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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:

- Mon. Feb. 27 – Columbia American Legion – 7:00 PM
- Mon., March 6 – Bristol Community Center – 7:00 PM
- Thurs., Mar. 9– 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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Tuesday, Feb. 21

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

School Lunch: Chicken nuggets, sweet potato tots, fruit, broccoli and dip, muffin.

Senior Menu: Beef stroganoff noodles, mixed vegetables, cookie, whole wheat bread.

United Methodist: Bible Study at 10 a.m., Evening Bible Study at 7 p.m.

School Board Meeting, 2 p.m.

Girls Regional Basketball Tourney at Sisseton. First round begins at 4:30 p.m. with 2 games to follow.

Wednesday, Feb. 22

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

School Lunch: Hot ham and cheese, wedge fries, fruit, carrots and dip.

Senior Menu: Lemon chicken breast, creamy noodles, green beans, cinnamon scalloped apples, whole wheat bread.

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
Ferne, SD
57439



Groton Chiropractic Clinic

Carol McFarland-Kutter, D.C.
1205 N 1st St., Groton 397-8204

Americans speak out about the arts By Jim Speirs, Executive Director, Arts South Dakota

Recently Americans for the Arts conducted a public opinion poll which provides an in-depth look at perceptions and attitudes about the arts in our country.

One of the most significant findings came in the question asking if people agree with the statement "Art institutions add value to our communities." The survey showed 87% agree the arts are important to the quality of life, and 83% agree they are important to local businesses and the economy. And South Dakota proves those statistics.

South Dakota communities are proud of their unique identities, and promote their cultural heritage in creative ways. Heritage festivals and arts activities throughout the year make our hometowns family-friendly and culturally enriched. In addition, in many South Dakota towns, the local school is a community focus, with concerts, plays and performances of all kinds as major attractions that bring people—and dollars—to Main Street.

Galleries and gift shops are part of the cultural tourism industry that draws visitors to community events, one of the ways in which the arts add dollars to each local economy. The creative industry is strong in South Dakota, with artists and craftspeople enhancing the lives of their fellow citizens and paying taxes to support their home communities and state.

Throughout the state, professional musicians, painters, sculptors, dancers, actors and so many more are building careers in South Dakota. Their connection to audiences and art lovers says something vital about our state and its support of our creative industry.

Another question asked for opinions on the statement, "The arts provide meaning to our lives." In response, 73% agree the arts are a positive experience in a troubled world, 64% agree the arts give them pure pleasure to experience and participate in, and 63% agree the arts lift them beyond everyday experiences.

Whether it's singing in the local choir, attending a play at the high school or taking in a concert by your favorite musician, the arts take you outside yourself. Our art experiences are personal, from creating a painting or playing an instrument to reading South Dakota authors. Pleasure and an escape from the ordinary are the gifts that art experiences bring to each of us. And sharing those experiences builds our cultural bond.

The arts transform people and communities every day. To learn more about how the arts impact all of our lives each day, browse more findings from the Americans for the Arts' Public Opinion Poll at www.AmericansForTheArts.org/PublicOpinion. For more about Arts South Dakota, join us online at www.ArtsSouthDakota.org.





By Richard P. Holm M.D.



Healing or harming with marijuana?

Just about 4000 years ago, Chinese writings explained the medicinal powers of what is now called marijuana or cannabis, describing its power to help arthritis, gout, malaria, nausea, and psychological stress, along with its intoxicating/recreational properties. The use of cannabis for medicinal and recreational purposes eventually spread to India and then Persia, often used by various cultures during religious ceremonies. From there cannabis spread

to Europe about the time of the middle ages.

In the 1500s and 1600s the Spanish and English brought marijuana to the new world for medical purposes, and, alongside tobacco, became a huge commercial crop. The fibrous cannabis plant was good for making rope. In the late 1800s marijuana lost popularity for use as material for rope and as a medicine for pain, but in the 1920s, Cannabis re-emerged in jazz clubs as a recreational drug. At the time, it was thought of as a better alternative to alcohol since cannabis users didn't seem as disruptive to the community.

During the prohibition era of the 1930s, the US Bureau of Narcotics considered marijuana as addictive and they made it illegal along with alcohol. Further, the US Controlled Substance Act of 1970 defined marijuana as a schedule 1 drug putting it in the same category as heroin and LSD, claiming high abuse potential and no medicinal use. Although these claims have changed, the US law remains on the books. During the Obama administration, the Department of Justice was directed to relax prosecution of marijuana rule-breakers while allowing state rules to supersede the US law.

Questions about cannabis remain since scientific experimentation for medicinal use has been limited due to legal restrictions. Are there legitimate medical uses for cannabis, or any of its chemical derivatives for seizures in children, chronic pain syndrome, glaucoma, appetite stimulation in wasting diseases, and nausea and malaise in cancer patients?

Is it right to restrict recreational use of marijuana when we accept alcohol use in this society? If we require cannabis only for medicinal use, are we limiting access for those who can afford a physician; making physicians unhappy gatekeepers for this drug; and making the cost of legitimate cannabis outrageously priced along with almost every other prescription medicine?

We know there is abuse potential with cannabis, just like with alcohol; and that driving intoxicated with cannabis increases crashes, even if only half as much as alcohol. Also, we know excess marijuana dulls and injures minds, especially when young and undeveloped. Would legalizing cannabis worsen or, with better laws and enhanced regulation, lessen these problems?

Legalizing marijuana is a very interesting issue worthy of open-minded discussion.

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Groton Robotics Team wins Mitchell Tourney

G-Force of Groton allied with Mechanim of Rapid City Stevens to become champions of the Mitchell VEX Robotics Tournament.

G-Force and Mechanim ranked first and second in the qualifying rounds. The other Groton teams ranked 14th, G.A.T. Wrenches; 16th Gear Heads; 18th Geek Squad and 19th Galaxy.

1	9050	G-Force	Groton	6-0-0
2	1563B	Mechanim	Stevens, Rapid City	6-0-0
3	6844B	Mechatron	Mitchell	5-1-0
4	6844C	Bolt	Mitchell	4-2-0
5	1563C	BotKatz	Stevens, Rapid City	4-2-0
6	8410A	Teck-Kno-Logik	Eureka	4-2-0
7	1563A	A-team	Stevens, Rapid City	4-2-0
8	7686B	Seige Tower	Harrisburg	3-3-0
9	7686	Gear Stripper 3000	Harrisburg	3-3-0
10	6844D	Robot Pandas	Mitchell	3-3-0
11	7686D	FlapJack	Harrisburg	3-3-0
12	98099A	Lead/Deadwood Robotics		3-3-0
13	7686C	Torsion 2.0	Harrisburg	3-3-0
14	9050C	G.A.T. Wrenches	Groton	3-3-0
15	8410B	Double Trouble	Eureka	3-3-0
16	9050B	Gear Heads	Groton	3-3-0
17	98099B	Lead/Deadwood Robotics		2-4-0
18	9050D	Geek Squad	Groton	2-4-0
19	9050E	Galaxy	Groton	2-4-0
20	13772A	Mustang Madness	McLaughlin	2-4-0
21	6844A	Kcreation	Mitchell	2-4-0
22	99707	ROBO Chickens	Sioux Falls	1-5-0
23	6844F	System Overlords		1-5-0
24	8410C	Choppers		0-6-0

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Today in Weather History

February 21, 1918: An amazing warm-up of 83 degrees in just 12 hours at Granville, North Dakota from Chinook winds. The temperature soared from an early morning low of 33 degrees below zero to an afternoon temperature of 50 degrees. Chinook winds are caused by the compression of Pacific air descending the Rockies. Compressing the air causes it to heat up resulting in the dramatic temperature rises.

