air waves.

Historians can point to plenty of past presidents who have sparred with the press. But they're hard-pressed to find anything that approaches the all-out attack on the media that President Donald Trump seems intent on escalating at every turn.

“There has never been a kind of holistic jihad against the news media like Trump is executing,” said Rice University historian Douglas Brinkley. “Trump is determined to beat and bloody the press whenever he finds himself in a hole, and that's unique.”

Trump, who has long had an adversarial relationship with the media, opened a 77-minute East Room news conference Thursday by saying he hoped to “get along a little bit better” with the press going forward — “if that's possible.”

“Maybe it's not, and that's OK, too,” he added.

Clearly, he's fine with that.

The president proceeded to circle back to the press time and again during the news conference to complain about “fake news” purveyed by “dishonest” reporters. He called out individual news organizations, reporters and stories, labeling them “disgraceful,” “discredited” and “a joke.” He lamented “the bias and the hatred” directed at him.

“It's all fake news, it's all fake news,” he said of reports that members of his team were in regular contact with Russian officials during the campaign.

Trump said he was determined to “take my message straight to the people” because “the press honestly is out of control. The level of dishonesty is out of control.”

The president posted a pre-dawn message on his Twitter account Friday expressing gratitude to his supporters “for all of the nice statements on the Press Conference yesterday.”

“Rush Limbaugh said one of the greatest ever,” Trump said in his tweet, referring to the nationally-known conservative radio talk show host. “Fake media not happy!”

The performance Thursday was part of a calculated strategy by Trump to discredit those who are reporting on the chaos and stumbles of the administration's opening weeks and to boost enthusiasm among the president's core supporters.

But Princeton historian Julian Zelizer warned that while Trump may shift attention away from his problems with the drama of such a press conference, “there are some signs that Republicans are getting tired of this.”

Zelizer said all presidents have had their moments of tension with the press, but “the scale and scope of this is unlike anything that we've seen in the past.”

Nixon's increasingly difficult relations with the press during the unfolding of the Watergate scandal may be the closest parallel, Zelizer said, with the embattled president famously telling reporters at a 1973 news conference that “I am not a crook.”

But at least publicly, Nixon was more circumspect about going after individual reporters and news organiza-

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tions, even while privately musing about how to discredit CBS's Walter Cronkite and other correspondents, says Brinkley, author of a book on the Nixon tapes. Nixon's men wiretapped the phones of reporters who were considered hostile or whose conversations might reveal the sources of damaging leaks.

"The press is your enemy," Nixon told the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in a taped conversation written about by Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein in a retrospective of the scandal they exposed in *The Washington Post*. "Enemies. Understand that? ... Because they're trying to stick the knife right in our groin."

More recent presidents have more episodic difficulties with the press.

George W. Bush, during his 2000 presidential campaign, was overheard using an epithet to describe a *New York Times* reporter.

After the bombing of the Oklahoma City federal building in 1995, Clinton condemned "loud and angry voices" on the airwaves that inflame the public debate. Limbaugh complained of irresponsible insinuations and accused the president and liberals of trying to foment "national hysteria."

The bad blood between presidents and the press stretches back to the nation's early years.

Jefferson is often remembered for his stirring defense of the press, when he wrote in 1787 that, "Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter."

But two decades later, as president, Jefferson had a different take on the press that sounds something like an early version of Trump's complaints against "fake news."

Jefferson wrote to a newspaper editor in 1807: "Nothing can now be believed which is seen in a newspaper. Truth itself becomes suspicious by being put into that polluted vehicle."

Brinkley said Trump's tactics reflect a broad cultural shift away from news to entertainment, as the former reality TV star tries to keep his supporters engaged.

"He's trying to show that he's King Kong and the press are little gnats," says Brinkley. "That has box office appeal to a certain segment of the population."

Follow Nancy Benac on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/nbenac>

Pakistan reeling after IS bombing at Sufi shrine killed 88

By MUHAMMAD FAROOQ and ADIL JAWAD, Associated Press

SEHWAN, Pakistan (AP) — Pakistani forces killed and arrested dozens of suspects in sweeping raids as the death toll from a massive suicide bombing by the Islamic State group that targeted a famed Sufi shrine the day before rose to 88 on Friday.

The terror attack — Pakistan's deadliest in years — stunned the nation and raised questions about the authorities' ability to rein in militant groups despite several military offensives targeting militant hideouts.

It also threatened to drive a deeper wedge between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Islamabad quickly lashed out at Kabul, saying the bombing was masterminded in militant sanctuaries across the border in Afghanistan.

Underscoring tensions, Pakistan fired a blistering round of artillery shells into Afghan territory on Friday and shut down the Torkham border crossing, a key commercial artery between the two neighbors.

Afghan police chief Gul Agha Roohani in eastern Nangarhar province told *The Associated Press* the artillery assault began on Friday morning, although there was no immediate confirmation from Pakistan.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani condemned the shrine attack. "Sufis always preach peace and brotherhood among people," he said in a statement, adding that "terrorists once again proved that they have no respect for Islamic values."

Meanwhile, raids overnight across Pakistan targeted militant hideouts and led to shootouts with insurgents that left at least 39 suspects dead, according to three Pakistani security officials who spoke on condition of anonymity under regulations.

Most of the operations were carried out by the paramilitary Rangers. In one raid, troops killed 11 suspects at a militant hideout in the port city of Karachi. In another, the Rangers came under fire as they were returning from Sehwan, the town in southern Sindh province where the shrine bombing took place,

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and killed seven of the attackers.

Other raids took place in northwestern Pakistan and also in the eastern province of Punjab. The officials said a total of 47 suspects were arrested.

In Thursday's attack, the suicide bomber walked into the main hall at the Lal Shahbaz Qalandar shrine in Sehwan, and detonated his explosives among a crowd of worshippers, initially killing 75. At least 20 women and nine children were among the dead.

On Friday, authorities raised the death toll to 88 after some of the critically wounded died. The Sindh provincial health department said a total of 343 people were wounded in the attack but that most were discharged after treatment while 76 still remain in hospitals.

The Islamic State group, claiming responsibility for the attack in a statement circulated by its Amaq news agency, said it targeted a "Shiite gathering." The Sunni extremist group views Shiites as apostates and has targeted Pakistan's Shiite minority in the past. It also views Sufi shrines as a form of idolatry.

The Sehwan shrine, which reveres a Muslim Sufi mystic, is frequented by the faithful of many sects of Islam but the majority of the worshippers are usually Shiite Muslims.

Raja Somro, who witnessed the attack, told a local TV network that hundreds of people were performing a spiritual dance known as the "dhamal" when the bomber struck.

Local TV showed graphic footage of the aftermath of the blast, with wounded worshippers crying out for help and the floors covered with shoes, blood and body parts. Women cried and beat their chests in grief.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif vowed that security forces would track down the perpetrators, according to Pakistani state TV.

"Each drop of the nation's blood shall be avenged, and avenged immediately," Pakistan's army chief, Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa, said in a statement.

The U.S. State Department condemned the attack and offered its support to Pakistan in bringing the perpetrators to justice.

The attack was the deadliest in Pakistan after the Dec. 16, 2014 assault on an army-run school in Peshawar that killed 154 people, mostly schoolchildren. A Taliban-linked group, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, claimed responsibility for that attack.

Pakistan has been at war with the Taliban and other extremist groups for more than a decade. In recent years it has launched major offensives against militant strongholds in the tribal regions along the border with Afghanistan, but insurgents have continued to carry out attacks elsewhere in the country.

The Islamic State group has been expanding its presence in Pakistan in recent years and has claimed a number of deadly attacks, including a suicide bombing at another Sufi shrine in November 2016 that killed more than 50 people.

The government has downplayed the IS affiliate, insisting that only a small number of militants have pledged allegiance to the group.

Afghanistan and Pakistan have long accused each other of failing to crack down on militants who operate along the porous border.

Also Friday, the Pakistani military handed over to Kabul a list of 76 suspected "terrorists" allegedly hiding in Afghanistan, demanding they be captured and extradited to Islamabad. A statement from the military says the list was given to Afghan officials at the Pakistani army's sprawling headquarters in the garrison city of Rawalpindi.

The military did not specify who was on the list, but it has long claimed that the head of Pakistani Taliban, Mullah Fazlullah, and other militants are hiding on Afghan soil with the purpose of fomenting violence inside Pakistan.

In Sehwan, police fired tear gas on Friday and swung batons to disperse a rally of several hundred protesters who demanded justice for the victims and better security measures from the government. The crowd set fire to a car before the police broke up the rally.

At one of the funerals that got underway Friday, relatives consoled the wailing mother of Zeeshan Ali, a 13-year-old who died in the shrine blast. Ali's uncle, Shoukat Ali, said he was devoted to his nephew and raised him since he had no children of his own.

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"I raised him like my own child ... and they took him from me," he said.

Associated Press Writers Munir Ahmed and Kathy Gannon in Islamabad, and Amir Shah in Kabul, Afghanistan, 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. PAKISTANIS QUESTION SECURITY AFTER SHRINE BLAST

A day after a suicide bombing by the Islamic State group killed 80 worshippers, the attack raised questions about Islamabad's ability to rein in militant groups.

2. TRUMP NOT FIRST TO HAVE ACRIMONY WITH THE PRESS

Yet historians are hard-pressed to find anything that approaches what seems to be the president's intention to escalate bad relations with the news media.

3. PENCE READY FOR CLOSE-UP

Making his debut on the world stage, the U.S. vice president seeks to reassure skeptical allies in Europe about U.S. foreign policy under Trump.

4. WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ABOUT KIM SLAY SUSPECT

Those who know the Indonesian woman suspected of involvement in the bold killing of the North Korean leader's half brother in Malaysia say the young mother was a polite and quiet "nice girl."

5. A NEW FACE, AND A NEW LIFE

The first face transplant performed at Mayo Clinic is providing a young man from Wyoming a second chance at a normal life after he was disfigured by a gunshot in a suicide attempt.

6. HOW SUPREME COURT NOMINEE RULED ON EDUCATION ISSUES

An AP review of Gorsuch's legal record shows he has embraced a bare-bones standard of education for disabled children while often upholding other civil rights complaints against schools.

7. SENATE POISED TO CONFIRM PRUITT AS EPA CHIEF

Democrats have sought a delay, citing his refusal to release emails he exchanged with oil and gas executives as Oklahoma's attorney general.

8. SAMSUNG BILLIONAIRE HEIR ARRESTED

Prosecutors believe Lee Jae-yong, vice chair at the electronics giant, gave bribes worth \$36 million to President Park Geun-hye and her close friend to help win government support.

9. MORE BUSINESS, AT THE STROKE OF A PEN

Trump is running out of the custom-made Cross pens he uses to sign his executive orders, and that means the 170-year-old Rhode Island company has to step up.

10. JETS' REVIS CHARGED AFTER FIGHT IN PITTSBURGH

The NFL player is charged with four first-degree felonies and one misdemeanor after allegedly being involved in a brawl with two men last weekend.

Family, friends describe 'nice girl' embroiled in Kim case

By NINIEK KARMINI, Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Family and former neighbors of the Indonesian woman suspected of involvement in the audacious killing of the North Korean leader's half brother in Malaysia are stunned by the arrest of the young mother who they say was a polite and quiet "nice girl."

Siti Aisyah, 25, is one of three people arrested so far by Malaysian police for possible involvement in the apparent assassination of Kim Jong Nam.

Between 2008 and 2011 she and her then-husband lived in a modest dwelling with flaking red paint in a narrow alley of the densely populated Tambora neighborhood in western Jakarta.

Her former father-in-law Tjia Liang Kiong, who lives in a nearby middle-class neighborhood and last saw

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Aisyah on Jan. 28, described her as a "very kind, polite and respectful person."

"I was shocked to hear that she was arrested for murdering someone," he said. "I don't believe that she would commit such a crime or what the media says — that she is an intelligence agent."

The three suspects — Aisyah, a woman carrying a Vietnamese passport and a man said to be Aisyah's Malaysian boyfriend — were arrested separately Wednesday and Thursday.

The women were identified using surveillance videos from Kuala Lumpur International Airport, where Kim Jong Nam suddenly fell ill Monday morning. Malaysian officials said he died on the way to a hospital after telling medical workers at the airport that he had been sprayed with a chemical.

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.

News of Aisyah's arrest has captivated Indonesia's scandal-and-mystery loving media, with some outlets characterizing her as a spy.

"Oh my God, how can I believe it," said Aminah, a housewife who is one of Aisyah's former Tambora neighbors.

"She's very nice with all the people here, she's so naive. How she can kill a great man? No way, it's impossible," said Aminah, who uses one name.

Aisyah's mother, Benah, said by telephone that the family comes from a humble village background and has no ability to help her.

"Since we heard that from the television, I could not sleep and eat. Same as her father, he just prays and reads the holy Quran. He even does not want to speak," said Benah. "As villagers, we could only pray."

Indonesia's Vice President Jusuf Kalla said Aisyah probably had been manipulated. He told reporters he believed she was not aware that she was participating in a murder.

"From the information we have received and also what was circulating in the media, what has happened in Kuala Lumpur is Kim Jong Nam and Aisyah were victims. Aisyah was a victim of some sort of manipulation or fraud," Kalla said.

Indonesian Immigration spokesman Agung Sampurno said Aisyah had traveled to countries besides Malaysia since 2014 but he did not elaborate.

Aisyah, according to Kiong, had only completed junior high school and moved to Malaysia with her husband in 2011 to seek a better life after the garment-making shop they ran from their home went out of business. The couple left their nearly 2-year-old son in Jakarta, who has been raised by Kiong and his wife since then.

Malaysia, which is approaching developed-nation income levels, is a magnet for millions of Indonesians, who typically find work there as bar hostesses, maids and construction and plantation workers.

A year after leaving Indonesia, Aisyah returned to Jakarta and told Kiong she wanted a divorce from his son because he'd changed and the marriage had become unhappy. Kiong said his son gave a different account: Aisyah was having an affair with a Malaysian man.

The divorce was finalized in 2012 and Aisyah told Kiong she was living with her parents in Serang in Banten province that neighbors Jakarta and working in a shoe store. A few months later she was on the move again, telling Kiong she was working in a clothing shop on Batam, an Indonesian island near Singapore and Malaysia.

At their last meeting in late January when Aisyah visited her son, Kiong thought she looked very slim and when his wife asked if she was sick, Aisyah said she'd had a respiratory illness.

Indonesian immigration said on Thursday that Aisyah entered Malaysia on Feb. 2 by ferry from Batam.

Rahmat Yusri, head of the neighborhood where Aisyah lived, did not believe she could commit murder.

"I was so surprised when I heard that because I knew her well," Yusri said. "I did not believe it because she is an innocent, a quiet woman who came from a village."

AP writer Ali Kotarumalos in Jakarta contributed.

Samsung family succession hits snag with chief's arrest

By **YOUKYUNG LEE, AP Technology Writer**

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea was taken by surprise Friday with the arrest of the scion of the country's richest family and de-facto leader at Samsung over his alleged involvement in a massive corruption scandal that engulfed the president and riveted the nation.

Prosecutors believe Lee Jae-yong, 48, a vice chairman at Samsung Electronics and the only son of the ailing Samsung chairman, gave bribes worth \$36 million to President Park Geun-hye and her close friend to help win government support for a smooth company leadership transition, including a contentious merger of two Samsung companies.

A look at how his arrest affects the electronics giant:

LITTLE IMPACT ON PHONE, TV BUSINESSES

Some conservative commentators are worried that Lee's arrest could hurt Samsung's businesses and therefore the economy, which relies on such companies for exports and jobs.

But others dismiss such concern as exaggerated. "What would affect its businesses are the Galaxy phone's success, the performance of the semiconductor sector and how fast Chinese rivals are catching up, not whether Lee Jae-yong is arrested or not," said Park Sang-in, a professor at Seoul National University.

Chiefs of companies such as Hyundai Motor Group and SK Group have been jailed before but still ran their companies from behind bars.

Samsung Electronics, which is the world's largest maker of mobile phones, TVs and computer memory chips, has three separate chief executive officers each overseeing its electronic component, mobile phone and television divisions.

But long-term business decisions, such as appointing executives and deciding on mergers and acquisitions, may be put on hold. Samsung normally announces personnel reshuffling and promotions each December, but postponed those announcements in 2016 as it was dragged deeper into the political scandal.