February 21, 1969: Heavy snow along with winds of 15 to 25 mph caused blowing and drifting snow which closed many roads. Snowfall amounts of 5 to 12 inches were common across eastern South Dakota from the 20th into the 22nd. Some snowfall amounts included, 5 inches at Clear Lake and Brookings, 6 inches at Wilmot, 7 inches at Milbank, Redfield and Mitchell, 8 inches at Conde, 9 inches at Webster, Sioux Falls, and Huron.

1971: A massive tornado outbreak occurred in the Delta region of northeastern Louisiana and Mississippi. The first major tornado touched down at about 2:50 p.m. in Louisiana and crossed into Mississippi. 46 were killed by this twister, which struck the towns of Dehli and Inverness. 121 people lost their lives that day, including 110 in Mississippi. A total of 1600 people were injured, 900 homes badly damaged or destroyed. The total damage was around 19 million dollars.

1918 - A spectacular chinook wind at Granville, ND, caused the temperature to spurt from a morning low of 33 degrees below zero to an afternoon high of 50 degrees above zero. (David Ludlum)

1935 - Frequent duststorms occurred in eastern Colorado during the month, forcing schools to close and people to stay indoors. A fatality occurred on this date when two section cars collided on the railroad near Arriba CO, due to poor visibility. (The Weather Channel)

1936 - The temperature at Langdon, ND, climbed above zero for the first time in six weeks. Readings never got above freezing during all three winter months. (David Ludlum)

1971 - An outbreak of tornadoes hit northeastern Louisiana and northern and central Mississippi. The tornadoes claimed 121 lives, including 110 in Mississippi. Three tornadoes accounted for 118 of the deaths. There are 1600 persons injured, 900 homes were destroyed or badly damaged, and total damage was 19 million dollars. (David Ludlum)

1971 - Elk City, OK, was buried under 36 inches of snow to establish a 24 hour snowfall record for the state. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Low pressure over central California produced gale force winds along the coast, and produced thunderstorms which pelted Stockton, Oakland and San Jose with small hail. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)




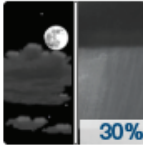



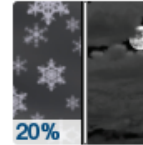

livestream

Upcoming Events
Tuesday, GBB Region
Groton vs. Sisseton, 7:30

gdilive.com

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Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
						
Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy then Chance Showers	Mostly Cloudy then Chance Rain	Slight Chance Rain/Snow then Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy then Slight Chance Snow	Slight Chance Snow then Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy then Partly Sunny and Blustery
High: 63 °F	Low: 37 °F	High: 48 °F	Low: 27 °F	High: 33 °F	Low: 20 °F	High: 30 °F

Another Shot At Records

Location	Normal	Forecast	Record
Aberdeen	30	64	61 – 1977
Watertown	29	62	58 – 2000
Pierre	37	73	73 – 1982
Mobridge	33	56	66 – 1982
Sisseton	30	63	58 – 1961
Kennebec	39	77	75 – 2000
Timber Lake	34	60	68 – 1982
Wheaton, MN	27	63	54 – 1961



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD



Updated: 2/21/2017 5:24 AM Central

Published on: 02/21/2017 at 5:28AM

Another abnormally warm day with just a few passing high clouds. Readings will trend closer to average over the next few days as a weather system develops across the central plains. This system could bring accumulating snow to the southern half of South Dakota Thursday/Friday.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 56.4 F at 12:12 AM

Low Outside Temp: 32.0 F at 10:37 PM

High Gust: 29.0 Mph at 1:03 AM

Rain: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 61° in 1977

Record Low: -30 in 1918

Average High: 30°F

Average Low: 10°F

Average Precip in Feb.: 0.37

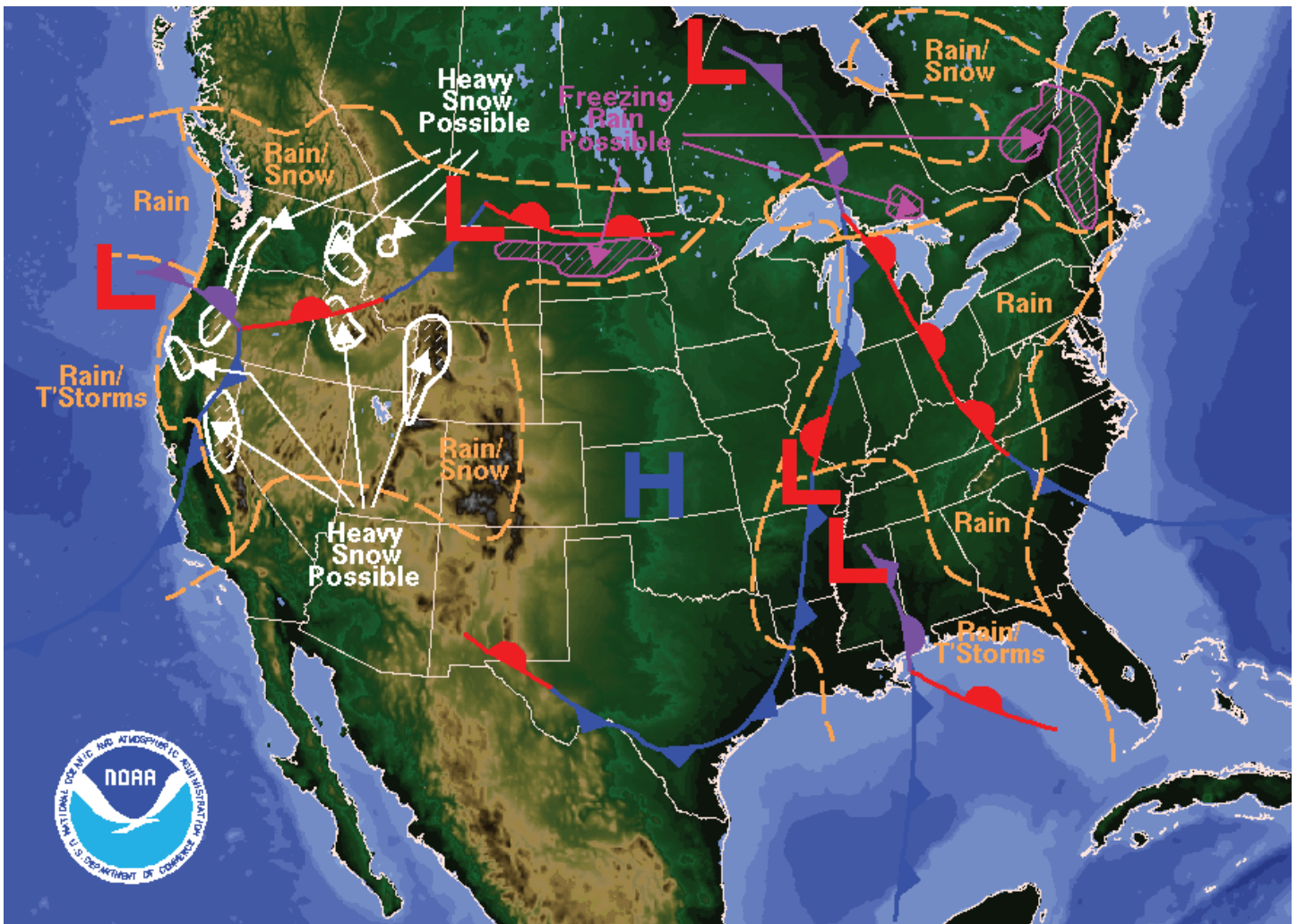
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.84

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 6:09 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:23 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Tue, Feb 21, 2017, issued 4:01 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

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LET GOD BE THE JUDGE

Young Anthony was ending his prayers before leaving for school. "And, finally God, thank You for this beautiful day that You have given us. In Jesus' Name, Amen."

"But, Anthony," protested his mother, "this is not going to be a beautiful day. There are large thunderstorms approaching."