Lee is not the first in his family to face criminal charges. His father was convicted in 2008 and 2009 for embezzlement and tax evasion related to business dealings designed to pass down wealth to his son. Lee Kun-hee, the ailing chairman, stepped away from his role at the company when prosecutors indicted him in 2008. The younger Lee will likely follow a similar course and stay away from leadership role once investigators formally bring charges against him.

FAMILY SUCCESSION HITS SNAG

As he stepped up his role in the absence of his ailing father, Lee was seen as the new face of Samsung, fluent in foreign languages and educated overseas. Since Lee assumed a bigger role, Samsung promised to inject the company's top-down hierarchy with a nimble, startup-like attitude. Corruption allegations similar to those that took down his father may mean the damage to Lee's reputation is irreversible.

Prosecutors were able to secure Lee's arrest in their second attempt, thanks to new evidence showing President Park's broader involvement in Samsung's family succession plan. Initially, prosecutors focused on their argument that Samsung offered bribes and in return, the government backed a controversial merger of two Samsung companies in 2015, which was a key step in the leadership transition.

But after the initial request was dismissed, additional evidence from a notebook that belonged to a top presidential adviser showed that the government gave favors to Samsung in other areas related to the Lee family's father-to-son succession, said Lee Kyu-chul, a spokesman for the special prosecution team.

Thanks to the family's decadeslong succession plan, the 48-year-old heir to Samsung was able to amass enormous wealth even before starting his own business.

Lee's net worth is estimated at \$6 billion. Here's how: In 1995, the elder Lee gave his only son, then in his 20s, 6 billion won (\$52 million), which became the seed money to purchase unlisted stock in several Samsung companies. And during the next two decades those unlisted Samsung companies saw increased revenues based on lucrative deals done with other Samsung firms. The shares could then be sold when the companies went public. Some Samsung securities were sold at illegally cheap prices to Lee before he

sold them off with huge returns, which later led to the conviction of his father.

OPPORTUNITY FOR REFORM?

With the Samsung scion's arrest, others saw an opportunity to change a business community long criticized for poor corporate governance and a lack of transparency.

Even though Lee has less than a 1 percent stake in Samsung Electronics and his father owns a 3.5 percent stake, the family's influence on the consumer electronics giant and other Samsung companies exceed other shareholders thanks in part to the way they control the business empire through a complicated web of cross-shareholding.

The merger between Samsung C&T and Cheil Industries in 2015 was one example showing how the Lee family could exert an outsized influence on Samsung Group.

Opponents of the merger, mostly minority shareholders, said the deal unfairly benefits the founding family while hurting other shareholders by devaluing the price of one company.

Samsung narrowly won the shareholder approval thanks to the support from the National Pension Fund, its key investor. Lee became the majority shareholder of the merged entity and he gained control over Samsung Electronics stock owned by Samsung C&T before the merger. If Lee had bought more Samsung Electronics stock, it would have cost him billions of dollars. But by merging two companies, he did not have to spend a penny.

"The arrest of Lee Jae-yong should provide a momentum for fundamental changes to end the collusion between the government and businesses, and reform the chaebol," said Park, referring to the family-controlled business conglomerates that dominate the economy.

Follow Lee on Twitter: www.twitter.com/YKLeeAP

Harward turns Trump down for national security adviser job

By JULIE PACE, AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Vice Admiral Robert Harward has turned down an offer to be President Donald Trump's new national security adviser, the latest blow to a new administration struggling to find its footing.

Harward told The Associated Press that the Trump administration was "very accommodating to my needs, both professionally and personally."

"It's purely a personal issue," Harward said Thursday evening. "I'm in a unique position finally after being in the military for 40 years to enjoy some personal time."

Asked whether he had requested to bring in his own staff at the National Security Council, Harward said, "I think that's for the president to address."

Following Flynn's ouster, administration officials said his deputy, KT McFarland, was staying on at the NSC. McFarland is a former Fox News analyst.

Harward would have replaced retired Gen. Michael Flynn, who resigned at Trump's request Monday after revelations that he misled Vice President Mike Pence about discussing sanctions with Russia's ambassador to the U.S. during the transition. Trump said in a news conference Thursday that he was disappointed by how Flynn had treated Pence, but did not believe Flynn had done anything wrong by having the conversations.

Harward, a former Navy SEAL, served as deputy commander of U.S. Central Command under Gen. James Mattis, who is now defense secretary. Harward served on the National Security Council under President George W. Bush and commissioned the National Counter Terrorism Center.

Upon retirement in 2013 after a nearly 40-year career in the Navy, Harward became chief executive officer for defense and aerospace giant Lockheed Martin in the United Arab Emirates. Trump has recently been in very public negotiations with Lockheed over the cost of its F-35 fighter jet.

Officials said earlier this week that there were two other contenders in the running for the job: acting national security adviser Keith Kellogg and retired Gen. David Petraeus.

Petraeus, a retired four-star general, resigned as CIA director in 2012 and pleaded guilty to one misdemeanor charge of mishandling classified information relating to documents he had provided to his biographer, with whom he was having an affair.

He was also fined \$100,000 and remains on probation.

Pence aiming to reassure allies at start of Trump presidency

By KEN THOMAS, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Making his debut on the world stage, Vice President Mike Pence will seek to reassure skeptical allies in Europe about U.S. foreign policy under President Donald Trump, who has made his “America First” mantra a centerpiece of his new administration.

Pence’s trip to Germany and Belgium, his first overseas trip as vice president, is aimed at reassuring European and Middle Eastern partners about the U.S. commitment to trans-Atlantic institutions like NATO and the European Union, White House advisers said ahead of the trip. The visit comes amid concerns in Europe about Russian aggression, and lingering questions about Trump’s relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin and whether the new president may promote isolationist tendencies.

The dismissal of Trump’s national security adviser, retired Gen. Michael Flynn, has also put Pence and his stature within the administration under new scrutiny. Flynn was forced to resign Monday following reports he misled Pence about contacts with a Russian diplomat, which the vice president learned about through media accounts.

Pence was arriving in Germany on Friday to attend the Munich Security Conference, where he will deliver a speech Saturday and then meet with German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Pence is also scheduled to sit down with the leaders of the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko — countries facing the threat of Russian aggression — along with Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim.

“These are pretty blunt-spoken people and they are very nervous. Pence is looking like an adult,” said James Jeffrey, a U.S. ambassador to Iraq during the Obama administration and a distinguished fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. “The question is will Trump listen to him?”

Pence was also expected to meet with the leaders of Iraq and Afghanistan, where the U.S. is embroiled in two separate wars. In the earliest days of his presidency, Trump declared his intention to fight and defeat the Islamic State group. But he also remarked that the U.S. may get a second chance to take Iraqi oil as compensation for its efforts in the war-torn country, a notion rebuffed by Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, who will be meeting with Pence.

Trump’s immigration and refugee ban has also ruffled feathers with a number of Muslim-majority countries affected by the order currently tied up in court, including Iraq — a close ally in the fight against IS.

The American allies will be seeking clues from Pence as to how the Trump administration plans to deal with Russia in the aftermath of Flynn’s departure, U.S. inquiries into Russia’s involvement in the presidential election and Trump’s past praise for Putin.

European countries along Russia’s border were rattled about deeper U.S.-Russian ties after Trump suggested sanctions imposed after Russia’s annexation of Crimea could be eased in exchange for a nuclear weapons deal and the president referred to NATO as “obsolete” in an interview before his inauguration.

NATO, or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, is a military alliance of European and North American democracies created after World War II to strengthen international cooperation as a counter-balance to the rise of the Soviet Union. In 2014, the 28-member alliance created a rapid-reaction force to protect the most vulnerable NATO members against a confrontation with Russia.

But Trump cast doubt as a candidate about whether the U.S. might fulfill its NATO obligations if he won the White House, saying in a July interview that he would decide whether to protect the Baltic republics against Russian aggression based on whether those countries “have fulfilled their obligations to us.”

Pence will travel to Brussels, Belgium, on Sunday for meetings related to NATO and the European Union. His Monday itinerary includes face-to-face meetings with EU Council President Donald Tusk, EU Commis-

sion President Jean-Claude Juncker and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg.

As part of his message, Pence is expected to press allies in Europe to raise their defense budgets to NATO's target of 2 percent of GDP. Germany has been wary of the costs and pointed to its expenditures from supporting refugees and investing in international development.

As Indiana's governor, Pence led a number of foreign trade missions, and he traveled to Iraq and Afghanistan as a member of Congress. But he is just beginning his relationships with foreign leaders and aides said the trip was also aimed at establishing personal relationships with U.S. partners.

"There's considerable concern, but because they don't know (Pence) they're willing to give him a chance," said Julianne Smith, a former deputy national security adviser to Vice President Joe Biden. "This is the opportunity for the administration to reassure very skittish allies across the European continent and beyond."

Associated Press writer Vivian Salama contributed to this report.

On Twitter follow Ken Thomas at <https://twitter.com/KThomasDC>

AP review: Court nominee backed minimum for disabled kids

By JEFF DONN, AP National Writer

Supreme Court nominee Neil Gorsuch has embraced a bare-bones standard of education for disabled children, but he has often upheld other civil rights complaints against schools, an Associated Press review of his legal record shows.

His rulings on education in his decade on the Denver-based 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reflect a judge who closely follows judicial precedent, including when it means ruling against handicapped children and their parents.

Sen. Chuck Grassley, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, announced Thursday the panel will begin confirmation hearings for Gorsuch on March 20. Republicans hope to complete the confirmation process by April, and Gorsuch has been making traditional courtesy calls to senators for the past two weeks, in part to woo some Democrats whose support he needs.

In a 2008 case, Gorsuch wrote an opinion that reversed a lower court ruling, which would have forced a Colorado school to pay an alternative school to educate an autistic boy identified only as Luke. Gorsuch said the alternative program might indeed be better for the boy, but he had been making some progress in the public school — and that was good enough under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

"We sympathize with Luke's family and do not question the enormous burdens they face. Our job, however, is to apply the law as Congress has written it and the Supreme Court has interpreted it," wrote Gorsuch.

The U.S. Supreme Court recently heard a similar Colorado-based challenge to the schools in a case known as *Andrew F. v. Douglas County School District*. "We believe the 10th Circuit has gotten it wrong and that the law demands more in terms of the level of education for kids," said William Koski, a Stanford University law professor who runs a clinic that helps disadvantaged children in disputes with their schools. He co-wrote a brief for the recent case, urging a higher standard of education for disabled children. The high court has yet to announce a decision.

Gorsuch, who was nominated by President Trump to replace the late Antonin Scalia, has been hailed by conservatives for adhering to the philosophy of staying within the established boundaries of the law and legal precedent. However, while not making new law, Gorsuch has often upheld civil rights challenges of a kind dear to liberals.

Education critics of the Trump administration have focused largely on Trump's pick for education secretary, Betsy DeVos. She stumbled during her Senate confirmation when she appeared to say that state control might take precedence over the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. She later recast her views to acknowledge the fundamental federal role in enforcement, which is the basis for such cases to be heard in federal courtrooms like Gorsuch's.

In other civil rights cases, Gorsuch joined in a 2007 ruling that restored a complaint by two women

who said they were sexually assaulted by football players and recruits during a party at the University of Colorado Boulder. The lower court had said it wasn't the university's fault, but Gorsuch's panel disagreed, blaming the assaults on poor campus supervision. The women's claims were brought under Title IX, the federal anti-discrimination law known for expanding female participation in sports programs.

The case was later settled out of court, with the school paying \$2.85 million to the women. No sexual assault charges were filed, but four players eventually pleaded guilty to giving alcohol to minors at the party. The Ivy League-educated Gorsuch taught law at the campus, but not until after his court ruling.

In a 2016 dissent from fellow judges, Gorsuch sided with a 13-year-old student in Albuquerque, New Mexico, who was handcuffed and arrested for persistent fake burping and other horseplay in class. However, the student had not been violent, and Gorsuch said the arrest was unwarranted. In his dissent, he wrote that "arresting a now compliant class clown for burping was going a step too far."

In a 2012 case, Gorsuch joined a ruling that let parents in a wealthy Kansas school district challenge a state law meant to equalize school spending around the state with a tax cap. Reversing the lower court, Gorsuch and his colleagues said the parents could mount their challenge as a possible abuse to their constitutional rights of equal protection and due process. In 2015, however, the same appeals court — with Gorsuch absent — upheld the state cap.

The AP National Investigative Team can be reached at investigate@ap.org

Despite charges, Brazil's Lula eyes another run

By SARAH DiLORENZO, Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — He is facing several corruption charges, Brazil's largest-ever graft probe has decimated the political party he founded and his hand-picked successor was impeached and ousted from office.

Yet former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, known to Brazilians simply as Lula, is topping polls for next year's presidential race and traveling the country to make the case that he can bring the boom times back to Latin America's largest nation.

"Lula has the 'I can make Brazil great again'" angle, said Monica de Bolle, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, based in Washington.

The political return of Silva seems as inevitable to Brazilians as it is strange to outsiders. Despite the charges against him, the charismatic ex-president remains a larger-than-life figure here: a folksy former union leader and workingman who fought for democracy during the country's dictatorship and then oversaw its rise to economic global power. His time in office, from 2003 to 2010, coincided with Brazil's unprecedented boom, and he is revered by many for using those gains to pull millions out of poverty.

Perhaps just as importantly, recent political turmoil and the graft probe have left few other viable candidates on the left.

Still, the charges against him cast a shadow over a possible comeback. He left office with an 87-percent approval rating, but a Datafolha survey in December showed him leading a crowded field of presidential hopefuls with just 25 percent support.

In five separate cases, Silva has been charged with crimes including accepting kickbacks or bribes, peddling influence and obstructing justice.

Before a conviction, it would be politically untenable to try to block Silva's candidacy, said Sergio Praca, a political scientist at the Fundacao Getulio Vargas university in Rio de Janeiro. Silva has dismissed the charges against him as politically motivated and if they interfered with his candidacy, he would have even more ammunition to call foul, Praca said.

Even if convicted, Silva might only receive a slap on the wrist, said de Bolle, who is also a professor at Johns Hopkins' School of Advanced International Studies.

"Brazil has these supposedly very strict laws about who can run for president," she said. "But, of course, Brazil also has a history of waving things off when they want to wave things off."

Uncertainty about Silva's candidacy, Praca said, is emblematic of a broader instability in Brazilian politics,

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where the fates of dozens of politicians remain unclear because of corruption cases against them and the looming threat that more could be ensnared.

That instability isn't just making elections hard to predict. It weighs on Brazil's economy just as the government is hoping reforms will stem a deep recession.

While touring the country in recent weeks, Silva has been hammering away at President Michel Temer, who came to power after Silva's successor, Dilma Rousseff, was removed from office last year for illegally managing the federal budget. Many on the left call her impeachment a "coup," and Silva has said Temer does not have the legitimacy to carry out deep economic reforms, which the former president claims will increase inequality and poverty.

"Those who staged the coup, they didn't do it to build something new," Silva told an education union conference in January. "They staged the coup to destroy what we built."

That rhetoric will play well with Workers' Party faithful, but there are fewer of those these days. Prosecutors allege that while Silva was in office, many politicians were in cahoots with businessmen to inflate contracts with state-run companies and then divert the billions of extra dollars to pay for election campaigns or personal extravagances.

While the Datafolha poll indicated Silva was likely to win a first round of voting, he trailed in a potential runoff against former Environment Minister Marina Silva, with 34 percent to her 43 percent. The margin of error was plus or minus 2 percentage points.

Recently, Silva received an outpouring of sympathy when his wife had a stroke and died after being hospitalized. Even his rival Temer visited the hospital.

Silva didn't shy away from turning her wake into a political event, calling the prosecutors who brought charges against her "criminals" and declaring he wasn't afraid of arrest.

In the coming months, Silva will likely couple that defiance with efforts to tap into a yearning for better days.

His two terms in office coincided with a global commodities boom, and Brazil's gross domestic product more than quadrupled. While he is not exclusively responsible for that phenomenal economic rise, he is credited with sharing the gains among Brazil's lower classes. Inequality, which was already falling when he was elected, plummeted on his watch through programs like the Family Grant, which gives poor households money for food, school and health expenses.

Those policies have earned him unshakable support in some sectors. Paulo Roberto Antonio Teixeira, a 50-year-old gas station attendant in Sao Paulo, said he remains a staunch supporter of the Workers' Party.