"I know, Mom," replied Anthony. "Never judge a day by its weather," he said as he ran out the door.

The Psalmist proclaimed, "This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it!"

Sometimes when we get half way through a day we feel that there is nothing to rejoice about or to be thankful for. Our problems mount and their solutions evade us. Our plans are interrupted by meaningless demands that make no sense at all. Our decisions seem to be wrong no matter how hard we tried to get them right. Our sorrow overwhelms us and our guilt appears beyond His forgiveness. What then? Rejoice? Makes no sense to most people.

But according to the Psalmist, that's the thing to do. When we read the Psalms carefully and allow God to speak to us clearly, we will discover that the writers were open and honest with God about their difficulties. And when they spoke to God sincerely, by the time they came to the close of their prayers they ended in giving Him praise. Tell God the facts. He wants to help!

Prayer: Thank You, God, for always being with us in all of our difficulties. Help us to hear Your voice and to accept Your grace as a solution to our problems. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 118:24-28 This is the day the Lord has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it.

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News from the  Associated Press

Monday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Alcester-Hudson 69, Viborg-Hurley 67
Bon Homme 57, Irene-Wakonda 56
Bridgewater-Emery 57, Kimball/White Lake 48
Canby, Minn. 65, Deubrook 53
Canistota 67, Colman-Egan 64
Chester 81, Dell Rapids St. Mary 36
Clark/Willow Lake 56, DeSmet 40
Corsica/Stickney 66, Parkston 43
Elk Point-Jefferson 55, West Central 44
Flandreau Indian 70, Centerville 39
Madison 80, Milbank Area 51
Miller 86, Stanley County 67
Mobridge-Pollock 55, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 50
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 62, McCook Central/Montrose 32
Red Cloud 62, Bennett County 44
Sioux Falls Christian 81, Garretson 38
Tri-Valley 77, Baltic 39
Waverly-South Shore 42, Elkton-Lake Benton 41
Winner 62, Crow Creek 53

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

District 11B
First Round
Kimball/White Lake 51, Corsica/Stickney 17
District 12B
First Round
Gregory 46, Colome 32
District 13B
First Round
Jones County 41, Crazy Horse 16
District 14B
First Round
Philip 46, Rapid City Christian 25
District 15B
First Round
Dupree 63, Tiospaye Topa 55
Lemmon 59, Wakpala 29
District 16B
First Round
Harding County 51, Takini 30
District 2B
First Round
Langford 53, Aberdeen Christian 17
District 3B

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First Round
Faulkton 73, Edmunds Central 17
Potter County 41, Eureka/Bowdle 30
District 4B
First Round
Highmore-Harrold 47, Sunshine Bible Academy 26
District 6B
First Round
James Valley Christian 46, Iroquois 28
District 9B
First Round
Scotland 53, Freeman Academy/Marion 40
Region 8A
First Round
Belle Fourche 58, Hot Springs 22
Custer 50, Lead-Deadwood 34

Thousands of demonstrators across US say 'Not My President'

By JULIE WALKER, Associated Press

Thousands of demonstrators turned out Monday across the U.S. to challenge Donald Trump in a Presidents Day protest dubbed Not My President's Day.

The protests on the federal holiday didn't draw nearly as many people as the million-plus who thronged the streets following the Republican president's inauguration a month earlier, but the message was similar.

Thousands of flag-waving protesters lined up outside Central Park in Manhattan. Many in the crowd chanted "No ban, no wall. The Trump regime has got to fall." They held aloft signs saying "Uphold the Constitution Now" and "Impeach the Liar."

Nova Calise, one of the New York City organizers, said Presidents Day was "a perfect time to protest the person that's currently holding the title of President of the United States," adding Trump didn't share the values of those demonstrating Monday.

A rally in downtown Los Angeles also drew thousands. Demonstrators there called attention to Trump's crackdown on immigration and his party's response to climate change and the environment. Organizers said they chose to rally on the holiday as a way to honor past presidents by exercising their constitutional right to assemble and peacefully protest. They chanted: "Love not hate makes America great."

In Chicago, several hundred rallied across the river from the Trump Tower, shouting "Hey, hey, ho, ho, Donald Trump has got to go."

Rebecca Wolfram of Chicago, who's in her 60s, said concerns about climate change and immigrant rights under Trump prompted her to start attending rallies.

"I'm trying to demonstrate as much as possible until I figure out what else to do," said Wolfram, who held a sign that said "Old white ladies are really displeased."

Several hundred demonstrated in Washington, D.C. Dozens gathered around the fountain in Dupont Circle chanting "Dump Trump" and "Love, not hate: That's what makes America great."

Dozens marched through midtown Atlanta for a rally named with a Georgia flavor: "ImPEACH NOW! (Not My) President's Day March."

Hundreds of protesters chanting "This is what democracy looks like" marched through Salt Lake City.

The Salt Lake Tribune reports (<http://bit.ly/2kFqWIG>) that the crowd marched to push back against Trump and his administration's stance on such issues as the environment, immigration, free speech and Russia.

Some people raised signs that said "Not My President," while others held up a large American flag. Protester Reg Brookings warned the crowd that Trump is trying to divide the country by making such groups as immigrants the enemy.

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A small but unruly group of protesters faced off with police in downtown Portland, Oregon.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports (<http://bit.ly/2lfx6xL>) the police confronted the crowd in front of the Edith Green-Wendell Wyatt Federal Building. Police took some people into custody.

Hundreds of Trump opponents and supporters turned out in Rapid City, South Dakota.

A larger anti-Trump faction stood on a street corner as part of a "Not My President" protest, similar to other demonstrations being held across the country. A group supporting the president lined up on a different corner at the same intersection. Police were on hand and the groups remained peaceful.

The Rapid City Journal (<http://bit.ly/2l1mzDK>) reported the anti-Trump protesters held up posters including some reading, "Make America Think Again" and "Build bridges, not walls." Supporters of the president waved American flags and held signs saying "God Bless our Presidents; Go Trump" and "Veterans for Trump."

Walker reported from New York City. Associated Press writers Jeff Martin in Atlanta, Tammy Webber in Chicago, Alanna Durkin Richer in Richmond and Martha Bellisle in Seattle, Washington, contributed to this story.

Deadline looms for Dakota Access pipeline protest camp

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON, Associated Press**

CANNON BALL, N.D. (AP) — As dawn breaks over an encampment that was once home to thousands of people protesting the Dakota Access oil pipeline, a few hundred holdouts rise for another day of resistance.

They aren't deterred by the threat of flooding, nor by declarations from state and federal authorities that they must leave by Wednesday or face possible arrest. They're determined to remain and fight a pipeline they maintain threatens the very sanctity of the land.

"If we don't stand now, when will we?" said Tiffanie Pieper, of San Diego, who has been in the camp most of the winter.

Protesters have been at the campsite since August to fight the \$3.8 billion pipeline that will carry oil from North Dakota through South Dakota and Iowa to a shipping point in Illinois. Dallas-based Energy Transfer Partners began work on the last big section of the pipeline this month after the Army gave it permission to lay pipe under a reservoir on the Missouri River. The protest camp is on Army Corps of Engineers land nearby.

The protests have been led by Native American tribes, particularly the Standing Rock Sioux and Cheyenne River Sioux, whose reservation is downstream. They say the pipeline threatens drinking water and cultural sites. ETP disputes that.

Faced with the prospect of spring flooding, some protesters are considering moving to higher ground, though not necessarily off the federal land. Some may move to the Standing Rock Reservation, where the Cheyenne River Sioux is leasing land to provide camping space even though Standing Rock Sioux Chairman Dave Archambault has urged protesters to leave.

"We have the same goals," Cheyenne River Chairman Harold Frazier said of himself and Archambault. "We don't agree on whether or not the water protectors should be on the ground."

On Monday, North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum talked with Archambault on the telephone about efforts to clean up and vacate the protest camp, Burgum's office said. Burgum and Archambault both stressed the importance of keeping lines of communication open, including a one-page flyer that the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs will distribute in the camp, reminding protesters that the main camp will be evacuated at 2 p.m. Wednesday and re-entry will not be allowed, Burgum's office said.

Archambault said Monday he continues to ask that there be no forced removal of remaining campers. He said the state has notified the tribe that law enforcement will enter the camp Wednesday and "will peacefully ask those to vacate."

"We ask that everyone keep public safety their top priority at this time," Archambault said in an email to The Associated Press.

More than 230 truckloads of debris have been hauled out as of Monday, according to the governor's office. Archambault said plans call for continuing the cleanup after Wednesday.

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Those urging the protesters to leave say they're concerned about possible flooding in the area as snow melts.

"The purpose of this is to close the land to ensure no one gets harmed," said Corps Capt. Ryan Hignight. One concern is that floodwaters could wash tons of trash and debris at the encampment into the nearby rivers.

"One of the biggest environmental threats to the Missouri is the camp itself," Burgum said.

Many in camp think authorities are exaggerating the flood threat and trying to turn public sentiment against them.

"They're talking like it will be a flood that will wipe out all of existence," said Luke Black Elk, a Cheyenne River Sioux from South Dakota. Some flooding is likely, he said, but "most of it won't be that bad."

The camp has been the site of numerous and sometimes violent clashes between police and protesters who call themselves "water protectors," with more than 700 arrests. The camp's population has dwindled as the pipeline battle has largely moved into the courts.

Protesters who remain say they're prepared to be arrested, but will remain peaceful.

"We'll make it difficult for them to handcuff us, but there will be no forceful opposition," said Bryce Pppard, from Oregon.

The Corps and the governor say they would rather there were no arrests.

"The ideal situation is zero arrests are made because everybody figures out that it's not a place where you want to be when the flood starts to happen," Burgum said.

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

Off-duty trooper helps teens out of fiery wreck in SD

BATH, S.D. (AP) — Authorities say an off-duty South Dakota highway patrolman stopped to help a group of teenagers out of burning vehicle after a crash that injured 10 people.

The two-vehicle crash happened Sunday night near Bath. A spokesman for the South Dakota Department of Public Safety says both vehicles were westbound on U.S. Highway 12.

Six teens were in a 2004 Jeep Cherokee that was having mechanical problems. The Jeep was going about 10 mph with its hazard lights activated when authorities say it was rear-ended by a compact SUV and caught fire.

The Aberdeen News (<http://bit.ly/2m20cCk>) reports nine people were taken by ambulance to hospitals. Another was airlifted to a hospital. Their injuries range from serious but non-life-threatening to minor.

The crash remains under investigation, but charges are not pending.

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

ND governor, tribal leader discuss camp cleanup, evacuation

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum has talked with Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Chairman Dave Archambault about efforts to clean up and vacate a camp protesting the Dakota Access oil pipeline.

Burgum's office says the governor and the tribal chairman talked on the phone Monday about the importance of evacuating and cleaning up the camp.

State and federal authorities have told protesters to leave the camp by Wednesday or face possible arrest. Authorities are concerned spring flooding could wash tons of trash into nearby rivers.

Burgum's office says more than 230 truckloads have been hauled out as of Monday.

Protesters have been at the campsite since August to fight the \$3.8 billion pipeline. Opponents say the pipeline threatens drinking water and cultural sites. Dallas-based developer Energy Transfer Partners disputes that.

Hundreds rally in Rapid City against, for President Trump

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Hundreds of people turned out in Rapid City to both oppose Donald Trump on Presidents Day and also to support the new Republican president.

A larger anti-Trump faction stood on a street corner Monday as part of a “Not My President” protest, similar to other demonstrations being held across the country. A group supporting the president lined up on a different corner at the same intersection.

The Rapid City Journal (<http://bit.ly/2l1mzDK>) reports both sides held signs supporting their positions. Anti-Trump protesters held posters saying “Make America Think Again,” and “Build bridges, not walls.”

Supporters of the president waved American flags and held signs saying “God Bless our Presidents; Go Trump” and “Veterans for Trump.”

Police were on hand. The crowds remained peaceful.

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

State lawmakers to weigh bills on abortion, campaign finance

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota lawmakers are set to consider measures on abortion, campaign finance and the governor’s emergency response powers this week. Here’s a look at some of the proposals they plan to take up after they return to Pierre on Tuesday:

CROSSOVER DAY

Lawmakers face an important deadline Thursday, which is the final day to pass bills out of their chamber of origin. The House and Senate may have to work late to get through any bills remaining to be considered by the end of crossover day.

ETHICS AND CAMPAIGNS

Lawmakers plan to tackle a raft of proposals on campaign finance and government ethics after lawmakers recently repealed a voter-imposed government ethics overhaul. The full state House is to consider a bill that aims to restrict the flow of out-of-state money into South Dakota ballot question campaigns. A House panel plans to take up a proposal Wednesday that would require more transparency from organizations that contribute \$25,000 or more in a year to a ballot measure committee.

A House committee that day is scheduled to consider a bill that would establish a state government accountability board, which would review and investigate issues ranging from bribery to theft of public funds.

PROTEST BILL

A Senate panel on Wednesday plans to take up a public safety proposal from Gov. Dennis Daugaard that was spurred by the Dakota Access oil pipeline protests in North Dakota. SB176 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.

TEACHING SCIENCE

A bill that says teachers can’t be prohibited from discussing the strengths and weaknesses of scientific information in class is set to be heard Wednesday in a House committee. Republican Sen. Jeff Monroe, the prime sponsor of SB55, has said he’s heard from concerned teachers including one who was forced to teach climate change as a fact.

But, some parents and educators are concerned that it could bring nonscientific theories into science classes. The bill has already

ABORTION BILL

A House committee on Tuesday is set to take up HB1189, which aims to ban a type of second-trimester abortion. The procedure is known medically as dilation-and-extraction, but the bill calls it “dismemberment

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abortion." Planned Parenthood, which operates South Dakota's only abortion clinic, which is in Sioux Falls, says it doesn't perform the procedure in South Dakota. However, some hospitals use it when a woman's life is in danger.

CONSTITUTIONAL CARRY

A bill that would allow people who can legally carry a concealed handgun in South Dakota to do so without a permit, HB1072, is set to be debated in the House. A similar bill, SB94, is scheduled for a hearing Tuesday in a Senate committee. Daugaard has said he will veto such legislation if it reaches his desk.

INDUSTRIAL HEMP

The House is set to weigh a bill that would allow people who pass background checks and get a license from the state agriculture department to cultivate industrial hemp. If approved, HB1204 would still need to make it through the Senate, where a hemp bill died in committee last session. Daugaard has said that he opposes it.

BEEF LABELING

The state Senate is to consider a bill that would require retailers to display the country of origin of beef sold in South Dakota. SB135 would require stores to designate on a placard the originating country of beef or that the country is unknown, a move that supporters say could help increase demand for U.S. beef.

Volunteers scour lake for duck hunter missing since December

ARLINGTON, S.D. (AP) — About 30 volunteers are searching for the body of a duck hunter whose boat capsized on a lake in Brookings County in early December.

Thomas Hill, 28, was duck hunting with his brother, Matthew Hill, 23, when their boat capsized on Brush Lake. The body of the younger brother was quickly recovered but the older sibling was never found.

Volunteers have drilled hundreds of holes across the lake and have dropped high-tech cameras into each hole in their underwater search.

"You can see the structure of the bottom of the lake. You can see tree, fish, rocks. If you happened to see a body in there, you would pick that up," Arlington Fire Chief Todd Smidt told KELO-TV (<http://bit.ly/2kZAYQL>). Smidt said he's invested about 70 hours in the search.