"He was a good president," said Teixeira, who shrugged when asked about Silva's legal troubles.

Munich conference brings hope for clarity on US priorities

By DAVID RISING, Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Top world leaders, diplomats and defense officials are getting their first opportunity to meet with members of the Trump administration amid concerns over the new president's commitment to NATO and posture toward Russia.

Vice President Mike Pence, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly are leading the U.S. delegation to the Munich Security Conference opening Friday. The annual weekend gathering is known for providing an open and informal platform for allies — and adversaries — to meet in close quarters.

Chancellor Angela Merkel, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, European Council President Donald Tusk and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg are among the group of more than 30 heads of state and government, 80 foreign and defense ministers and other officials expected to attend.

Trump set off alarm bells last month by calling NATO "obsolete," though has subsequently told European leaders he agrees on the "fundamental importance" of the military alliance. He has emphasized the need for all members to pay a fair share for defense, an issue that NATO leaders themselves have pushed for years.

Mattis told the alliance's 27 other defense ministers in Brussels on Wednesday that Trump has "strong

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support for NATO” and assured Stoltenberg that “the alliance remains a fundamental bedrock for the United States.”

However, Mattis also told fellow NATO members they need to increase their military spending by year’s end or risk seeing the U.S. curtail its defense support.

Other stances — Trump’s support for Britain’s decision to leave the EU, his perceived closeness to Russia and inaugural pledge to put “America first” — also have raised “an unbelievable number of question marks,” conference organizer Wolfgang Ischinger, a former German ambassador to the U.S., said.

Ischinger said expectations that Pence would speak at the conference on Saturday were extremely high. Participants have told him they are seeking clarity on the administration’s stance on its relationship with Russia, NATO, the EU, free trade, human rights, the Iran nuclear agreement, relations with China and the Syria conflict.

“We’re all hoping the American vice president will give a statement on ... all of these questions that we in the past weeks have wondered: ‘What does America under Trump really want?’” he said.

Merkel, whose views on many of the main issues differ significantly from those expressed by Trump, plans to address the conference on Saturday.

Others expected to be on hand include Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani.

On the sidelines, representatives from Germany, Russia, Ukraine and France are supposed to hold a meeting of the so-called “Normandy group” to talk about the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine.

South Korea’s Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se told reporters he plans to emphasize the “gravity and urgency” of North Korea’s nuclear program at the meeting. The allegation from the U.S. this week that Russia violated an arms control treaty with the deployment of a cruise missile also seems certain to be on the agenda.

U.S. Sen. John McCain, an outspoken critic of Trump’s Russia policies, is among more than a dozen American representatives expected to attend as part of a U.S. congressional delegation.

The Zuckerberg manifesto: How he plans to debug the world

By BARBARA ORTUTAY, AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Mark Zuckerberg’s long-term vision for Facebook, laid out in a sweeping manifesto, sometimes sounds more like a utopian social guide than a business plan. Are we, he asks, “building the world we all want?”

While most people now use Facebook to connect with friends and family, Zuckerberg thinks that the social network can also encourage more civic engagement, from the local to the global level. Facebook now has nearly 2 billion members, which makes it larger than any nation in the world.

His 5,800-word essay positions Facebook in direct opposition to a rising tide of isolationism and fear of outsiders, both in the U.S. and abroad. In a phone interview with The Associated Press, Zuckerberg stressed that he wasn’t motivated by the U.S. election or any other particular event. Rather, he said, it’s the growing sentiment in many parts of the world that “connecting the world” — the founding idea behind Facebook — is no longer a good thing.

“Across the world there are people left behind by globalization, and movements for withdrawing from global connection,” Zuckerberg, who founded Facebook in a Harvard dorm room in 2004, wrote on Thursday. So it falls to the company to “develop the social infrastructure to give people the power to build a global community that works for all of us.”

CONNECTING IN FACEBOOK’S INTEREST

Zuckerberg, 32, told the AP that he still strongly believes that more connectedness is the right direction for the world. But, he added, it’s “not enough if it’s good for some people but it’s doesn’t work for other people. We really have to bring everyone along.”

It’s hardly a surprise that Zuckerberg wants to find ways to bring more people together, especially on

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Facebook. After all, getting more people to come together on the social network more frequently would give Facebook more opportunities to sell the ads that generate most of its revenue, which totaled \$27 billion last year. And bringing in more money probably would boost Facebook's stock price to make Zuckerberg — already worth an estimated \$56 billion — even richer.

And while the idea of unifying the world is laudable, some critics — backed by various studies — contend Facebook makes some people feel lonelier and more isolated as they scroll through the mostly ebullient posts and photos shared on the social network. Facebook's famous "like" button also makes it easy to engage in a form of "one-click" communication that can displace meaningful dialogue.

Facebook also has been lambasted as a polarizing force by circulating posts espousing similar viewpoints and interests among like-minded people, creating an "echo chamber" that can harden opinions and widen political and cultural chasms.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Today, most of Facebook's 1.86 billion members — about 85 percent — live outside of the U.S. and Canada. The Menlo Park, California-based company has offices everywhere from Amsterdam to Jakarta, Indonesia, to Tel Aviv, Israel. (It is banned in China, the world's most populous country, though some people get around the ban.) Naturally, Zuckerberg takes a global view of Facebook and sees potential that goes beyond borders, cities and nations.

And that could allow the social network to step up as more traditional cultural ties fray. People already use Facebook to connect with strangers who have the same rare disease, to post political diatribes, to share news links (and sometimes fake news links). Facebook has also pushed its users to register to vote, to donate to causes, to mark themselves safe after natural disasters, and to "go live." For many, it's become a utility. Some 1.23 billion people use it daily.

"For the past decade, Facebook has focused on connecting friends and families. With that foundation, our next focus will be developing the social infrastructure for community — for supporting us, for keeping us safe, for informing us, for civic engagement, and for inclusion of all," he wrote.

LONG VIEW

Zuckerberg has gotten Facebook to this position of global dominance — one that Myspace and Twitter, for instance, never even approached — partly thanks to his audacious, long-term view of the company and its place in the world.

Last fall, Zuckerberg and his wife, the doctor Priscilla Chan, unveiled the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, a long-term effort aimed at eradicating all disease by the end of this century. Then, as now, Zuckerberg preferred to look far down the road to the potential of scientific and technological innovations that have not been perfected, or even invented yet.

That includes artificial intelligence, which in this case means software that's capable of "thinking" enough like humans to start making the sorts of judgments that Facebook sometimes bobbles. Last September, for instance, the service briefly barred the famous Vietnam War-era photograph dubbed "Napalm Girl" because it featured a nude child, and only reversed its decision after users — including the prime minister of Norway — protested.

AI systems could also comb through the vast amount of material users post on Facebook to detect everything from bullying to the early signs of suicidal thinking to extremist recruiting. AI, Zuckerberg wrote, could "understand more quickly and accurately what is happening across our community."

Speaking to the AP, Zuckerberg said he understands that we might not "solve all the issues that we want" in the short term.

"One of my favorite quotes is this Bill Gates quote, that 'people overestimate what they can get done in two years and underestimate what they can get done in 10 years.' And that's an important mindset that I hope more people take today," he said.

Reach Barbara Ortutay on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/BarbaraOrtutay>

AP Technology Writer Michael Liedtke in San Francisco contributed to this story.

This story has been corrected to substitute a quote on artificial intelligence to reflect what was actually in the manifesto.

AP FACT CHECK: Trump's messy case that he inherited a mess

By JOSH BOAK and CALVIN WOODWARD, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Thursday made a messy case that he “inherited a mess” from his predecessor. Economic stats and territorial losses of Islamic State insurgents don’t support his assertions about the problems handed to him on those fronts.

A look at some of his claims in a news conference Thursday and how they compare with the facts:

TRUMP: “To be honest I inherited a mess. It’s a mess. At home and abroad, a mess.”

THE FACTS: A mess is in the eye of the beholder. But by almost every economic measure, President Barack Obama inherited a far worse situation when he became president in 2009 than he left for Trump. He had to deal with the worst downturn since the Depression.

Unemployment was spiking, the stock market crashing, the auto industry failing and millions of Americans risked losing their homes to foreclosure when Obama took the oath of office. None of those statistics is as dire for Trump.

Unemployment is 4.8 percent, compared with a peak of 10 percent during Obama’s first year as president. The Dow Jones Industrial Average was cratering until March 2009, only to rebound roughly 200 percent over the rest of Obama’s term— gains that have continued under Trump on the promise of tax and regulatory cuts.

When Trump assumed office last month, a greater percentage of the country had health insurance, incomes were rising and the country was adding jobs.

The Trump administration has noted that a smaller proportion of the population is working or looking for jobs. But even this measure began to turn around toward the end of the Obama era.

Yet it’s true that jobs at factories and coal mines have been disappearing for more than three decades, while many Americans with only a high school diploma have seen their incomes fall after adjusting for inflation. The home ownership rate has slipped even as the economy has improved, leaving many pockets of the country feeling left out of a recovery that technically began more than seven years ago.

TRUMP: “ISIS has spread like cancer, another mess I inherited.”

THE FACTS: The Islamic State group began to lose ground before Trump took office, not just in Iraq and Syria but also in Libya. The gradual military progress achieved in Iraq during Obama’s final two years has pushed IS to the point of collapse in Mosul, its main Iraqi stronghold.

It remains a potent danger beyond its shrunken territory, encouraging adherents to stage acts of terrorism. The analogy with cancer is an echo of Obama’s last defense secretary, Ash Carter, who repeatedly cast Obama’s counter-IS campaign as an effort to reverse the extremists’ “metastasis” beyond the “parent tumor” in Iraq and Syria.

TRUMP: “I see stories of chaos. Chaos. Yet it is the exact opposite. This administration is running like a fine-tuned machine, despite the fact that I can’t get my Cabinet approved.

THE FACTS: Did he just say a “fine-tuned machine”?

Trump’s first month has been consumed by a series of missteps and firestorms, and produced far less significant legislation than Obama enacted during his first month.

Republican-led congressional committees will investigate the Trump team’s relations with Russians before he took office and the flood of leaks that altogether forced out his national security adviser in record time. His pick for labor secretary withdrew because he didn’t have enough Republican support.

By many measures, the administration is in near paralysis in its earliest days, leaving allies unsettled and many in Congress anxious about what Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., called the “constant disruption.” To

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many Republicans — never mind Democrats — the “fine-tuned machine” seems in danger of its wheels coming off.

In his first month, Obama signed a \$787 billion stimulus package into law, as well as a law expanding health care for children and the Lilly Ledbetter bill on equal pay for women. Trump has vigorously produced executive orders, which don’t require congressional approval and typically have narrow effect. The one with far-reaching consequences — banning entry by refugees and by visitors from seven countries — has been blocked by courts.

Trump’s biggest initiatives, such as tax cuts and a replacement for Obama’s health care law, have not emerged. On Thursday he was signing into law a rollback of Obama-era regulations on mining near streams. Congress has sent him little else.

TRUMP, bragging again about his Electoral College vote total: “We got 306 because people came out and voted like they’ve never seen before, so that’s the way it goes. I guess it was the biggest Electoral College win since Ronald Reagan.”

THE FACTS: Not even close. In the seven previous elections, the winner of five of those contests won a larger Electoral College majority than Trump. They were George H.W. Bush in 1988, Bill Clinton in 1992 and 1996; and Barack Obama in 2008 and 2012.

When a reporter pointed out that Trump was overstating his winning margin, the president said: “Well, I don’t know, I was given that information.” He then called it “a very substantial victory.”

Trump actually ended up with 304 electoral votes because of the defection of two electors in December, but he had won enough states in November to get to 306.

TRUMP, saying the appeals court that blocked his selective travel ban “has been overturned at a record number.”

THE FACTS: Other appeals courts have seen their decisions overturned at a higher rate than the San Francisco-based 9th Circuit that froze his action on immigration.

In the most recent full term, the Supreme Court reversed 8 of the 11 cases from the 9th Circuit. But the Atlanta-based 11th Circuit went 0 for 3 — that is, the Supreme Court reversed all three cases it heard from that circuit. And over the past five years, five federal appeals courts were reversed at a higher rate than the 9th Circuit.

The 9th Circuit is by far the largest of the 13 federal courts of appeals. In raw numbers, more cases are heard and reversed from the 9th Circuit year in and year out. But as a percentage of cases the Supreme Court hears, the liberal-leaning circuit fares somewhat better, according to statistical compilations by Scotusblog.

Most cases decided by appeals courts aren’t appealed to the Supreme Court, and the high court only accepts for review a small percentage of those that are.

But the very act of the Supreme Court’s agreeing to hear a case means the odds are it will be overturned; the court reverses about two-thirds of the cases it hears.

Associated Press writers Robert Burns, Mark Sherman and Jim Drinkard contributed to this report.

Find all AP Fact Checks here: <http://apne.ws/2kx8bd>

This story has been corrected to show that the winner of five of the seven previous elections won a larger Electoral College majority than Trump.

Trump seeks pause in legal fight with revised travel ban

By SUDHIN THANAWALA, Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The Trump administration said in court documents on Thursday it wants a pause in the legal fight over its ban on travelers from seven predominantly Muslim nations, so it can issue a replacement ban as it strives to protect the nation from terrorism.

Details of the new proposal were not provided in the filing or at a wide-ranging news conference by President Donald Trump. But lawyers for the administration said in the filing that a ban that focuses solely on foreigners who have never entered the U.S. — instead of green card holders already in the U.S. or who have traveled abroad and want to return — would pose no legal difficulties.

“In so doing, the president will clear the way for immediately protecting the country rather than pursuing further, potentially time-consuming litigation,” the filing said.

Trump said at the news conference that a new order would come next week.

“I will not back down from defending our country. I got elected on defense of our country,” he said.

Legal experts said a new order focusing only on residents of the seven countries who had never entered the U.S. would still face legal hurdles over possible religious discrimination.

Jessica Levinson, a professor at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles, believes Trump would eliminate some major problems with the new focus.

“But I think that it will definitely still end up in court,” she said.

Stephen Vladeck, who teaches at the University of Texas School of Law, said the states challenging the current ban — Washington and Minnesota — would likely change their lawsuit to focus on any revised order.

“It will surely be a mess — and perhaps a repeat of some of the chaos we saw the first weekend of the original order,” Vladeck wrote in an email.

The administration asked the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to hold off on making any more decisions related to the lawsuit until the new order is issued, and then toss out last week’s decision by a three-judge 9th Circuit panel that kept the ban on hold.

The 9th Circuit said late Thursday it will hold off on deciding whether to have a larger panel of judges reconsider that ruling.

The appeals court had asked the Trump administration and Washington and Minnesota to file arguments on whether a larger panel should rehear the case.

Washington state Attorney General Bob Ferguson said the federal government was “conceding defeat” by saying it does not want a larger appellate panel to review last week’s ruling. The three judges who issued that decision rejected the Trump administration’s claim of presidential authority and questioned its motives in ordering the ban.

The administration attacked the decision in Thursday’s court filing, saying the panel wrongly suggested some foreigners may be entitled to constitutional protections. The filing also rejected the judges’ determination that courts could consider Trump’s statements about shutting down Muslim immigration.

The lawsuit says the ban unconstitutionally blocks entry to the U.S. on the basis of religion and harms residents, universities and sales tax revenue in the two states. Eighteen other states, including California and New York, have supported the challenge.

In his filing with the 9th Circuit Thursday, Washington state Solicitor General Noah Purcell said the ruling by the three-judge panel was consistent with previous U.S. Supreme Court decisions, so there was no basis for a review.

Purcell said Trump had campaigned on the promise to ban Muslims from entering the U.S. and one week into office issued the order that “radically changed immigration policy” and “unleashed chaos around the world.”

The three-judge panel said the states had raised “serious” allegations that the ban targets Muslims, and it rejected the federal government’s argument that courts do not have the authority to review the president’s immigration and national security decisions.

The three judges said the Trump administration presented no evidence that any foreigner from the

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seven countries — Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen — was responsible for a terrorist attack in the U.S.

In Thursday's filing, the administration said the ban was intended to prevent potential attacks from "nationals of seven countries that were previously found to present uniquely high risks of terrorism."

The ban does not discriminate on the basis of religion because it affects only a fraction of the world's Muslim population and also applies to non-Muslims in those countries, the administration said.

AP writer Martha Bellisle in Seattle contributed to this report.