"We're not going to quit until we recover the body. So if that means going until we get boats in, we'll just keep working at it. I just want to stay out here until the job is done," Smidt said.

Search dogs from Codington County have also been at the lake. Smidt said the dogs picked up scent in the northeast corner of the lake where the boat was found, but that has not led to Hill's body.

Information from: KELO-TV, <http://www.keloland.com>

Pinpointing cause of death for NK's Kim Jong Nam may be hard

By EILEEN NG and MARGIE MASON, Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Determining whether poison killed the half brother of North Korea's leader in a busy airport is proving difficult for Malaysian officials, who said Tuesday that autopsy results are so far inconclusive.

More than a week has passed since Kim Jong Nam was approached by two women at a budget air terminal in Kuala Lumpur and apparently attacked in the face with an unknown substance. Kim did not suffer a heart attack and had no puncture wounds, such as those a needle would have left, Director General of Health Noor Hisham Abdullah told reporters. He did not dismiss poison as a potential cause.

"We have to confirm with the lab report before we can make any conclusive remark," he said.

He added that medical specimens have been sent to experts for analysis. However, Rahmat Awang, director of Malaysia's National Poison Center in Penang, said he has not yet received any samples despite

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expecting them to arrive two days ago.

He said with a case this high-profile, specimens are likely being sent to his lab and to facilities abroad to seek the cause of death or confirm findings already reached in Kuala Lumpur.

Identifying a specific poison can be challenging, especially if a minute amount was used and it did not penetrate fat cells in the victim's tissue. If the toxin only entered the bloodstream, it could leave the body very quickly. And even if a substance is found, it would need to match the symptoms Kim Jong Nam experienced before death. The more unique the poison is, the harder it is to find.

"Our lab, for example, traces the usual chemicals," Awang said. "If the substance involved is not something we often see, the likelihood is that we might not be able to detect it."

Highly sophisticated facilities, such as in Japan or at the FBI's crime lab in the U.S., are among those that have greater capabilities for discovering unusual toxic substances.

The case has perplexed leading forensic toxicologists who study murder by poison. They say the airport attack is one of the most bizarre cases in the books, and question how the two women could walk away unscathed after deploying an agent potent enough to kill Kim Jong Nam before he could even make it to the hospital.

Some type of nerve gas or ricin, a deadly substance found in castor beans, have been suggested as possible toxins used. A strong opioid compound could also have been liquidized, though that would likely have incapacitated the victim immediately. Surveillance footage instead shows Kim walking calmly downstairs to the airport's clinic.

Kim, the older half brother of North Korea's reclusive ruler Kim Jong Un, had spent most of the past 15 years living in China and Southeast Asia. The victim is believed to have had at least three children with two women. No family members have come forward to claim the body.

The attack spiraled into diplomatic fury when Malaysia refused to hand over Kim Jong Nam's corpse to North Korean diplomats after his death, and proceeded with an autopsy over the ambassador's objections. The two nations have made a series of increasingly angry statements since then, with Malaysia insisting it is simply following its legal protocols, and North Korea accusing Malaysia of working in collusion with its enemy South Korea.

Seoul's spy agency believes North Korea was behind the killing, but has produced no evidence.

Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak told reporters Tuesday that the North Korean ambassador's remarks were "diplomatically rude" and said Pyongyang "should help us to find out the truth."

Isolated North Korea has a long history of ordering killings of people it views as threats to its regime. Kim Jong Nam was not known to be seeking political power; he was best known for his penchants for drinking, gambling and expensive restaurants. But his position as eldest son of the family that has ruled North Korea since it was founded could have made him appear to be a danger.

Police have so far arrested four people carrying identity documents from North Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam. Those held include two women who were allegedly seen approaching Kim Jong Nam on Feb. 13 as he stood in the departure hall at an airport ticketing kiosk.

One of the women, Doan Thi Huong, is from Nghia Binh, Vietnam, a farming and largely Catholic village about 130 kilometers (80 miles) south of Hanoi. Her father, Doan Van Thanh, said Tuesday he can't believe she would do such an "earthshaking" thing.

"She is my daughter and I understand her," he said in his simply furnished home. "She was scared of rats and toads. She would not have dared to do such thing."

Thanh said his daughter left the village about 10 years ago to study at a pharmaceutical school in Hanoi, and once told him she was working in communications. She occasionally visited home, most recently during the Lunar New Year holiday in late January.

Her niece, 18-year-old high school student Dinh Thi Quyen, said she believes Huong was duped into taking part. "My aunt is a very nice and kind person, but she could easily trust in other people," she said.

Quyen said Huong called her Feb. 14, one day after Kim's death, and asked for her help to put down a deposit on a dress she liked in a Hanoi shop.

The Indonesian woman arrested has said she was tricked into taking part in the attack, believing it was

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part of a comedy TV show stunt.

Grainy video from airport security cameras obtained by Japan's Fuji TV seems to show two women approaching Kim Jong Nam from different directions that morning, with one slipping up behind him and appearing to hold something over his mouth for a few seconds. Then the women turn and calmly walk off in different directions.

Kim Jong Nam, a heavyset man in his mid-40s, died soon after en route to a hospital after suffering a seizure, officials say. He was at the airport to fly to Macau, where he had a home.

Investigators are still looking for four North Korean men who arrived in Malaysia on different days beginning Jan. 31 and flew out the day of the attack.

Asia Medical Writer Margie Mason in Jakarta, Indonesia, and AP writer Tran Van Minh in Nghia Binh, Vietnam, 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:

Removes hyperlinks on 1st and 7th items

1. TRUMP NAMES A NEW NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER TO REPLACE OUSTED MICHAEL FLYNN

The new national security adviser, Army Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster, enjoys the reputation as a scholarly officer and holds a Ph.D. in military history.

2. ISRAELI COURT SENTENCES SOLDIER FOR FATAL SHOOTING

Sgt. Elor Azaria is sentenced to 18 months in prison for the killing last year of a wounded Palestinian attacker.

3. WHO DIED ON A PLANE CRASH IN MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

An Australian pilot and four American tourists on a golfing vacation were those killed shortly after their light plane took off.

4. ANOTHER MIGRANT TRAGEDY ON THE MEDITERRANEAN

The Libyan Red Crescent says that at least 74 bodies had washed ashore in Libya.

5. CAUSE OF DEATH STILL UNKNOWN FOR EXILED KIM

Malaysian officials say the cause of death has still not been determined in apparent poisoning at Kuala Lumpur airport.

6. WHAT'S NEXT FOR MILO YIANNOPOULOS

The right-wing provocateur's publisher canceled his book "Dangerous." He's also been disinvited to a conservative conference following his attempt to clarify past comments on relationships between boys and older men falls flat with organizers.

7. THE LATEST PROTESTS AGAINST TRUMP

Thousands of demonstrators across the U.S. showed up to challenge Trump in a Presidents Day protest dubbed Not My President's Day.

8. HOW AN UNHAPPY TEEN LEFT BEHIND A SKINHEADS GROUP

Shannon Martinez is helping others do the same as part of an emerging U.S. movement that helps people quit hate organizations.

9. HOW A NEW ENGLAND SCHOOL IS HELPING STUDENTS CONNECT WITH ONE ANOTHER

A Connecticut school district has teamed up with the mother of a Sandy Hook school shooting victim to help teach children about empathy.

10. TRUMP'S SECOND MONTH IN OFFICE

The president is hoping to leave behind the controversies of his first month and focus on health care and tax overhauls long sought by Republicans.

Azerbaijan's leader names his wife as 1st vice president

BAKU, Azerbaijan (AP) — Azerbaijan's president on Tuesday appointed his wife as the first vice president of the ex-Soviet nation — the person next in line in the nation's power hierarchy.