Trump supporters cheer his combative stance with the media

By JOHN RABY, Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — Critics of President Donald Trump saw in his Thursday news conference a combative, thin-skinned chief executive who continues to blame the media for the controversies roiling his administration.

His supporters saw something else: A champion of Middle America who is taking on the establishment and making good on his campaign promises to put the country first.

The Associated Press contacted Trump supporters across the country to see how they viewed a news conference in which the president said his administration was running like "a fine-tuned machine" despite the resignation of his top national security adviser, a court setback on his immigration order, a defeat for his nominee as labor secretary and reports of internal divisions.

Here are views of some of those supporters:

Richelle Kirk of Logan, West Virginia, watched some of Trump's news conference on Thursday and didn't see any head-scratching comments from the president.

"I back him 100 percent," said the 42-year-old stay-at-home mom. "You either love it or get out, is my opinion."

During Barack Obama's presidency, her husband was laid off from his coal-mining job, a loss they blamed on Obama's environmental policies. She said they lost a home and "everything we owned."

After West Virginia voters resoundingly rejected Obama during his 2012 re-election, "we didn't show our hind ends when Obama was re-elected," Kirk said. So she believes people shouldn't overreact to Trump, either.

She particularly agreed with the president when he took credit for an optimistic business climate and a rising stock market, saying Trump is beginning to fulfill his campaign promise to put people back to work.

Reporters, she said, "need to leave him alone. He's just doing what he said he's going to do."

Kevin Felty of Norfolk, Virginia, said it was the "most impressive presidential press conference" of his life.

"Largely because it was so unorthodox," said Felty, 48, who works as a surgical assistant and sells life insurance. "It was hyper adversarial between the president and the press. And yet he was able to control the questioning and the tone and the mood in the room."

Felty said the media needs to move on regarding Russia and former national security adviser Michael Flynn.

"There was nothing illegal that General Flynn had done at that time," Felty said. "What he did do is make a mistake in not being accurate with the vice president."

He also said he believes Trump is trustworthy as president.

"He doesn't need the media to chide him to make the right decisions," Felty said. "It's something he's been doing well for decades."

Regina Lenoir of Picayune, Mississippi, enjoyed watching Trump's news conference and said the president "looked more relaxed."

Lenoir, 69, said she was most interested in the president's comments about the alleged leaks that led

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to the resignation of Michael Flynn as national security adviser.

"We don't know the conversation that happened between him and (Vice President Mike) Pence. Only they know. But the news media gets out there (and) says such and such with no corroboration," she said. "I'm sick of them making up stories. You know, we're intelligent people. We can make up our own mind on whether they're telling the truth."

She agreed with Trump's take on how the media has covered his administration and campaign, saying those covering his administration are good reporters but biased.

She said if people gave Trump a chance, "he might just surprise everyone.

"He wasn't my first choice, but he is my president," Lenoir said. "I think he handled the news conference very well."

Joseph Gatlin of Virginia Beach, Virginia, said he did not watch the news conference but heard about the question a Jewish reporter asked Trump about a rise in anti-Semitic incidents around the country.

Trump told the reporter to sit down and said it was not a simple or fair question before describing himself as "the least anti-Semitic person you've ever seen in your entire life."

Gatlin, who is Jewish and who was born in Israel, said the media needs to move on from "asking the same question."

"He's not a racist. He doesn't believe in racism," said Gatlin, who owns a flooring company. "He's not anti-Semitic at all."

Gatlin pointed to the number of Jewish people in Trump's inner circle, including his son-in-law and White House adviser, Jared Kushner. He said the media instead should be asking Trump about terrorism and the economy.

"I think that it's become ridiculous," Gatlin said. "He wants the serious questions. He wants people to ask him questions that people care about. You can't mention racism in every speech. They're looking at the wrong things."

Scott Hiltgen, a 66-year-old office furniture sales broker from River Falls, Wisconsin, said he was glad to see the president push back against the media. He said reporters have no proof Trump or anyone around him did anything wrong.

"They're trying to make up a story that Trump worked with the Russians to rig the election," he said. "Now they're trying to make a big deal out of (former national security adviser) Mike Flynn. He was doing what he was supposed to do. He was talking to his counterparts. He was talking to the Russians. He got fired because he lied to (Vice President Mike) Pence. There's no story there. The left media is so excited. They think they took this guy down. No, he made a mistake. He just lied."

Hiltgen said he remains squarely behind the billionaire president because he has done what he said he would do on the campaign trail.

"He's accomplished more in, whatever, three weeks, regarding the stuff he talked about," Hiltgen said. "That's what people voted for. I can't believe there's actually a politician doing what he says he would do. That never happens."

Associated Press writers Ben Finley in Norfolk, Virginia; Chevel Johnson in New Orleans; and Todd Richmond in Madison, Wisconsin, contributed to this report.

Trump, in unprecedented fashion for a president, rips press

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The leaks are real. But the news about them is fake. The White House is a fine-tuned machine. Russia is a ruse.

For its stunning moments and memorable one-liners, Donald Trump's first solo news conference as president has no rivals in recent memory. For all the trappings of the White House and traditions of the

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forum, his performance was one of a swaggering, blustery campaigner, armed with grievances and primed to unload on his favorite targets.

In nearly an hour and a half at the podium, Trump bullied reporters, dismissed facts and then cracked a few caustic jokes — a combination that once made the candidate irresistible cable TV fodder. Now in office, he went even further, blaming the media for all but sinking his not-yet-launched attempt to “make a deal” with Moscow.

That matters, Trump said in one of his many improvisational asides, because he’d been briefed and “I can tell you ... nuclear holocaust would be like no other.”

This was his and his aides’ attempt to get the boss his groove back. Trump used the event to try to claw his young administration back from the brink after a defeat in court and the forced resignation of his top national security adviser.

He taunted reporters and waved away their attempts to fact-check him in real time. He (incorrectly) touted his Electoral College total and repeatedly blasted his November opponent — somehow mentioning Hillary Clinton more than anyone else in his defense of his administration’s early days. He bragged that his White House is “a fine-tuned machine” and claimed “there has never been a presidency that has done so much in such a short period of time.”

If only the news media would give him credit. Over and over, he accused the political press of being dishonest and suggested that any negative coverage of his administration was “fake news.” He unloaded a torrent of grievances while positioning himself as the stand-in for the everyman, who, he declared, hates and distrusts reporters as much as he does.

“The press — the public doesn’t believe you people anymore. Now, maybe I had something to do with that. I don’t know. But they don’t believe you,” Trump charged. “But you’ve got to be at least a little bit fair, and that’s why the public sees it. They see it. They see it’s not fair. You take a look at some of your shows and you see the bias and the hatred.”

The hastily called news conference was not on the White House’s original schedule for Thursday, and some of Trump’s own aides were surprised when the president let slip at a morning meeting that he would hold the event in the East Room just hours later.

The performance was vintage Trump, a throwback to the messy, zinger-filled news conferences he held during the early stages of his campaign. And, when combined with a rally slated for Saturday in Florida, it appeared to be the start of a one-two punch meant to re-energize a president whose White House in recent days has been buffeted by crisis and paralyzed by dysfunction.

Yet it was a far cry from the “buck stops here” mantra popularized by Harry Truman and other presidents who believed that the ultimate responsibility for any White House struggles lay with the president himself. Trump was eager to assign blame elsewhere, ignoring the nation’s healthy economy and relative peace when he took office to say “to be honest, I inherited a mess, a mess, at home and abroad, a mess.”

He mostly blamed the media for his woes, rebuffing suggestions that he was undermining confidence in the press or threatening the First Amendment by trying to convince the nation that “the press honestly is out of control.”

“The press has become so dishonest that if we don’t talk about it, we are doing a tremendous disservice to the American people,” he said. “Tremendous disservice.”

Never before has a president stood in the White House and so publicly maligned the press or attacked reporters by name, according to presidential historians. Not even Richard Nixon in the days of Watergate.

“It was bizarre theater,” said Douglas Brinkley, a professor of history at Rice University. “He turned a presidential press conference into a reality TV show in which he can be the star and browbeat anyone who objects to him with the power of his office.”

But for Trump, it continued a defining theme and amplified his chief strategist Stephen Bannon’s decree that the media are “the opposition party.”

Trump had put claims of press prejudice at the center of his campaign in an unprecedented way and earlier this month falsely accused the media of refusing to cover terrorist attacks across the world. Though Thursday’s news conference was a messy, fact-challenged affair, it may well have been cheered by Trump

supporters across the country who had packed arenas last year to jeer reporters and chant “tell the truth” at the press pen.

An Associated Press-GfK poll taken on the eve of the election revealed that 87 percent of Trump’s supporters saw the media as biased against him.

Trump retains support among Republicans, and solid majorities of Americans say he is following through on his promises and is viewed as a strong leader, according to a Gallup survey. But his overall job approval rating is much lower than those of past presidents at the same point in their administrations. According to a Pew Research Center survey, 39 percent of Americans approve of his job performance while 56 percent disapprove.

For all of Trump’s complaints, he appeared to delight in sparring with reporters in what was only his second news conference since last July. Several times he extended the event in order to field more questions.

Not that he answered them all. He dodged inquiries about his campaign’s links to Russia and talked down several reporters before they could finish their questions.

On one subject in the news, he did defend the national security adviser he recently fired.

But he also made a point of complimenting a softball inquiry about the first lady as “a very nice question.” He teased CNN reporter Jim Acosta for having the same last name as his new pick for labor secretary — Alexander Acosta, whose appointment was ostensibly the reason for the news conference — and said he asked his staff to make sure the men weren’t related.

There were startling moments aplenty.

He chided a Jewish reporter wearing a kippah for asking a question about anti-Semitism. He asked an African-American reporter whether she could help set up a meeting with the Congressional Black Caucus. He displayed a rare moment of introspection when he discussed his love for kids amid his “very, very hard” decision whether to potentially deport young immigrants who came to the United States illegally as children.

But mostly it was Trump’s bravado on display, as when he incorrectly asserted that his Electoral College victory had been the largest of any president since Ronald Reagan — and then simply dismissed a reporter’s attempt to correct him.

“Well, I don’t know, I was given that information,” said Trump. “But it was a very substantial victory, do you agree with that?”

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Man pleads guilty to buying rifles in San Bernardino attack

By AMY TAXIN, Associated Press

RIVERSIDE, Calif. (AP) — A California man who bought high-powered rifles used in the San Bernardino terror attack pleaded guilty on Thursday as the father of one of the victims angrily denounced the plea deal as a “slap on the wrist.”

Enrique Marquez Jr. appeared in federal court in Riverside with his hands cuffed and chained to his waist. He sounded choked up after the prosecutor described what he had done.

Marquez told the judge he had dropped out of high school and college but understood the allegations and the consequences of the plea agreement with prosecutors that could bring him up to 25 years in prison while sparing him a trial.

Gregory Clayborn, the father of one of the people killed, opposed the deal in an impassioned plea to the judge before the hearing.

“This man supplied these murderers with these weapons and he’s going to get a slap on the wrist, your honor,” Clayborn said, his voice cracking as he described the pain of losing his 27-year-old daughter Sierra.

“My daughter, she didn’t deserve this,” he said.

Marquez was the only person criminally charged in the December 2015 attack that killed 14 people and wounded 22 others at a meeting of San Bernardino County employees. Husband-and-wife assailants Syed Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik were killed in a shootout with authorities later that day.

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Marquez is scheduled to be sentenced by U.S. District Judge Jesus G. Bernal on Aug. 21.

In addition to purchasing the weapons, Marquez pleaded guilty to conspiring with Farook to draft earlier mass killing plots targeting a community college and a gridlocked Southern California freeway. Authorities said the pair researched bomb-making and bought materials to make explosives, but never carried out those attacks.

In court Thursday, relatives of victims in the San Bernardino attack were given tissue boxes ahead of the brief hearing. While Marquez was questioned, one sobbed. Another closed her eyes.

Afterward, Clayborn told reporters he believes Marquez knew about the San Bernardino attack.

U.S. attorney Eileen M. Decker said she understands why victims' relatives may feel the sentence is insufficient due to the pain they have suffered, but explained that she is bound by the law and there is no evidence that Marquez participated in or had advance knowledge of the San Bernardino killings.

But his purchase of the weapons and preparations with Farook for the attacks they never committed laid the foundation for the 2015 assault, she said.

"These chilling plans could have inflicted mass casualties. These plans thankfully were not executed," she told reporters outside the courthouse. "But there are connections between their planning in 2011 and 2012 that we believe assisted in the horrible attacks that took place in 2015."

Prosecutors said Marquez acknowledged being a "straw buyer" when he purchased two AR-15 rifles for Farook that were used years later in the massacre on Farook's colleagues at the environmental health services division in San Bernardino. Prosecutors have said Marquez agreed to buy the weapons because the pair feared Farook's Middle Eastern appearance might arouse suspicion.

Marquez also acknowledged plotting with Farook in 2011 and 2012 to attack the community college the pair attended and a Southern California freeway. He said he backed out of the plot after four men in the area were arrested on terrorism charges in late 2012, the FBI has said in court documents.

Marquez and Farook met in 2005 after Marquez moved next door to Farook's family in Riverside, about 55 miles east of Los Angeles.

Farook began educating his new friend about his Muslim faith and Marquez converted in 2007.

The FBI said the two began discussing extremist views shortly thereafter. By late 2011, Marquez spent time at Farook's home reading magazines published by al-Qaida and studying radical material online, federal officials said.

Trump raps 'criminal' leaks, 'dishonest' media, 'bad' judges

By JULIE PACE, AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Aggrieved and spoiling for a fight, Donald Trump used a marathon encounter with reporters Thursday to denounce the "criminal" leaks that took down his top national security adviser and revived questions about his own ties to Russia. But he offered only a lawyerly denial that his campaign aides had been in touch with Russian officials before last fall's election.

"Nobody that I know" he said in the first full-length news conference of his presidency.

The 77-minute event amounted to a free-wheeling airing of complaints, with the new president attempting to find his footing after the rockiest launch in recent memory. Trump slammed a "bad court" of appeals judges for blocking his refugee and immigration executive order and denied that his White House was paralyzed by chaos and infighting among top advisers.

"This administration is running like a fine-tuned machine," he boasted.

With his signature hyperbole betrayed by reality, Trump said there has never been a president "who in this short period of time has done what we've done." He blamed any problems on the outgoing Obama administration — "I inherited a mess at home and abroad" — and the news media.

Standing in the stately, chandeliered East Room, Trump lambasted the "out of control" media — long his favorite foe. He appeared to delight in jousting with reporters, repeatedly interrupting their questions and singling out stories he disagreed with, well aware his attacks were sure to be cheered by loyal supporters who share his views.

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Polls show Trump retains support among Republicans, and solid majorities of Americans say he is following through on his promises and is viewed as a strong leader, according to a Gallup survey. But on other questions Americans express deep reservations. Majorities say he doesn't inspire confidence and is not honest and trustworthy.

Trump's job approval rating is much lower than those of past presidents at the same point in their administrations. According to a Pew Research Center survey, 39 percent of Americans approve of his job performance while 56 percent disapprove.

Trump's first month in office has been chaotic by any measure — a flurry of self-inflicted wounds and poorly executed policy. On Monday, he demanded the resignation of his national security adviser Michael Flynn following revelations that Flynn misled Vice President Mike Pence about his contacts with Russia. The next day, The New York Times reported that multiple Trump advisers were in touch with Russian intelligence advisers during the election campaign.

Trump panned the report as "fake news" and said he had "nothing to do with Russia."

"To the best of my knowledge no person that I deal with does," he added.

That answer, couched with a caveat similar to one routinely used by witnesses on a trial stand, appeared to give him wiggle room.

The president more clearly defended Flynn's calls with Russia's ambassador to the U.S. during the transition period after his November victory. He said that while he did not tell his adviser to discuss sanctions with the envoy, "I would have directed him if he didn't do it."

The president said that while Flynn was "just doing his job," he was "not happy" that the adviser had misled the vice president. Trump knew for some time that Flynn had given Pence an inaccurate accounting of his discussions with Russia, but the president did not tell his No. 2 for about two weeks, according to a timeline supplied by the White House.

The president has yet to announce Flynn's replacement. His top choice, Vice Admiral Robert Harward, turned down the job Thursday, largely because of family concerns, according to a White House official who would not be named because Harward's decision has not been publicly announced.

Trump repeatedly tried to steer questions away from his and his advisers' potential ties with Russia, saying attention should rather be focused on why a steady stream of classified information is making its way into news reports.

He took a friendly posture toward Russia during the campaign and has spoken favorably about Russian President Vladimir Putin. He's yet to fully define what a better relationship between Washington and Moscow would look like, though he has said he wants to increase cooperation with Russia in the fight against the Islamic State.

On Thursday, he seemed to lower expectations for the success, pre-emptively blaming media reports for hurting his chances of making good on campaign promises to build a better relationship.

"If you were Putin right now, you would say, 'Hey, we're back to the old games with the United States, there's no way Trump can ever do a deal with us,'" he said.

Trump vowed to move forward next week on his stalled plans to enact "extreme vetting" measures for people coming to the United States. He said he would sign a "new and very comprehensive order" aimed at addressing legal issues in his initial directive, which had temporarily halted the entire U.S. refugee program and all entries from seven Muslim-majority nations while the government worked on new vetting procedures.

A federal appeals court rejected the measure, and Trump said his administration would be "appealing." Shortly after, the Justice Department announced it did not want a larger appellate panel to review the ruling and would instead replace the ban.

The president took questions Thursday from 17 reporters, far more than at most presidential news conferences. His answers were often unwieldy, almost stream of consciousness, and some of his responses were startlingly strange.

He said the "greatest thing" he could do was "shoot" a Russian spy ship lingering off the East Coast of

the United States. He asked an African-American reporter whether she could help set up a meeting with the Congressional Black Caucus. He wrongly stated that his Electoral College victory had been the largest of any president since Ronald Reagan, then dismissed the inaccuracy, saying he'd been "given that information."

But the former reality TV star often appeared to be in his element. He jostled with reporters, particularly those he knows by name from his constant consumption of television news. He jokingly told CNN's Jim Acosta that he had checked whether he was related to Alexander Acosta, the dean of the Florida International University law school who is his new pick to lead the Labor Department.

Acosta's nomination was ostensibly the purpose of the news conference, though Trump dispensed with the announcement in a few brief sentences. The president's original choice to head the agency, Andy Puzder, withdrew his nomination on Wednesday, another blow to the new administration.

AP writers Ken Thomas, Darlene Superville and Eric Tucker contributed to this report.

Follow Julie Pace at <http://twitter.com/jpaceDC>

'Day Without Immigrants': Protest closes restaurants in US

By **ERRIN HAINES WHACK, Associated Press**

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — The heart of Philadelphia's Italian Market was uncommonly quiet. Fine restaurants in New York, San Francisco and the nation's capital closed for the day. Grocery stores, food trucks, coffee shops, diners and taco joints in places like Chicago, Los Angeles and Boston shut down.

Immigrants around the U.S. stayed home from work and school Thursday to demonstrate how important they are to America's economy, and many businesses closed in solidarity, in a nationwide protest called A Day Without Immigrants.

The boycott was aimed squarely at President Donald Trump's efforts to step up deportations, build a wall at the Mexican border and close the nation's doors to many travelers. Organizers said they expected thousands to participate or otherwise show support.

It was unclear how many people participated, but in many cities, the actions were disruptive, if not halting. More actions are being planned for May 1 — known as May Day, the internationally recognized holiday honoring workers.

"I fear every day whether I am going to make it back home. I don't know if my mom will make it home," said Hessel Duarte, a 17-year-old native of Honduras who lives in Austin, Texas, with his family and skipped class at his high school to take part in one of several rallies held around the country. Duarte said he arrived in the U.S. at age 5 to escape gang violence.

The protest even reached into the U.S. Capitol, where a Senate coffee shop was among the eateries that were closed as employees did not show up at work.

Organizers appealed to immigrants from all walks of life to take part, but the effects were felt most strongly in the restaurant industry, which has long been a first step up the economic ladder for newcomers to America with its many jobs for cooks, dishwashers and servers. Restaurant owners with immigrant roots of their own were among those acting in solidarity with workers.

Expensive restaurants and fast-food joints alike closed, some perhaps because they had no choice, others because of what they said was sympathy for their immigrant employees. Sushi bars, Brazilian steakhouses, Mexican eateries and Thai and Italian restaurants all turned away lunchtime customers.

"The really important dynamic to note is this is not antagonistic, employee-against-employer," said Janet Murguia, president of the Hispanic rights group National Council of La Raza. "This is employers and workers standing together, not in conflict."

She added: "Businesses cannot function without immigrant workers today."

At a White House news conference held as the lunch-hour protests unfolded, Trump boasted of his border security measures and immigration arrests of hundreds of people in the past week, saying, "We are

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saving lives every single day.”

Since the end of 2007, the number of foreign-born workers employed in the U.S. has climbed by nearly 3.1 million to 25.9 million; they account for 56 percent of the increase in U.S. employment over that period, according to the Labor Department.

Roughly 12 million people are employed in the restaurant industry, and immigrants make up the majority — up to 70 percent in places like New York and Chicago, according to the Restaurant Opportunities Centers United, which works to improve working conditions. An estimated 1.3 million in the industry are immigrants in the U.S. illegally, the group said.

The construction industry, which likewise employs large numbers of immigrants, also felt the effects of Thursday’s protest.

Shea Frederick, who owns a small construction company in Baltimore, showed up at 7 a.m. at a home he is renovating and found that he was all alone, with a load of drywall ready for install. He soon understood why: His crew, five immigrants, called to say they weren’t coming to work. They were joining the protests.

“I had an entire day of full work,” he said. “I have inspectors lined up to inspect the place, and now they’re thrown off, and you do it the day before the weekend and it pushes things off even more. It sucks, but it’s understandable.”

Frederick said that while he fundamentally agrees with the action, and appreciates why his crew felt the need to participate, he feels his business is being made to suffer as a result of the president’s policies.

“It’s hurting the wrong people,” he said. “A gigantic part of this state didn’t vote this person in, and we’re paying for his terrible decisions.”

There were no immediate estimates of how many students stayed home in many cities. Many student absences may not be excused, and some people who skipped work will lose a day’s pay or perhaps even their jobs. But organizers and participants argued the cause was worth it.

A school board official said that more than 1,100 students went on strike at Dallas Independent School District schools.

Marcela Ardaya-Vargas, who is from Bolivia and now lives in Falls Church, Virginia, pulled her son out of school to take him to a march in Washington.

“When he asked why he wasn’t going to school, I told him because today he was going to learn about immigration,” she said, adding: “Our job as citizens is to unite with our brothers and sisters.”

Carmen Solis, a Mexico-born U.S. citizen, took the day off from work as a project manager and brought her two children to a rally in Chicago.

“I feel like our community is going to be racially profiled and harassed,” she said of Trump’s immigration policies. “It’s very upsetting. People like to take out their anger on the immigrants, but employers are making profits off of them.”

On Ninth Street in South Philadelphia’s Italian Market, it was so quiet in the morning that Rani Vasudeva thought it might be Monday, when many of the businesses on the normally bustling stretch are closed.

Produce stands and other stalls along “Calle Nueve” — as 9th Street is more commonly known for its abundance of Mexican-owned businesses — stood empty, leaving customers to look elsewhere for fresh meat, bread, fruits and vegetables.

In New Orleans’ Mid-City neighborhood, whose Latino population swelled after the damage wrought by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 created lots of jobs for construction workers, the Ideal Market was closed. The place is usually busy at midday with people lining up at the steam tables for hot lunches or picking from an array of fresh Central American vegetables and fruits.

In Chicago, Pete’s Fresh Market closed five of its 12 grocery stores and assured employees they would not be penalized for skipping the day, according to owner Vanessa Dremonas, whose Greek-immigrant father started the company.

“It’s in his DNA to help immigrants,” she said. “We’ve supported immigrants from the beginning.”

Among the well-known establishments that closed in solidarity were three of acclaimed chef Silvana Salcido Esparza’s restaurants in Phoenix; Michelin star RASA in San Francisco; and Washington’s Oyamel and Jaleo, run by chef Jose Andres.

Tony and Marie Caschera, both 66, who were visiting Washington from Halfmoon, New York, thought a tapas restaurant looked interesting for lunch, but then realized the lights were off and the place was closed.

Tony Caschera, a registered Republican whose family emigrated from Italy before World War II, said he supports legal immigration, but added: "I don't like illegal aliens here."

Associated Press writers Sophia Tareen in Chicago; Juliet Linderman in Baltimore; David Saleh Rauf in Austin, Texas; Alex Brandon in Washington; Kevin McGill in New Orleans; and Russell Contreras in Albuquerque contributed to this report.

Errin Haines Whack covers urban affairs for The Associated Press. Follow her work on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/emarvelous>

Islamic State suicide bombing at Pakistan shrine kills 75

By ADIL JAWAD and MUNIR AHMED, Associated Press

KARACHI, Pakistan (AP) — An Islamic State suicide bomber struck inside a famed shrine in southern Pakistan on Thursday, killing at least 75 people in the deadliest attack in the country in more than two years.

The bomber entered the main hall of the shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Sehwan and detonated his payload amid dozens of worshippers, according to three security officials, who said at least 20 women and nine children were among the dead.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief reporters. Fazal Palejo, a senior health official in Sindh province, confirmed the toll.

The Islamic State group claimed the attack in a statement circulated by its Aamaq news agency, saying it had targeted a "Shiite gathering." The Sunni extremist group views Shiites as apostates and has targeted Pakistan's Shiite minority in the past. It views Sufi shrines like the one targeted Thursday as a form of idolatry.

Raja Somro, who witnessed the attack, told a local TV network that hundreds of people were performing a spiritual dance known as the Dhamal when the bomber struck.

"I saw bodies everywhere. I saw bodies of women and children," he said.

Local TV showed graphic footage of the aftermath of the blast, with wounded worshippers crying out for help and the floors covered with shoes, blood and body parts. Women cried and beat their chests in grief.

Ghazanfar Shah, the custodian of the site, said security was lax at the shrine, which is entered through two gold-plated doors.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif vowed that security forces would track down the perpetrators of the attack, according to Pakistani state TV.

"Each drop of the nation's blood shall be avenged, and avenged immediately," Pakistan's army chief, Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa, said in a statement. "No more restraint for anyone."

The U.S. State Department condemned the attack and offered its support to Pakistan in bringing the perpetrators to justice.

"We stand with the people of Pakistan in their fight against terrorism and remain committed to the security of the South Asia region," said a statement by acting State Department spokesman Mark Toner.

Thursday's attack was the deadliest in Pakistan since Dec. 16, 2014, when militants assaulted an army-run school in Peshawar, killing 154 people, mostly schoolchildren.

Pakistan has been at war with the Taliban and other extremist groups for more than a decade. In recent years it has launched major offensives against militant strongholds in the tribal regions along the border with Afghanistan, but insurgents have continued to carry out attacks elsewhere in the country.

The Islamic State group has been expanding its presence in Pakistan in recent years and has claimed a number of deadly attacks, including a suicide bombing at another shrine in November 2016 that killed more than 50 people.

The government has downplayed the IS affiliate, insisting that only a small number of militants have

pledged allegiance to the group.

Afghanistan and Pakistan have long accused each other of failing to crack down on militants who operate along the porous border.

The army spokesman, Maj. Gen. Asif Ghafoor, said acts of terrorism were being carried out "from hostile powers and from sanctuaries in Afghanistan," without elaborating. Pakistan closed the main Torkham border crossing with Afghanistan shortly after the attack.

Ahmed reported from Islamabad. Associated Press writers Riaz Khan in Peshawar, Pakistan and Muhammad Farooq in Jam Shoro, Pakistan contributed to this report

Tea party gains voice in Trump's Cabinet with budget chief

By **ANDREW TAYLOR, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The tea party wing of the GOP gained a voice in President Donald Trump's Cabinet on Thursday when Mick Mulvaney was sworn in as director of the White House budget office.

Vice President Mike Pence administered the oath of office hours after the Senate confirmed the South Carolina Republican's nomination on a narrow 51-49 vote in the GOP-controlled Senate.

Pence praised Mulvaney's "extraordinary record" and said he "couldn't be more enthusiastic" about Trump's decision to choose him.

Not all Republicans shared Pence's sentiments.

Arizona Sen. John McCain, who is emerging as perhaps the most vocal GOP critic of the Trump administration, opposed the former congressman based on his past House votes supporting cuts to Pentagon spending.

"Mulvaney has spent his last six years in the House of Representatives pitting the national debt against our military," said McCain, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Senators also gave a tentative 54-46 procedural green light to Trump's choice to run the Environmental Protection Agency, Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt. It was a signal that Pruitt should sail through on a final vote scheduled for Friday, despite being opposed by Maine Sen. Susan Collins, a GOP moderate.

Democratic Sens. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota, two of the party's more moderate members, backed Pruitt.

Trump has tapped some of the wealthiest Americans to serve in his Cabinet and ethics reviews have slowed the confirmation process. So have Senate Democrats who have mostly opposed all the nominees and forced hours of debate.

Trump lashed out at Senate Democrats during a White House news conference Thursday, saying he has worked to build a Cabinet over their "delays and obstruction ... You've seen what they've done over the last long number of years."

In fact, Democrats pushed to secure confirmation of President Barack Obama's picks the past eight years.

Mulvaney's vote means that 13 out of 22 Trump Cabinet or Cabinet-level picks have been confirmed. Nominees to key Cabinet departments such as Interior, Housing and Urban Development, and Energy await confirmation.

Mulvaney's confirmation promises to accelerate work on Trump's upcoming budget plan, which is overdue. That's typical at the beginning of an administration. But there is also the need to complete more than \$1 trillion in unfinished spending bills for the current budget year, as well as transmit Trump's request for a quick start on his oft-promised U.S.-Mexico border wall and tens of billions of dollars in emergency cash for the military.

In the past, Mulvaney has routinely opposed catchall appropriations bills, which required Republicans to compromise with the Obama White House. The upcoming measure is also going to require deals with Democrats.

Mulvaney brings strong conservative credentials to the job, and he's likely to seek big cuts to longtime GOP targets such as the EPA and other domestic programs whose budgets are set each year by Congress.

Trump has indicated, however, that he's not interested in tackling highly popular benefit programs such as Social Security and Medicare and wants a major investment in highways and other public works. The House Freedom Caucus, a group of the most conservative lawmakers on Capitol Hill, issued a statement saying that the president's pick of Mulvaney "sends a strong message that the Trump administration is serious about tackling our national debt."

Democrats opposed Mulvaney over his support for curbing the growth of Medicare and Social Security and other issues, such as his brinksmanship as a freshman lawmaker during the 2011 debt crisis in which the government came uncomfortably close to defaulting on its obligations.

"He said to me in a one-on-one meeting how he would prioritize the debts he would pay if he defaulted on the debt," said Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo. "Wouldn't that be a great addition to the chaos we are all feeling right now?"

The vote came a day after Trump's pick to head the Labor Department, Andrew Puzder, abruptly withdrew his nomination in the face of Republican opposition. Puzder was met with questions over taxes he belatedly paid on a former housekeeper not authorized to work in the United States.

Mulvaney has managed to survive questions about his failure to pay more than \$15,000 in payroll taxes for a nanny more than decade ago. He has since paid the taxes.

Watchdog: US has no way to measure border wall effectiveness

By ELLIOT SPAGAT, Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The United States does not have a way to measure how well fencing works to deter illegal crossings from Mexico, according to a report released Thursday by Congress' main watchdog as President Donald Trump renewed his pledge to build "a great wall" on the border.

The Government Accountability Office said the government spent \$2.3 billion from 2007 to 2015 to extend fences to 654 miles of the nearly 2,000-mile border and more to repair them.

Despite those investments, the Customs and Border Protection agency "cannot measure the contribution of fencing to border security operations along the southwest border because it has not developed metrics for this assessment," the agency said in a 75-page review.

Efforts to better measure success were aborted in 2013 because of a budget showdown between President Barack Obama and Congress, according to the report, which recommends developing new measures to justify more spending.

Trump, speaking at a news conference Thursday, reiterated plans for a wall with Mexico — one of his signature campaign pledges — and promised to negotiate a lower price.

Border Patrol leaders have struggled to say with any degree of precision how well fences work, in part because it's unknown how many people get away. Another unknown is the extent to which fences or other factors such as the number of agents explain why people are caught.

The GAO estimated capture rates in areas with and without fencing but cautioned that no cause-and-effect relationship has been established.