Ilham Aliyev, 55 named his wife Mehriban, 52, to the position created after a constitutional referendum in September. Mehriban, who married her husband when she was 19, graduated from a medical university. She has served previously as a lawmaker and headed a charity.

The vice president takes over the country's presidency if the president is unable to perform their duties, according to the constitution. It doesn't describe the first vice president's duties, but it's expected that they will include overseeing the Cabinet.

Aliyev's critics say the September referendum that also extended the presidential term from five to seven years effectively cemented a dynastic rule. In 2003, Aliyev succeeded his father, who had ruled Azerbaijan first as the Communist Party boss and then as a post-Soviet president for the greater part of three decades.

Aliyev and his wife have two daughters and a son.

Aliyev has firmly allied the energy-rich Shiite Muslim nation with the West, helping secure his country's energy and security interests and offset Russia's influence in the strategic Caspian Sea region. At the same time, his government has long faced criticism in the West for alleged human rights abuses and suppression of dissent.

Azerbaijan's leader has cast himself as a guarantor of stability, an image that has a wide appeal in the country where painful memories are still fresh of the turmoil that accompanied the 1991 breakup of the Soviet Union.

In Trump's future looms a familiar shutdown threat

By ANDREW TAYLOR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Add a potential government shutdown to embattled President Donald Trump's growing roster of headaches.

Beneath the capital's radar looms a vexing problem — a catchall spending package that's likely to top \$1 trillion and could get embroiled in the politics of building Trump's wall at the U.S.-Mexico border and a budget-busting Pentagon request.

While a shutdown deadline has a few weeks to go, the huge measure looms as an unpleasant reality check for Trump and Republicans controlling Congress.

Despite the big power shift in Washington, the path to success — and averting a shuttering of the government — goes directly through Senate Democrats, whose votes are required to pass the measure. And any measure that satisfies Democrats and their new leader, Sen. Chuck Schumer of New York, is sure to alienate tea party Republicans. Trump's determination to build his wall on the U.S.-Mexico border faces a fight with Democrats, too.

For now, the new Democratic leader is cautious.

"We'll have to wait and see what happens," Schumer said. "I hope they won't jam up the supplemental (spending bill) with poison pills."

At issue is the annual must-do legislation funding government agencies and departments. The path for the huge spending measure — by Republicans' own choice a piece of leftover business from last year — would be difficult and complicated in a smoothly running Washington. But partisanship has engulfed the city, and the upcoming measure is made even more challenging once upcoming Trump requests for \$18 billion or more for the Pentagon and money for his contentious border wall are added to the mix.

For years, Republicans needed President Barack Obama's signoff and relied on Democratic votes to pass the measures and balance out opposition from tea partiers.

Trump's election has shifted the balance of power in Washington, but the GOP's grip on the Senate — where 60 votes are needed for most legislation — is actually weaker. Some House conservatives are demanding a round of budget cuts to "offset" new spending on the Pentagon and Trump's wall.

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"If all of a sudden we're not worried about pay-fors for our spending, then we have been hypocrites," said tea party Rep. Raul Labrador, R-Idaho. "I'm not going to vote for anything that just increases spending without looking for a way to pay for that in the future."

That's far easier said than done, especially with the budget year nearly half over. Democrats might accept the Pentagon funding — aimed at reversing what Pentagon hawks see as a slide in military readiness and procurement — even though it would unravel a hard-won 2015 budget pact. But they won't stand for cuts to domestic programs to pay for it, and neither will more pragmatic Republicans.

"I don't think we'd be able to jam anything through that didn't have some significant buy-in by Democrats," Sen. Roy Blunt, R-Mo., said.

Lawmakers face an April 28 deadline, which seems like plenty of time. The administration, however, is off to a slow start, just last Wednesday winning Senate confirmation of its budget director, Mick Mulvaney, who has his hands full with Trump's broader budget submission for the upcoming year as well as plans for the supplemental Pentagon spending or the border wall.

It's all complicated by the tumult surrounding Trump's presidency, including his low approval ratings and vehement opposition from rank-and-file Democrats still stinging from Trump's upset victory and his provocative travel ban.

GOP leaders like House Speaker Paul Ryan of Wisconsin are eager to avert any shutdown. The most recent one, caused by House Republicans, came as tea party lawmakers insisted on a failed strategy of using shutdown threats as leverage to try to block implementation of Obama's health care law.

An end-of-April shutdown still seems unlikely. Neither Republicans nor Democrats want that. But a stumble is possible if Senate Democrats filibuster the measure over budget additions like the border wall with Mexico.

And in the House, dysfunction is always possible, especially if conservatives shun the measure as they have with previous bipartisan versions of spending bills. That led top leaders like then-Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, to turn to House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi, hat in hand, to get enough votes. Now, with Trump in the White House, House Democrats can't be counted upon to help.

"If they need Democratic votes, because some of their people will vote for nothing, as you well know, then we'll have to talk," Pelosi said. "But I fear that if they don't need Democratic votes, the product would be something very horrible for the American people."

And there's still the Senate, where Republicans hold a 52-48 edge, short of filibuster-proof 60.

"So it doesn't mean just because (Republicans) have a majority in the House, a majority in the Senate and now the White House that we can do anything we want," Rep. Mike Simpson, R-Idaho, said.

Supreme Court hears case of Mexican teen slain across border

By MARK SHERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court is taking up an appeal from the parents of a Mexican teenager who was killed by a U.S. Border Patrol agent. The case could help define when foreigners outside the U.S. have access to American courts.

The justices are hearing argument Tuesday in a case that arose from an incident that took place in June 2010 in the cement culvert that separates El Paso, Texas, from Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.

The circumstances of exactly what occurred are in dispute, but what is clear is that the agent was on the U.S. side of the border when he fired his gun, striking Sergio Adrian Hernandez Guereca on the Mexican side.

Lower courts dismissed the parents' lawsuit. The Supreme Court is considering whether noncitizens who are injured or killed outside the United States can have their day in American courts.

The legal issues are different, but the Supreme Court case resembles the court battle over President Donald Trump's ban on travelers from seven majority Muslim nations in at least one sense. Courts examining both issues are weighing the rights of foreigners.

Privacy experts also are watching the case because it could affect how courts treat global internet surveillance, particularly when foreigners are involved. "It's there, not in the context of a cross-border shooting, that the Fourth Amendment question in Hernandez seems to matter most," George Washington University

law professor Orin Kerr wrote on the Volokh Conspiracy blog.

The Fourth Amendment protects against unreasonable searches and seizures.

U.S. officials chose not to prosecute Agent Jesus Mesa Jr. in the killing of the Mexican teenager and the Obama administration refused a request to extradite him so that he could face criminal charges in Mexico.

The Trump administration, like its predecessor, is arguing that the location of the teenager's death, in Mexico, should be the end of the story.

But Sergio's shooting was not an isolated border incident. Parents of a teenager killed in Nogales, Mexico, from gunshots fired across the border by a U.S. agent have filed a civil rights lawsuit that is being delayed until the Supreme Court rules.

The government's response to that incident was notable because prosecutors are pursuing second-degree murder charges against Agent Lonnie Swartz in the death of Jose Antonio Elena Rodriguez, 16.

A 2013 report commissioned by U.S. Customs and Border Protection and written by an outside group faulted the agency for not sufficiently investigating the 67 shootings that took place from 2010 to 2012 and questioned the use of force in some of those incidents. The agency has said it has tightened its policies, particularly in response to rock-throwing incidents.

Trump's new national security adviser a soldier-scholar

By CATHERINE LUCEY and ROBERT BURNS, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has chosen as his national security adviser a soldier-scholar who fought in both Iraq wars and published an influential book that called out the U.S. government for "lies" that led to the Vietnam War.

Army Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster would remain on active military duty while leading the National Security Council, White House officials said Monday. He joined two retired generals — Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly — already in Trump's inner circle, adding to the impression that the president prefers military men in top roles.

Trump called McMaster "a man of tremendous talent and tremendous experience" when he introduced his new national security adviser at his private Florida club. McMaster, who returned to Washington with the president, said he looked forward to "doing everything that I can to advance and protect the interests of the American people."

McMaster replaced retired Gen. Michael Flynn, who was fired last week after Trump determined that Flynn had misled Vice President Mike Pence about the nature of his discussion with Russia's ambassador to the U.S. during the presidential transition. The White House said McMaster was one of four candidates Trump interviewed for the job over the weekend.

McMaster has been heavily involved in the Army's efforts to shape its future force and its way of preparing for war. He is the director of the Army Capabilities Integration Center, a sort of military think tank, at Fort Eustis, Virginia.

McMaster commanded troops in both American wars in Iraq — in 1991, when he fought in a storied tank battle known as the Battle of 73 Easting, and again in 2005-2006 in one of the most violent periods of the insurgency that developed after the U.S.-led invasion in 2003. He is credited with using innovative approaches to countering the insurgency in the northern Iraqi city of Tal Afar when he commanded the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment. He later served as a special adviser to the top U.S. commander in Iraq.

McMaster, born in 1962, earned a doctoral degree in history from the University of North Carolina. Outside the Army, he may be best known for his 1997 book, "Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies that Led to Vietnam," a searing indictment of the U.S. government's mishandling of the Vietnam War. The book earned him a reputation for being willing to speak truth to power.

How closely McMaster's and Trump's views align were not clear. On Russia, McMaster appears to hold a much dimmer view than Trump of Moscow's military and political objectives in Europe.

In remarks at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in May 2016, McMaster said Russia

managed to annex Crimea and intervene militarily in eastern Ukraine "at zero cost" from the international community.

McMaster said Moscow's broader goal is to "collapse the post-Cold War security, economic and political order in Europe and replace that order with something that is more sympathetic to Russian interests."

In his current role, McMaster has studied the way Russia developed and executed its campaigns in Crimea and Ukraine, where it used what some call "hybrid warfare" — part political, part disinformation, part military.

The National Security Council has not adjusted smoothly to Trump's leadership. The president has suggested he does not trust holdovers from the Obama administration and complained about leaks to reporters. His decision to put his top political adviser on the council's senior committee drew sharp criticism. On Friday, the head of the council's Western Hemisphere division was fired after he criticized Trump's policies and his inner circle of advisers.

Trump said retired Army Lt. Gen. Keith Kellogg, who had been his acting adviser, would serve as the National Security Council chief of staff. He also said he would be asking John Bolton, a former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, to work with them in a "somewhat different capacity."

4 US tourists and pilot killed in Australian plane crash

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — An Australian pilot and four American tourists on a golfing vacation were killed when a light plane crashed in flames into a shopping mall on Tuesday shortly after takeoff in the Australian city of Melbourne, officials said.

The five were on a twin-engine Beechcraft Super King Air that crashed about 45 minutes before the Direct Factory Outlet mall in suburban Essendon was to open, Police Minister Lisa Neville said.

The U.S. Embassy in Canberra confirmed that four victims were U.S. citizens. Texans Greg Reynolds De Haven and Russell Munsch have been identified by their families on social media as two of the victims.

De Haven's sister Denelle Wicht posted on Facebook that her 70-year-old brother had been killed "on a once in a lifetime trip to Australia" with friends.

The pilot was Max Quartermain, owner of the charter company Corporate and Leisure Travel.

The plane had taken off from Melbourne's second-biggest airport at Essendon for a golfing trip to King Island, 255 kilometers (160 miles) to the south, officials said.

The mall adjoins the airport.

Police Assistant Commissioner Stephen Leane said no one outside the plane was injured.

"Looking at the fireball, it is incredibly lucky that no one was at the back of those stores or in the car park of the stores, that no one was even hurt," Leane said.

The pilot reported a "catastrophic engine failure" moments before the plane crashed into a storage area at the rear of the mall, police said.

Police and paramedics rushed to the crash site, where firefighters doused the flames.

A witness who gave his name as Jason told Australian Broadcasting Corp. he was passing the mall in a taxi when the plane crashed.

"I saw this plane coming in really low and fast. I couldn't see the impact but when it hit the building there was a massive fireball," he said.

"I could feel the heat through the window of the taxi, and then a wheel — it looked like a plane wheel — bounced on the road and hit the front of the taxi as we were driving along," he said.

Iraqi troops advance on western Mosul as Mattis holds talks

By BRAM JANSSEN, Associated Press

SOUTH OF MOSUL, Iraq (AP) — Iraqi forces advanced Monday into the southern outskirts of Mosul on the second day of a push to drive Islamic State militants from the city's western half, as the visiting U.S. defense secretary met with officials to discuss the fight against the extremists.

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With aerial support from the U.S.-led coalition, Iraqi police and army troops launched the offensive Sunday, part of a 100-day-old campaign that has already driven the militants from the eastern half of the city.

Iraqi helicopters fired rockets at the village of Abu Saif early Monday, targeting a hill that overlooks the city's airport. By noon, the forces entered the village and gained control over much of the strategic hill as fighting was still raging.

Separately, militarized police in armored vehicles were moving toward the sprawling Ghazlani military base on the southwestern outskirts of the city.

A U.S.-led coalition has been providing close air support throughout the campaign to retake Iraq's second-largest city. U.S. special operations forces are embedded with some Iraqi units and thousands of U.S. troops are in Iraq providing logistical and other support.

Meanwhile, U.S. Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis was holding discussions with U.S. and Iraqi officials, a week before he is expected to present a new strategy to President Donald Trump for defeating the Islamic State group.

"We're going to make certain that we've got good situational awareness of what we face as we work together and fight alongside each other," Mattis told reporters traveling with him.

Trump has repeatedly vowed to eliminate the extremist group but has provided few details about how his approach might differ from that of the Obama administration, which had partnered with Syrian and Iraqi forces to drive IS out of several towns and cities.

The battle for western Mosul, the extremist group's last major urban bastion in Iraq, is expected to be the most daunting yet.

The streets are older and narrower in that sector of the city, which stretches west from the Tigris River, forcing Iraqi soldiers to leave the relative safety of their armored vehicles. The presence of up to 750,000 civilians also poses a challenge.

Two suicide car bombers struck army and paramilitary forces west of Mosul on Monday, killing and wounding a number of troops, two army officers said, without specifying the number of casualties. A third suicide car bomber was blown up before reaching the troops, they said, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief the media.

IS claimed responsibility for two attacks in an online statement, saying the attackers were British and Iraqi.

Associated Press writers Lolita C. Baldor and Qassim Abdul-Zahra in Baghdad and Maamoun Youssef in Cairo contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to show that Mattis is U.S. secretary of defense, not secretary of state.

Russia's ambassador to United Nations falls ill, dies at 64

By EDITH M. LEDERER and JENNIFER PELTZ, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Russia's ambassador to the United Nations, a veteran diplomat known as a potent, savvy yet personable voice for his country's interests who could both spar and get along with his Western counterparts, died suddenly Monday after falling ill in his office at Russia's U.N. mission.

Vitaly Churkin was taken to a hospital, where he died a day before his 65th birthday, said Russia's deputy U.N. ambassador, Vladimir Safronkov. The cause of his death was unknown.

As Russia's envoy at the United Nations since 2006 and a diplomat for decades, Churkin was considered Moscow's great champion at the U.N., where he was the longest-serving ambassador on the powerful Security Council.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called Churkin "an outstanding diplomat."

"Ambassador Churkin served the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation with distinction through some of the most challenging and momentous periods of recent history," Guterres said in a statement.