Construction cost estimates have varied widely. The GAO report stuck with its 2009 estimate of an average of \$6.5 million a mile for a fence to keep out people on foot and \$1.8 million a mile for vehicle blockades. There are currently 354 miles of pedestrian fencing and 300 miles of vehicle barriers.

Republican leaders in Congress have said Trump's wall would cost between \$12 billion and \$15 billion. Trump has suggested \$12 billion.

An internal Homeland Security Department report prepared for Secretary John Kelly estimates the cost of extending the wall along the entire U.S.-Mexico border at about \$21 billion, according to a U.S. government official who is involved in border issues. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because the report has not been made public.

The Homeland Security report proposes an initial phase that would extend fences 26 miles and a second wave that would add 151 miles, plus 272 "replacement" miles where fences are already installed, according to the official. Those two phases would cost \$5 billion.

Few people dispute that fences contributed to a sharp drop in crossings in cities like San Diego and El Paso, Texas, where people can easily blend in once they enter the country. Before fences were built in San Diego, crossers played soccer on U.S. soil as vendors hawked tamales, waiting until night fell to overwhelm agents.

San Diego was the busiest corridor for illegal crossings until the late 1990s, when an enforcement surge pushed traffic to Arizona and other more remote areas where many crossers died from heat. As fencing critics note, border crossers continue to perish in isolated areas under extreme weather conditions.

Border Patrol agents told authors of the GAO report that fencing has made it more difficult for people to ambush or assault them. Attacks on agents dropped 81 percent two years after fencing was erected in the Nogales, Arizona, area.

On the flip side, holes are often cut. The GAO reported 9,287 breaches in pedestrian fencing from 2010 to 2015. Agents said crossers have built ramps to drive over fences in Arizona and have burrowed beneath them.

Kelly told lawmakers last week that he would like to see wall construction well underway within two years, but he held open the possibility that it would not extend to areas where natural physical barriers already exist.

After a tour of the border in Arizona and California, he said he got "an earful" of suggestions from employees on where to build first.

"I'll take that on board. We'll bring it back to Washington, put in the blender and come up with a solution," he said.

CIA director: Agency isn't hiding intelligence from Trump

By VIVIAN SALAMA and DEB RIECHMANN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — CIA director Mike Pompeo said Thursday that the agency is providing President Donald Trump with the best intelligence it can, disputing reports that the spy community is withholding information from the commander in chief.

"The CIA does not, has not, and will never hide intelligence from the president, period. We are not aware of any instance when that has occurred," Pompeo said in a statement aimed at quelling reports that the intelligence community and Trump were in conflict.

He said news reports that the agency was keeping intelligence from the president are "dead wrong" and damage the "the integrity of thousands of professional intelligence officers."

Pompeo's statement came on the same day that a senior White House official said the administration had asked a New York-based private equity executive — Stephen Feinberg, co-founder of Cerberus Capital Management — to lead a review of the U.S. intelligence community.

Feinberg has been asked to make recommendations on improvements to efficiency and coordination between the various intelligence agencies, the official said. His position was not to become official until he completed an ethics review, said the official, who wasn't authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

However, Trump later appeared to back off the idea, saying somebody else might not be needed because it could be handled by Pompeo, FBI Director James Comey and Dan Coats, the president's nominee to be director of national intelligence who has not yet been confirmed.

"They're in position so I hope that we'll be able to straighten that out without using anybody else," Trump said at a news conference.

He said Feinberg was a "very talented man, very successful man" who has offered his services to the administration. "You know, it's something we may take advantage of. But I don't think we're (going to) need that at all because of the fact that you know, I think that we are gonna be able to straighten it out very easily on its own."

The news that Feinberg was being tapped to do an intelligence review drew complaints from Democrats. Feinberg was among the economic advisers for Trump's presidential campaign. Cerberus Capital Management, a firm with \$30 billion in investments, is deeply rooted in the Republican establishment. Former

Vice President Dan Quayle is the firm's head of global investment, and former Treasury Secretary John W. Snow, who served under President George W. Bush, is the firm's chairman.

"While we must always be open to improving organization and coordination among intelligence agencies, taken in concert with the large number of troubling statements President Trump has made denigrating our nation's intelligence professionals, I am extremely concerned that this appointment signals a desire by the administration to marginalize the role of the DNI or even take unprecedented steps to politicize intelligence operations," said Sen. Mark Warner of Virginia, the ranking Democrat on the Senate intelligence committee.

The DNI is the director of national intelligence.

Many intelligence professionals also viewed the White House review as another slight by the Trump White House, according to a former senior U.S. intelligence officer who spoke only on condition of anonymity out of concern for putting former colleagues at risk. They already are worried about politicization of the intelligence product and fear this could be a way to hinder their ability to provide information that might contradict the White House's political views, the official said.

Mike Hayden, former director of both the CIA and the National Security Agency, said the White House can review inefficiencies within the intelligence community but should not attempt to exert control over the agencies. Hayden said in an interview that the proposed White House review of the 17 intelligence agencies could be an unsettling development for Coats.

Some current and former administration officials have raised concern over the extent to which Trump has empowered members of his inner circle on matters that are typically left to the intelligence agencies.

The newly established Strategic Initiatives Group, headed by White House strategist Steve Bannon, includes a unit charged with counterterrorism intelligence, current and former senior officials say. The unit is headed by White House aide and former national security analyst Sebastian Gorka, who doesn't have appropriate clearance, they said — something the officials expressed concern about given the sensitive mandate of the unit.

However, Pompeo had been actively briefing the president every day he can and the president is settling into a traditional process of receiving his daily intelligence brief and talking to intelligence advisers, said an intelligence official, who was not authorized to publicly discuss the matter and spoke only on condition of anonymity.

Associated Press writer Matthew Daly and Eileen Sullivan in Washington contributed to this report.

Trump names Acosta as new choice to become labor secretary

By LAURIE KELLMAN and KEN THOMAS, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Seeking a surer bet to fill out his Cabinet, President Donald Trump on Thursday moved quickly to name law school dean Alexander Acosta as his new choice for labor secretary — a day after Andrew Puzder abruptly withdrew from consideration.

If confirmed by the Senate, Acosta would be the first Hispanic member of Trump's Cabinet.

Trump and key Republicans highlighted a key detail in Acosta's resume: He has won unanimous Senate confirmation three times — to a seat on the National Labor Relations Board, as the head of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division and as U.S. attorney in Miami.

"He did very, very well," Trump, said in a brief statement to start a White House press conference that was dominated by other challenges facing the new administration. Acosta did not appear with him.

Almost immediately, Acosta's Senate prospects looked better than Puzder's had after months of attacks on his personal life, statements and career as a fast-food CEO.

"Mr. Acosta's nomination is off to a good start because he's already been confirmed by the Senate three times," said Sen. Lamar Alexander, the chairman of the Senate panel that will hold Acosta's confirmation hearing.

Leading Democrats and their allies vowed to hold Acosta "accountable" as the head of an agency charged with enforcing worker protections.

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But their reactions were muted compared to the scathing response to Puzder's nomination in December, when his opponents paraded out worker after worker who complained of shoddy treatment at Puzder's company's restaurants, which include Hardee's and Carl's Jr. And they questioned how well Puzder could advocate for workers after a career atop CKE Restaurants Inc.

Puzder withdrew his nomination Wednesday after several Republicans indicated they would not support him, in part over his past employment of a housekeeper not authorized to work in the U.S. Puzder did not pay the related taxes for five years after he fired the worker, only doing so after he was nominated on Dec. 9.

"Unlike Andy Puzder, Alexander Acosta's nomination deserves serious consideration," AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said in a statement. "In one day, we've gone from a fast-food CEO who routinely violates labor law to a public servant with experience enforcing it."

Sen. Patty Murray, the leading Democrat on the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, made a passing reference in her statement to having "some initial concerns about his record," but did not name them.

An assortment of Hispanic advocacy groups praised the nomination, including the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. The Florida International University law school, where Acosta is dean, said he is 48. The Hispanic National Bar Association and others described Acosta as the son of Cuban immigrants.

Other groups pointed out that Acosta was head of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division when the agency came under fire for applying political considerations to some hiring decisions. The agency's inspector general report said Acosta "did not sufficiently supervise" an employee to whom he had delegated hiring duties.

"This egregious conduct played out under Mr. Acosta's watch and undermined the integrity of the Civil Rights Division," said Kristen Clarke, president of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under the Law. "It is hard to believe that Mr. Acosta would now be nominated to lead a federal agency tasked with promoting lawful hiring practices and safe workplaces."

The Harvard-trained Miami native, now dean of the Florida International University law school, clerked for Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito on the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

"He reminds me of one of those baseball players who can do everything," Alito said as he swore in Acosta in 2006 as South Florida's top federal prosecutor.

While Acosta was South Florida's top prosecutor, his office won the conviction of purported "dirty bomb" suspect and al-Qaida operative Jose Padilla on terrorism support charges; convicted former Washington lobbyist Jack Abramoff and a partner on fraud charges involving a gambling fleet purchase; obtained guilty pleas from brothers Gilberto and Miguel Rodriguez-Orejuela for operating Colombia's Cali cocaine cartel; and prosecuted Swiss bank UBS for allowing U.S. taxpayers to hide money overseas, resulting in the bank paying a \$780 million fine and turning over names of secret account holders to the U.S.

One top Miami defense lawyer, David O. Markus, who represented one of the Cali cartel brothers, tweeted out Thursday that Acosta was a great choice.

"Smart, ethical and a really good guy," Markus wrote.

Associated Press writers Darlene Superville in Washington and Curt Anderson in Miami contributed to this report.

Follow Kellman and Thomas at <http://www.twitter.com/APLaurieKellman> and <http://www.twitter.com/KThomasDC>

GOP leaders unveil new health law outline, divisions remain

By ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Top House Republicans unveiled a rough sketch of a massive health care overhaul to rank-and-file lawmakers Thursday, but a lack of detail, cost estimates and GOP unity left unresolved the problem that's plagued them for years: What's the party's plan and can Congress pass it?

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At a closed-door meeting in the Capitol basement, House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., and other party leaders described a broad vision for voiding much of President Barack Obama's 2010 statute and replacing it with conservative policies. It features a revamped Medicaid program for the poor, tax breaks to help people pay doctors' bills and federally subsidized state pools to assist those with costly medical conditions in buying insurance.

Lawmakers called the ideas options, and many were controversial. One being pushed by Ryan and other leaders would replace the tax increases in Obama's law with new levies on the value of some employer-provided health plans — a political no-fly zone for Republicans averse to tax boosts.

"You have to legislate with a sense of political reality," said Rep. Tom Cole, R-Okla., who said backing that proposal "would set up an ad against you from multiple directions" during upcoming elections.

The scant health care progress mirrors a lack of movement on other issues in a capital run by the GOP. No proposals have surfaced to pursue President Donald Trump's campaign promises to build a border wall with Mexico or buttress the nation's infrastructure, and Republicans have yet to coalesce around another priority, revamping the nation's tax code.

Senate Republicans have criticized a House GOP plan to change how corporations are taxed. Trump has said he will release his own proposal in the coming weeks, but nothing had been produced, drawing mockery from Democrats.

"At some point we need to move from imaginary made-up plans to things that you can read on paper," said Sen. Mark Warner, D-Va.

The health care outline was aimed at giving Republicans something to exhibit during next week's congressional recess, at a time of boisterous town hall meetings packed with supporters of Obama's law. Ryan told reporters that Republicans would introduce legislation voiding and replacing Obama's statute after Congress returns in late February, but offered no specifics.

Many Republicans took an upbeat tone after Thursday's meeting, with Rep. Peter King, R-N.Y., saying, "We're only 27 days into the new administration, so we have time."

But they have repeatedly failed for seven years to rally behind a substitute plan, and there are no guarantees of success in replacing a law that has extended coverage to 20 million Americans.

"We're not going to get out of this overnight," Rep. Bill Huizenga, R-Mich., said of the overall effort.

There are sure clashes ahead this time over crucial specifics that could jeopardize the entire effort. And lawmakers said they were awaiting official cost estimates from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, which could ignite other battles if the price tag is disconcertingly high.

Obama's law levied \$1.1 trillion in taxes over a decade to finance its expanded coverage to millions. GOP leaders said some or all of those taxes could be repealed, with the revenue replaced by a new tax on health care that employees receive at work.

Two people familiar with the proposal said individuals would pay taxes on the value of such coverage above \$12,000, and above \$30,000 for families. Republicans would not confirm those amounts, though House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Kevin Brady, R-Texas, told reporters "the vast, vast majority of Americans" would be unaffected.

According to documents distributed to members and obtained by The Associated Press, the expansion of Medicaid to millions of additional poorer people — almost entirely financed by federal taxpayers — would be phased out. In a compromise aimed at resolving a bitter dispute, extra Medicaid money would flow to the 31 states that accepted that expansion and the 19 that didn't, though it would end "after a certain date" left unspecified.

After that, states would get far more discretion to decide who would be covered by Medicaid. They'd also decide whether to receive federal Medicaid funds based on the fluctuating numbers of the program's beneficiaries or a set annual amount.

The tax penalties Obama's law levies on people who don't buy insurance would be abolished, as would federal subsidies for most people buying coverage on the online exchanges the statute established. They would be replaced by tax credits for people who don't have job- or government-provided health coverage and tax-advantaged health savings accounts. Republicans said decisions on amounts have not been made.

AP congressional correspondent Erica Werner and reporters Matthew Daly and Stephen Ohlemacher contributed to this report.

New mosquito trap smart enough to keep just the bad bugs

By LAURAN NEERGAARD, AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A smart trap for mosquitoes? A new high-tech version is promising to catch the bloodsuckers while letting friendlier insects escape — and even record the exact weather conditions when different species emerge to bite.

Whether it really could improve public health is still to be determined. But when the robotic traps were pilot-tested around Houston last summer, they accurately captured particular mosquito species — those capable of spreading the Zika virus and certain other diseases — that health officials wanted to track, researchers reported Thursday.

The traps act like “a field biologist in real time that’s making choices about the insects it wants to capture,” said Microsoft lead researcher Ethan Jackson, who displayed a prototype trap at a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Boston.

The traps are part of Microsoft’s broader Project Premonition, aimed at learning how to spot early signs of outbreaks.

“It catches people’s imagination,” said University of Florida medical entomology professor Jonathan Day, who isn’t involved with the project. “But whether it is actually a trap that will functionally improve surveillance, I think that remains to be seen.”

Trapping is a key part of mosquito surveillance and control, important so health officials know where to spray or take other measures to fight mosquito-borne diseases. Trapping hasn’t changed much in decades: Typically net traps are outfitted with mosquito-attracting bait and a fan, and suck in whatever insect gets close enough. Entomologists later sort the bugs for the ones they want.

Jackson’s trap consists of 64 “smart cells,” compartments outfitted with an infrared light beam. When an insect crosses the beam, its shadow changes the light intensity in a way that forms almost a fingerprint for that species, Jackson said.

Program the trap for the desired species — such as the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito that is the main Zika threat — and when one flies into a cell, its door snaps closed. In pilot testing in Harris County, Texas, last July and August, the trap was more than 90 percent accurate in identifying the insect buzzing through the door, Jackson said.

Harris County already is well known in public health for strong mosquito surveillance, and had been keeping a sharp eye out for Zika — fortunately finding none. But mosquito control director Mustapha Debboun called the high-tech trap promising, and is looking forward to larger scale testing this summer.

“If we are trying to collect the Zika virus mosquito, you can teach this trap to collect just that mosquito,” he said.

When each mosquito is captured, sensors record the time, temperature, humidity and other factors, to show what environmental conditions have different species buzzing. That’s information officials might use to schedule pesticide spraying.

The next step: Rapid genetic scans of the mosquitoes’ blood check for harmful pathogens — and can tell what animal the mosquito had been biting, Jackson said. If that work pans out, he said the data may help predict emerging diseases.

But bringing Microsoft’s tech know-how to mosquito control ultimately will depend on cost, cautioned Debboun, who spends about \$350 for one of today’s traps and says the new high-tech ones can’t cost more.

While Jackson doesn’t know a final price, he said he used low-cost microprocessors and other equipment to design the traps and plans to test if drones can place them in remote areas.

Today’s traps already provide lots of useful information, Florida’s Day noted. Some mosquito species are so plentiful that he can catch thousands in a single trap. Others, like *Aedes aegypti*, are much harder to find, and information about when it flies might be useful, he said.

A broader Israel-Arab deal _ rare opportunity or diversion?

By **KARIN LAUB**, Associated Press

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AP) — President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have pledged to seize what they believe is an opportunity for an ambitious Israeli-Arab peace deal. The premise is that Sunni Arab countries — pushed closer to Israel and the U.S. by the fear of regional rival Iran and its nuclear ambitions — can play an active role in future negotiations, perhaps nudging the Palestinians toward a deal they might otherwise reject. A rare opening or wishful thinking? Here's a look.

WHAT DID TRUMP AND NETANYAHU PROPOSE?

At the leaders' first joint news conference on Wednesday, Netanyahu said some Arab countries see Israel "increasingly as an ally," suggesting they are driven by concern over Iranian expansionism and the spread of Islamic militancy. "This change in our region creates an unprecedented opportunity to strengthen security and advance peace," he said in urging Trump to "seize this moment together."

Trump said he wants to pursue "a much bigger deal" in the Mideast that would include "many, many countries." He suggested there's Arab interest, saying, "We have some pretty good cooperation from people who in the past would never, ever have even thought of doing this."

Neither leader provided specifics, though Trump said both Israelis and Palestinians would have to make concessions. Both men refused to endorse a traditional pillar of U.S. policy — a Palestinian state alongside Israel as the preferred solution to the long-running conflict.

WHAT IS THE OFFICIAL ARAB VIEW?

An Arab peace initiative presented by Saudi Arabia in 2002 offered Israel normalization with dozens of Arab and Muslim countries in exchange for an Israel withdrawal from the lands it captured in 1967 — including the West Bank, Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem, where a state of Palestine would be established.

The initiative, which also called for a "just solution" for several million Palestinian refugees and their descendants, was reaffirmed later by the 22-member Arab League. Arab foreign ministers, meeting in Cairo next month, are expected to do so again, according to a draft resolution obtained by The Associated Press.

Israeli governments have balked at such a withdrawal, even if tempered by land swaps with the Palestinians. Israeli lawmaker Michael Oren, a former Israeli ambassador to the U.S., said Thursday that full withdrawal and the refugee clause were non-starters for Israel, but that other elements, including normalization, were "very positive." The Saudis have rejected Israeli calls for a revision, saying the plan remains on the table.

SIGNS OF AN ARAB THAW?

Sunni-led Gulf Arab states, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, share with Israel a deep distrust of Shiite power Iran. They see Iran as a meddlesome and destabilizing force in the region that is intent on asserting its dominance through support for militant groups from Lebanon, Syria and Iraq to Yemen and the Gulf itself.

Officially, the Gulf states do not recognize Israel, though the United Arab Emirates has in recent years allowed Israeli citizens entry to participate in sporting events or meetings of the International Renewable Energy Agency. Netanyahu frequently boasts of quiet ties with Arab countries that he refuses to identify.

In a sign of the region's deepening sectarian divide, Hassan Nasrallah, leader of Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah, taunted Sunni Arab leaders Thursday, saying: "Would someone please reply to Netanyahu? Someone with some honor? Tell him, 'No, you are a liar, you are still our enemy?'"

WHAT DOES ISRAEL ENVISION?

Netanyahu believes the interests of Sunni Arab countries increasingly align with those of Israel. Netanyahu's warm ties with Trump, on display Wednesday, could enhance the perception that Israel can help countries in the region gain access to U.S. administration officials.

Israel already has formal relations and close security ties with Egypt and Jordan, in a shared struggle against Islamic militants. It also is believed to be quietly sharing intelligence with some of the Gulf countries.

Yaakov Amidror, Netanyahu's former security adviser, said Thursday that the aim is to take an Israeli-Sunni

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Arab alliance out of the shadows. "I am not speaking about covertly. That is happening anyhow," he said. A first step would be more open security coordination, including intelligence sharing with Israel, which he said is "essential" for Sunni Arab countries facing an Iranian threat.

On Thursday, The Wall Street Journal quoted several Middle Eastern officials as saying the Trump administration is in talks with Arab allies about such an intelligence-sharing arrangement.

An Israeli-Arab alliance could then help negotiate "something that the Palestinians are not ready to do today," Amidror said, adding that one challenge would be public opposition to Arab engagement with Israel in the absence of a peace deal with the Palestinians. That's why U.S. engagement is important, he said.

Support for Palestinians, while not the rallying issue it once was, remains popular among Gulf citizens.

WHAT ABOUT THE PALESTINIANS?

Palestinian officials believe it is unlikely Arab states will cut a separate deal with Israel. "The Arabs will not accept anything the Palestinians don't," said Nasser al-Kidweh, an official in President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah party.

Analyst Ali Jerbawi said there's a possibility Abbas will come under more pressure from U.S.-allied countries in the region to accept a lesser deal with Israel at a time when Netanyahu and Trump appear so close.

Since Netanyahu came to power in 2009, he and Abbas have been unable to hold meaningful talks because of vast gaps on basic issues.

WHAT DO OTHERS SAY?

Much of the international community remains committed to a two-state solution as the only path forward. On Thursday, the United Nations and the Arab League endorsed the establishment of a Palestinian state in a joint statement. Last month representatives from dozens of countries reiterated the need for a two-state solution.

Mideast analyst Fawaz Gerges said Arab leaders wouldn't dare strike separate deals with Israel.

"The Arab states have already been dealing with Israel for quite some times. Iran now is a bigger threat than Israel, in the eyes of the Arab street, in the Gulf in particular," he said. Still, he said, "the Arab position is that the only way forward with Israel is to make peace with the Palestinians, based on the Arab Peace Initiative."

Israeli suggestions of a closer alliance with Arab countries, ahead of any deal with the Palestinians, are a "pipe dream," he said.

Associated Press writers Adam Schreck in Dubai, Philip Issa in Beirut, Daniel Estrin in Jerusalem and Mohammed Daraghmeh in Ramallah, West Bank, contributed to this report.

After failed union vote, Boeing hails Trump visit to plant

By MEG KINNARD, Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — Boeing workers' overwhelming anti-union vote at the aviation giant's 787 Dreamliner plant in South Carolina is a big victory for Southern politicians and business leaders who have lured manufacturing jobs to the region on the promise of keeping unions out.

It's also a win for the company that will host President Donald Trump at its North Charleston facilities Friday.

Nearly 3,000 workers were eligible to vote Wednesday on representation by the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace workers. According to Boeing, nearly 74 percent of the more than 2,800 votes cast were against representation.

It was a massive victory for union opponents, in line with longstanding Southern aversion to collective bargaining. At 1.6 percent, South Carolina maintains the lowest percentage of unionized workers in the country, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Its neighboring states, North Carolina and Georgia, hover slightly higher but still in low territory, at 3.0 and 3.9 percent, respectively.

Other largescale Southern unionization efforts haven't met recent success. In 2014, Volkswagen workers in Chattanooga, Tennessee, turned down representation by the United Autoworkers. For years, organizers

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have campaigned for representation among Nissan workers in Canton, Mississippi, but no vote has been scheduled.

Boeing came to South Carolina in part because of the state's minuscule union presence.

"I think a failed vote isn't that big of a deal because that's frankly the norm in the South," said Jeffrey Hirsch, law professor who specializes in labor relations at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. "The culture here, at least in recent memory, has not been pro-union."

Had the results at Boeing been reversed, Hirsch says, the ripple effect could have been dramatic. Politicians such as former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley -- who, directly and via her labor secretary Catherine Templeton, adamantly spoke against the need for unions here -- would be forced to rethink business recruitment strategies, and corporations also might think more carefully about locating in South Carolina.

"We'll make the unions understand full well that they are not needed, not wanted and not welcome in the state of South Carolina," Haley said in a 2012 address. She has since been appointed ambassador to the United Nations by President Donald Trump.

During her 2014 re-election campaign, Haley said she and others "discourage any companies that have unions from wanting to come to South Carolina because we don't want to taint the water."

Union opposition in this heavily Republican state is tied to politics, given Democrats' longstanding ties to organized labor. Any lenience toward unions could be seen as giving Democrats a toehold in the state, where both legislative chambers and the governor's office have long been controlled by Republicans.

"If they were successful it would be huge, I think," Hirsch says. "The numbers by themselves are not going to move the dial nationally in a substantive way, but the symbolism of it would be quite large."

Boeing workers will have to wait at least a year before voting again, and Machinist organizers have said they'll wait and see about their next steps. Despite more manufacturing jobs coming to the state, South Carolina saw the largest drop in union members as a percentage of employed workers over the past decade, according to BLS data.

It's not all bad news for unions in the South, however. In the face of falling union membership nationwide, six of the 11 states that were part of the old Confederacy saw more modest losses in that time. Mississippi, Florida and Virginia even saw gains.

Boeing's massive win gives the company a boost for Friday's visit from Trump, who blasted the manufacturer during last year's presidential campaign for the cost of building a new Air Force One.

"Costs are out of control," Trump tweeted in early December. "Cancel order!" Boeing CEO Dennis Muilenburg met with Trump two weeks later.

Trump's visit will also be his first since naming law school dean R. Alexander Acosta as his pick to lead the U.S. Department of Labor, following the withdrawal of troubled nominee Andrew Puzder. Acosta has served on the National Labor Relations Board and as a federal prosecutor in Florida and was an assistant attorney general for civil rights under President George W. Bush.

In a statement on the union election, Boeing vice president and general manager Joan Robinson-Berry looked past the decisive vote to Trump's visit.

"It is great to have this vote behind us as we come together to celebrate that event," she said.

Emery Dalesio contributed to this report from Raleigh, North Carolina.

Kinnard can be reached at <http://twitter.com/MegKinnardAP> . Read more of her work at <http://bigstory.ap.org/content/meg-kinnard/> .

Trump's ambassador pick is well-known figure in West Bank

By ALON BERNSTEIN, Associated Press

BEIT EL, West Bank (AP) — President Donald Trump's nominee for ambassador to Israel may be causing controversy in Washington. But in this West Bank settlement, he is a well-known friend.

At his Senate confirmation hearing on Thursday, David Friedman faced a grilling about his ties to Beit

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El, a community north of Jerusalem located in the heart of the occupied territory Palestinians want for an independent state.

Friedman is a major donor to the settlement and serves as the president of the American Friends of Beit El Yeshiva, the U.S. fundraising arm of its Jewish seminary and affiliated institutions, including high schools, an Israeli military prep academy, a newspaper for the religious Jewish settler community and the right-wing news site Arutz Sheva.

On Thursday, Friedman defended his affiliation with Beit El, telling the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that he was not connected to its political activities, which "I really have no part in."

Instead, he said, all the money that he has helped raise has been to support construction of dormitories, gyms, classrooms and similar facilities. "It primarily derives from my commitment to Jewish education," Friedman said. "The quality of those schools is excellent."

Questioned by senators during the lengthy hearing, Friedman also said he doesn't support Israeli annexation of the West Bank and acknowledged that expanding settlements beyond their existing borders could be unhelpful to peace efforts.

Before Trump was elected, a string of U.S. presidents, along with the Palestinians and international community, opposed settlements built in the West Bank and east Jerusalem as obstacles to peace. The Palestinians seek both territories, captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war, for their hoped-for state.

At a high-profile White House meeting on Wednesday, Trump abandoned those positions. He asked the visiting Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, to "hold back on settlements for a little bit," but also promised to "work something out." He then said the U.S. is no longer necessarily committed to a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians, saying he would accept any arrangement worked out by the parties.

But even by Trump's new standards, Friedman appears to be extreme. A bankruptcy lawyer and son of an Orthodox rabbi, Friedman is a fervent supporter of the settlements and an outspoken opponent of Palestinian statehood.

In Beit El, the Friedman Faculty House, which bears his and his wife's names on the facade, is built on private Palestinian land without permission from its Palestinian landowners, according to the anti-settlement watchdog Kerem Navot.

A website connected to Friedman's fundraising group describes Beit El's institutions as "'facts on the ground' in the face of the international community's desire to uproot us."

Such views are unprecedented for U.S. ambassadors to Israel, who in the past, whether from Republican or Democratic administrations, have avoided travel to settlements.

On Wednesday, five former U.S. ambassadors issued a letter saying that Friedman is unqualified and has staked out "extreme, radical positions." They urged the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to carefully consider the nomination.

Friedman's ties to Beit El are just one of the reasons he could face a stormy confirmation hearing.

As a columnist for the Beit El-affiliated Arutz Sheva news site, Friedman has railed against the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is backed by many American Jewish organizations. He also has infuriated many by referring to U.S. Jews who support the liberal pro-Israel advocacy group J Street as "kapos," the Jews who assisted Nazis in concentration camps. He has also accused Obama of "blatant anti-Semitism."

During Thursday's hearing, Friedman expressed regret over some of his past comments and vowed to use more measured language if he is confirmed.

Beit El resident Daniel Aviya, who makes religious phylacteries called Tefillin, said he thinks Friedman will make an excellent ambassador. He described Friedman as "someone who knows Israel because he was here — not because he read the newspapers that the Arab population is very good at using on their side."

Yoni Fromwitz, who also works at the Tefillin factory, said he believes Friedman will keep his personal feelings in check if he becomes ambassador.

"If he comes to spend some time here on a personal level, that's between him and his wife and God," Fromwitz said. "As far as his job is concerned, I believe he is enough of a professional that he will truly

represent whatever the Trump government decides whenever they get around to deciding.”

In a financial disclosure report to the U.S. State Department, Friedman pledged to resign from his position with the Beit El fundraising arm should he be confirmed as ambassador to Israel.

AP FACT CHECK: Misplaced blame for nomination failure

By JIM DRINKARD, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The abrupt withdrawal of the nomination of President Donald Trump’s pick for labor secretary brought swift blame from press secretary Sean Spicer, who said Democrats had “a double standard” for his party’s president and former President Barack Obama.

But it was only the Republicans who had the power to kill the nomination of fast-food executive Andrew Puzder. A look at the reality:

SPICER: “Where is the role of Senate Democrats in this?” he asked reporters at the White House. “There is no focus on these guys having a double standard for which they had with Obama nominees. It’s just ridiculous. He was not given a hearing.”

THE FACTS: Senate Democrats indeed disapproved of Puzder, as they have most of Trump’s other nominees. But it was the majority Republicans who did him in.

At least half a dozen GOP members had made it clear to the White House that they couldn’t vote for him, largely because he had employed and long neglected to pay taxes for a housekeeper who was working in the country illegally - a big failing in the eyes of their tough-on-immigration party.

The GOP leadership had scheduled a hearing Thursday for Puzder, but the party pulled the plug on it to head off what would have been a distasteful vote for many of its members.

Find all AP Fact Checks here: <http://apne.ws/2kx8bd>

Associated Press writer Ken Thomas contributed to this report.

French prosecutors continue probe of presidential candidate

By ANGELA CHARLTON, Associated Press

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

Fillon vowed to carry on his campaign amid the ongoing probe, 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. He has denied wrongdoing.

France’s already unpredictable presidential campaign plunged into uncertainty when the national financial prosecutor’s office opened a preliminary investigation last month based on Le Canard Enchaîné newspaper’s published reports about the parliamentary jobs.

The prosecutor’s office said Thursday it received the initial police report on 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.

In a tweeted statement Thursday, he said the prosecutor’s announcement “is just an act of communication that feeds the media soap opera. This does nothing to reduce my determination.”

Fillon’s lawyers accused the prosecutors of violating rules about investigative secrecy and separation of powers.

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.

A judicial official stressed that prosecutors only have the initial police report and cannot make a decision on possible next steps until the final police report is submitted.

Among those potential steps would be elevating the case to a formal judicial inquiry, which would allow for preliminary charges. Another possibility, seen as less likely, is that the financial prosecutor orders the case directly to trial.

With the first round of voting nine weeks away, some are calling for a speedier investigation than usual in a country where high-profile legal proceedings often take years to come to trial.

3 arrested in NKorean's death in Malaysia; autopsy completed

By EILEEN NG, Associated Press

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

Investigators were still piecing together details of the case, including the widespread assumption that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un dispatched a hit squad to kill his estranged half brother, Kim Jong Nam. Known for his love of gambling and casinos, Kim Jong Nam had lived abroad for years, aware he was a hunted man.

Three suspects — two women and a man — were arrested separately Wednesday and Thursday. The women were identified using surveillance videos from Kuala Lumpur International Airport, where Kim Jong Nam, who was 45 or 46, suddenly fell ill Monday morning.

Malaysian officials said he died on the way to a hospital after telling medical workers at the airport that he had been sprayed with a chemical.

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 female suspects had Vietnamese travel documents and was picked up Wednesday at the budget terminal of the airport, the same place where the 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 were believed to be the actual assassins.

Indonesian diplomats met with the second suspect and confirmed she is an Indonesian citizen, officials said. Authorities identified her as Siti Aisyah, 25, originally from Serang in Banten, a province that neighbors the Indonesian capital, Jakarta.

Indonesian Immigration Office spokesman Agung Sampurno said officials from the Indonesian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur met with the woman in Selangor state, where she is being held, and ensured she is in safe condition.

"They were allowed to see her but cannot make any questions," said Sampurno. "However, the team can confirm that Aisyah is Indonesian."

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 Indonesian suspect.

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 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.

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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."

Kim Jong Nam was estranged from his younger half 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.

Kim Jong Nam 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.

He was reportedly 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, 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 person, in 2013.

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

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

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.

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

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

By ERIKA KINETZ, Associated Press

SHANGHAI (AP) — So deadly it's considered a terrorist threat, carfentanil has been legal in China— until now. Beijing is banning carfentanil and three similar drugs as of March 1, China's Ministry of Public Security said Thursday, closing a major regulatory loophole in the fight to end America's opioid epidemic.

"It shows China's attitude as a responsible big country," Yu Haibin, the director of the Office of the National Narcotics Control Committee, told the Associated Press. "It will be a strong deterrent."

He added that China is actively considering other substances for sanction, including U-47700, an opioid marketed as an alternative to banned fentanyl. China said the March 1 ban will also apply to carfentanil's less-potent cousins furanyl fentanyl, acryl fentanyl and valeryl fentanyl.

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration called China's move a potential "game-changer" that is likely to have a big impact in the U.S., where opioid demand has driven the proliferation of a new class of deadly drugs made by nimble chemists to stay one step ahead of new rules like this one. 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."

Legally used as an anesthetic for elephants and other large animals, carfentanil burst into the North American drug supply last summer, causing hundreds of unsuspecting drug users to overdose. The DEA confirmed more than 400 seizures of carfentanil across eight U.S. states from July through October. So lethal an amount smaller than a poppy seed can kill a person, carfentanil was researched for years as a chemical weapon and used by Russian forces to subdue Chechen separatists at a Moscow theater in 2002.

New data from DEA laboratories suggests the supply of furanyl fentanyl is now surging. DEA labs identified 44 samples of furanyl fentanyl in the last three months of 2016, up three-fold from the prior quarter.

Though Beijing has said U.S. assertions that China is the top source of fentanyl lack evidence, the two countries have deepened cooperation as the U.S. opioid epidemic intensifies. Beijing already regulates

fentanyl and 18 related compounds, even though they are not widely abused domestically. Since 2016, China has arrested dozens of synthetic drug exporters, destroyed eight illegal labs and seized around 2 tons of new psychoactive substances, according to the Office of the National Narcotics Control Committee.

But the battle against rapidly evolving synthetic drugs is complicated by the deeply global nature of the narcotics trade and the deeply national nature of law enforcement. Some online drug vendors host their websites on servers abroad to thwart police. All benefit by submerging their illicit packages in the vast tides of legitimate commerce shipped or sent by courier from China.

One example of the kind of global coordination needed to take down synthetic drug barons is the case of Zhang Lei, whom the U.S. Treasury Department designated a drug kingpin in 2014. China shared 4,221 clues with 58 countries and areas in the hunt for Zhang, Chinese drug control authorities said Thursday. Zhang was sentenced to 14 years in Chinese prison last year, according to one of his lawyers, Fan Renzhong.

In October, the AP identified 12 Chinese companies willing 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 ban carfentanil and the three other drugs. Usually, the process can take nine months. This time, it took just four. Good international cooperation and effective early warning systems to track the emergence of novel drugs helped speed the process, Chinese drug control officials said Thursday.

China's action is "a hopeful sign of political and strategic law enforcement cooperation," said Jeremy Douglas, a regional representative for the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime in Bangkok. "But having legislation is a first step. The law will need to be enforced effectively."

Offers for carfentanil from Chinese vendors were scarce Thursday, but the AP quickly secured five offers to export furanyl fentanyl to the United States. Some vendors also pushed U-47700.

"One news I just got is that the carfentanil and furanyl fentanyl etc opioid analogs will be controlled in China on March 1 effective," one vendor called Ete wrote in an email. "So if you need them pls make it before that day. After that day it will be unavailable."

The vendor did not immediately respond to a request for comment from AP.

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

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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.

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."

"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.

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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 Presi-

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dent 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.

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.

Follow Nancy Benac on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/nbenac>

Robot probes show Japan reactor cleanup worse than expected

By MARI YAMAGUCHI, Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Robot probes sent to one of Japan's wrecked Fukushima nuclear reactors have suggested worse-than-anticipated challenges for the plant's ongoing cleanup.

The plant's operator Tokyo Electric Power Co. said the remote-controlled "scorpion" robot was sent into the Unit 2 reactor's containment vessel Thursday to investigate the area around the core that had melted six years ago, but its crawling function failed while climbing over highly radioactive debris.

The robot, carrying a dosimeter, thermometer and two small cameras, transmitted some data and visuals but could not locate melted fuel — key information to determine how to remove debris out of the reactor. The robot was abandoned inside the vessel at a location where it won't block a future probe.

Preliminary examinations over the past few weeks have detected structural damage to planned robot routes and higher-than-expected radiation inside the Unit 2 containment chamber, suggesting the need to revise robot designs and probes.

Similar probes are being planned for the two other melted reactors. A tiny waterproof robot that can go underwater will be sent to Unit 1 in coming weeks, but experts haven't figured out a way to access badly torn Unit 3.

TEPCO needs to know the melted fuel's exact location and condition and other structural damage in each of the three wrecked reactors to figure out the best and safest ways to remove the fuel.

Despite the incomplete probe missions, TEPCO stuck to its schedule to determine methods for the melted fuel removal this summer and start work in 2021, company spokesman Yuichi Okamura said.

TEPCO is struggling with the plant's decommissioning, which is expected to last decades, following the 2011 earthquake and tsunami that led to the meltdown. Tens of thousands of residents had evacuated their homes, many of them still unable to return due to high radiation.

Earlier this month, another robot, designed for cleaning debris for the main "scorpion" probe, had to return midway through because two of its cameras became inoperable after two hours when its total

radiation exposure reached a maximum tolerance of 1,000 Sievert — a level that can kill a human within seconds. The original duration planned for the robot was 10 hours, or 100 Sievert per hour.

Inadequate cleaning, high radiation and structural damage could limit subsequent probes, and may require more radiation-resistant cameras and other equipment, TEPCO officials said.

TEPCO officials said that despite the dangerously high figures, radiation is not leaking outside of the reactor.

Images captured from inside the chamber have showed damage and structures coated with molten material, possibly mixed with melted nuclear fuel, and part of a disc platform hanging below the melted core.

Follow Mari Yamaguchi on Twitter at twitter.com/mariyamaguchi

Find her work at <http://bigstory.ap.org/content/mari-yamaguchi>

Salt of the earth: Road salt miners chip away at winter need

By MICHAEL HILL, Associated Press

HAMPTON CORNERS, N.Y. (AP) — Deep below upstate New York's farm country, workers in ghostly tunnels are praying for snow.

Fiercer winters mean better business, longer hours and fatter paychecks at what's billed as the nation's most productive salt mine, which ships trainloads of snow-melting road salt to municipalities across the Northeast. And when the snow keeps falling and supplies run low, miners have to step up production to meet demand in real time.

"We live and die by the weather," said Joe Bucci Jr., environmental manager for American Rock Salt Co., which mines a sprawling seam of salt south of Rochester that was left from a sea that dried up 400 million years ago.

That deposit is accessible today by a cage elevator that descends more than 1,200 feet, about as deep as the Empire State Building is high. Miners drive through a vast grid of tunnels to blast out and haul crystals that glimmer in their headlamps.

No matter the season, the temperature in the mine remains 60 degrees. Salt lingers in the air, and miners swear it does wonders for their sinuses.

"I've always considered it coming down to a health spa every day," miner John Goho said with a smile.

But salt mining is a serious, sometimes dangerous business, practiced in this western New York countryside since the days of mules and pickaxes more than a century ago.

America produces up to 4.3 million tons of salt a year, though it hoisted less last year because of the mild winter. Despite a big storm in the Northeast last week, this year has so far been a mixed bag for snow. But there is still time left and much at stake for the mine's 350 workers, who can earn more than \$80,000 with overtime in a busy winter.

They remove the deposits with a room-and-pillar approach: using explosive blasts to loosen the salt, while leaving pillars of salt in place to support the overhead layers. Loaders scoop up the blasted salt, some in chunks as big as file cabinets, into a rock-crushing maw and then onto miles of conveyor belts. Machines then crush it further into crystals that are too impure for use as food, but perfect for spreading on icy and snowy roads.

"Our salt, you wouldn't want to put it on your french fries," Bucci joked as he steered a utility vehicle along a long corridor.

Bucci has salt in his blood. His great-grandfather drove mules as an early salt miner in the area. Bucci's father, Joe Bucci Sr., negotiated mineral rights for the old mine nearby and in 1997 co-founded the current mine company. It was a time when the local industry hit rock bottom.

The old mine had been flooded by a cave-in a few years earlier, and the Dutch conglomerate that ran it abandoned plans to start a new mine nearby. Bucci stepped in to start the current mine with three other investors.

The elder Bucci says he wanted to keep mining alive in the area, a sentiment he held to even though

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his father was among four men killed in a 1975 mine explosion.

Aside from milder winters, the biggest challenge for the industry now is cheap salt shipped from overseas, from countries such as Chile.

But operators at American Rock Salt are confident enough in the mine to seek expansion. They want to add a third belt line that could be relied on at those times when one of the existing two goes down. It also could add another 10 years to the mine's life.

"This mine will be here 40 years from now, for sure," said the elder Bucci. "Maybe 50 years, maybe longer."

Asian shares slip after Wall Street fall and Samsung arrest

By YURI KAGEYAMA, AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Asian shares slipped Friday following a drop on Wall Street as the stronger dollar sent Japanese issues lower and the arrest of an executive at Samsung weighed on Korean stocks.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 lost 0.6 percent to 19,238.81 in morning trading. South Korea's Kospi edged down 0.1 percent to 2,079.60. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 fell nearly 0.2 percent to 5,807.20. Hong Kong's Hang Seng shed 0.1 percent to 24,082.17, while the Shanghai Composite was also down 0.1 percent at 3,225.75.

WALL STREET: The S&P 500 fell 2.03 points, or 0.1 percent, to 2,347.22. The Dow Jones industrial average rose 7.91 points, less than 0.1 percent, to set another record at 20,619.77. The Nasdaq composite dipped 4.54 points, or 0.1 percent, to 5,814.90.

THE QUOTE: "The future outlook is clouded by rising political uncertainties and waves of anti-globalization sentiments from the U.S. and Europe. As US reaches full employment and approaches closer to the Fed's inflation target, a tighter Federal monetary policy is expected to lead to a stronger US dollar in the months ahead. This might worry investors," says Margaret Yang Yan, market analyst at CMC Markets in Singapore.

SAMSUNG WOES: A South Korean court approved the arrest of a billionaire heir to Samsung accused of bribery and other corruption scandal, a stunning development for the nation's richest family. Being arrested is Lee Jae-yong, 48, a vice chairman at Samsung Electronics and son of Samsung chair Lee Kun-hee. The news sent Samsung Electronics stock down by more than 1 percent.

ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. crude rose 10 cents to \$53.46 a barrel in New York. It rose 25 cents to settle at \$53.36 per barrel Thursday. Brent crude, the international standard, added 13 cents to \$53.78 a barrel.

CURRENCIES: The dollar fell slightly to 113.42 yen from 113.61 yen late Thursday. The euro rose to \$1.0672 from \$1.0635.

AP Markets Writer Marley Jay and Business Writer Stan Choe contributed.

Follow Yuri Kageyama on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/yurikageyama>

Her work can be found at <http://bigstory.ap.org/content/yuri-kageyama>

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, Feb. 17, the 48th day of 2017. There are 317 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 17, 1947, the Voice of America began broadcasting in Russian to the Soviet Union.

On this date:

In 1815, the United States and Britain exchanged the instruments of ratification for the Treaty of Ghent, ending the War of 1812.

In 1863, the International Red Cross was founded in Geneva.

In 1897, the forerunner of the National PTA, the National Congress of Mothers, convened its first meeting in Washington.

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In 1913, the Armory Show, a landmark modern art exhibit, opened in New York City.

In 1925, the first issue of The New Yorker magazine (bearing the cover date of Feb. 21) was published.

In 1933, Newsweek magazine was first published under the title "News-Week."

In 1944, during World War II, U.S. forces invaded Eniwetok Atoll, encountering little initial resistance from Imperial Japanese troops. (The Americans secured the atoll less than a week later.)

In 1959, the United States launched Vanguard 2, a satellite which carried meteorological equipment.

In 1964, the Supreme Court, in *Wesberry v. Sanders*, ruled that congressional districts within each state had to be roughly equal in population.

In 1972, President Richard M. Nixon departed the White House with his wife, Pat, on a historic trip to China.

In 1986, Johnson & Johnson announced it would no longer sell over-the-counter medications in capsule form, following the death of a woman who had taken a cyanide-laced Tylenol capsule.

In 1996, world chess champion Garry Kasparov beat IBM supercomputer "Deep Blue," winning a six-game match in Philadelphia (however, Kasparov lost to Deep Blue in a rematch in 1997).

Ten years ago: Senate Republicans foiled a Democratic bid to repudiate President George W. Bush's deployment of 21,500 additional combat troops to Iraq. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice made a surprise visit to Baghdad. At Camp Pendleton, California, Marine Lance Cpl. Robert B. Pennington was sentenced to 8 years in military prison for his role in the kidnapping and killing of an Iraqi civilian (he was released early in Aug. 2007). Former French Cabinet minister Maurice Papon (pa-PAWN'), convicted of complicity in crimes against humanity for his role in deporting Jews during World War II, died near Paris at age 96.

Five years ago: Congress voted to extend a Social Security payroll tax cut for 160 million workers and to renew unemployment benefits for millions more. The New York Knicks saw their seven-game winning streak with team sensation Jeremy Lin come to an end as they lost to the New Orleans Hornets, 89-85.

One year ago: A three-way feud among the GOP's leading White House contenders escalated, with Ted Cruz daring Donald Trump to sue him for defamation and dismissing Marco Rubio's charges of dishonesty during a CNN forum just days before South Carolina's high-stakes primary. Travis Hittson, a former Navy crewman, was executed in Georgia for killing a fellow sailor, Conway Utterbeck. A jury in Los Angeles acquitted an Ohio man of stalking actress Gwyneth Paltrow.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Hal Holbrook is 92. Actor-comedian Barry Humphries (aka "Dame Edna") is 83. Country singer-songwriter Johnny Bush is 82. Actress Christina Pickles is 82. Football Hall-of-Famer Jim Brown is 81. Actress Brenda Fricker is 72. Actress Rene Russo is 63. Actor Richard Karn is 61. Actor Lou Diamond Phillips is 55. Basketball Hall of Famer Michael Jordan is 54. Actor-comedian Larry, the Cable Guy is 54. TV personality Rene Syler is 54. Movie director Michael Bay is 53. Singer Chante Moore is 50. Rock musician Timothy J. Mahoney (311) is 47. Actor Dominic Purcell is 47. Olympic gold and silver medal skier Tommy Moe is 47. Actress Denise Richards is 46. Rock singer-musician Billie Joe Armstrong (Green Day) is 45. Actor Jerry O'Connell is 43. Country singer Bryan White is 43. Actress Kelly Carlson is 41. Actor Ashton Holmes is 39. Actor Conrad Ricamora (TV: "How to Get Away With Murder") is 38. Actor Jason Ritter is 37. TV personality Paris Hilton is 36. Actor Joseph Gordon-Levitt is 36. TV host Daphne Oz (TV: "The Chew") is 31. Actor Chord Overstreet is 28. Singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran is 26. Actress Meaghan Martin is 25. Actress Sasha Pieterse is 21.

Thought for Today: "A healthy attitude is contagious but don't wait to catch it from others. Be a carrier."
— Tom Stoppard, Czech-born British playwright (1937-).