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Russian President Vladimir Putin esteemed Churkin's "professionalism and diplomatic talents," spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, according to the state news agency TASS. Diplomatic colleagues from around the world mourned Churkin as a master in their field: a passionate and effective advocate for his country; an intellectual with a doctorate in history who was also a onetime child actor with an acute wit; a formidable adversary who could remain a friend.

"We did not always see things the same way, but he unquestionably advocated his country's positions with great skill," U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley said in a statement.

Her predecessor, Samantha Power, described him on Twitter as a "diplomatic maestro and deeply caring man" who had done all he could to bridge differences between the U.S. and Russia.

Those differences were evident when Power and Churkin spoke at the Security Council last month, when she lashed out at Russia for annexing Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula and for carrying out "a merciless military assault" in Syria. Churkin accused Democratic former President Barack Obama's administration, which Power served, of "desperately" searching for scapegoats for its failures in Iraq, Syria and Libya.

Churkin died weeks into some major adjustments for Russia, the U.N. and the international community, with a new secretary-general at the world body and a new administration in Washington. Meanwhile, the Security Council is due this week to discuss Ukraine and Syria.

From Moscow's vantage point, "Churkin was like a rock against which were broken the attempts by our enemies to undermine what constitutes the glory of Russia," Tass quoted Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov as saying.

Churkin's U.N. counterparts "experienced and respected the pride that he took in serving his country and the passion and, at times, very stern resolution that he brought to his job," said General Assembly President Peter Thomson, of Fiji.

But colleagues also respected Churkin's intellect, diplomatic skills, good humor and consideration for others, Thomson said.

Britain's U.N. ambassador, Matthew Rycroft, recalled "a diplomatic giant and wonderful character." Former French U.N. Ambassador Gerard Araud, now French ambassador to the U.S., described Churkin as "abrasive, funny and technically impeccable."

Churkin emerged as the face of a new approach to foreign affairs by the Soviet Union in 1986, when he testified before the U.S. Congress about the Chernobyl nuclear plant disaster. It was rare for any Soviet official to appear before Congress.

In fluent English, Churkin provided little new information about Chernobyl but engaged in a friendly, sometimes humorous, exchange with lawmakers who weren't accustomed to such a tone — or to a representative in a fashionably well-fitting suit and a stylish haircut — from the U.S.S.R.

After he returned to the foreign ministry in Moscow, he ably dodged questions and parried with Western correspondents, often with a smile, at briefings in the early 1990s. Within the government, he proved himself an able and flexible presence who survived numerous course changes after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. He held ambassadorships in Canada and Belgium, among other posts.

Churkin told Russia Today in an interview this month that diplomacy had become "much more hectic," with political tensions rising and stability elusive in various hotspots. At the time, he looked in good health, reporter Alexey Yaroshevsky tweeted Monday.

Lederer reported from London. Associated Press writers Colleen Long in New York, Cara Anna in Johannesburg and James Heintz and Brian Friedman in Moscow contributed to this report.

Conservative group cancels speech by Yiannopoulos

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Right-wing provocateur Milo Yiannopoulos has been disinvited to this year's Conservative Political Action Conference after his attempt to clarify past comments on relationships between boys and older men fell flat with organizers.

Hours later, his publisher cancelled his book "Dangerous," which had been scheduled to come out in June.

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The American Conservative Union founded and hosts CPAC, which is being held Wednesday through Saturday outside Washington. In a tweet on Monday, ACU chairman Matt Schlapp said that "due to the revelation of an offensive video in the past 24 hours condoning pedophilia, the American Conservative Union has decided to rescind the invitation of Milo Yiannopoulos to speak."

After the polarizing Breitbart News editor was invited, his invitation sparked a backlash. The conservative Reagan Battalion blog tweeted video clips Sunday in which Yiannopoulos discussed Jews, sexual consent, statutory rape, child abuse and homosexuality.

In one clip, Yiannopoulos defends sexual relationships between men and boys as young as 13 years old. He also speaks approvingly of his own sexual relationship with a 29-year-old priest when he was 17.

"In the homosexual world, particularly, some of those relationships between younger boys and older men — the sort of 'coming of age' relationship — those relationships in which those older men help those young boys discover who they are and give them security and safety and provide them with love and a reliable, sort of rock, where they can't speak to their parents," he said.

Later Monday, Simon & Schuster and its Threshold Editions imprint announced that "after careful consideration" they had pulled Yiannopoulos' book, for which pre-orders placed it high on Amazon.com's best-seller lists. The subject of intense controversy from the start, "Dangerous" was originally scheduled to come out in March. But Yiannopoulos pushed back the release to June so he could write about the protests during his recent campus tour, including a cancelled appearance at the University of California, Berkeley.

At the time of his publisher's decision Monday, "Dangerous" ranked No. 83 on Amazon's overall list and No. 1 in the subcategory of "Censorship & Politics."

Simon & Schuster did not offer any specific reason for pulling "Dangerous." In Facebook postings Monday night, Yiannopoulos wrote: "They canceled my book" and "I've gone through worse. This will not defeat me."

Yiannopoulos is known for his vicious criticism of women and Muslims, among others. Last summer, he helped instigate a harassment campaign against "Ghostbusters" star Leslie Jones that led to his banishment from Twitter.

More than 100 Simon & Schuster authors had objected to his book deal, which was announced last December, and prominent feminist writer Roxane Gay withdrew a planned book. Some bookstores had said they would not sell it, although the National Coalition Against Censorship and other free speech organizations had defended the publisher. Threshold is a conservative imprint that has published books by President Donald Trump, who has defended Yiannopoulos, and former Vice President Dick Cheney, among others.

On Facebook, Yiannopoulos blamed deceptive editing and his own "sloppy phrasing" for any indication he supported pedophilia. The British author said he spoke of his own relationship when he was 17 with a man who was 29. The age of consent in the United Kingdom is 16.

It's unclear who edited the videos.

"We realize that Mr. Yiannopoulos has responded on Facebook, but it is insufficient," Schlapp said. "We urge him to immediately further address these disturbing comments."

Schlapp said the invitation was initially extended knowing that free speech on college campuses is a "battlefield where we need brave, conservative standard-bearers."

But he added: "There is no disagreement among our attendees on the evils of sexual abuse of children."

Breitbart is considered by many a platform for the so-called "alt-right" movement, an offshoot of conservatism that mixes racism, white nationalism and populism. Its former executive chairman, Steve Bannon, is now a senior adviser to President Donald Trump.

Associated Press writer Deb Riechmann in Washington and AP National Writer Hillel Italie in New York contributed to this report.

N. Korean envoy blasts Malaysians, calls for joint probe

By EILEEN NG, Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — North Korea's ambassador to Malaysia denounced the country's investigation into the death of the exiled half brother of North Korea's ruler, calling it politically motivated and demanding a joint probe amid increasingly bitter exchanges between the once-friendly nations.

Malaysia responded with its own accusations, with a foreign ministry statement saying the ambassador's comments were "culled from delusions, lies and half-truths." Earlier Monday, Malaysia said it was recalling its ambassador to Pyongyang.

The diplomatic spat comes in the wake of the death last week of Kim Jong Nam, who died after apparently being poisoned in the Kuala Lumpur airport.

The attack spiraled into diplomatic fury when Malaysia refused to hand over Kim's corpse to North Korean diplomats and proceeded with at least one autopsy over the diplomats' objections.

"The investigation by the Malaysian police is not for the clarification of the cause of the death and search for the suspect, but it is out of the political aim," North Korean Ambassador Kang Chol told reporters Monday, saying Malaysia was in collusion with South Korea, as Seoul tries to deflect attention from its own months-long political crisis.

Police "pinned the suspicion on us, and targeted the investigation against us," Kang said, calling on Malaysia to work with North Korea in a joint investigation. Kang referred to the dead man as "Kim Chol," the name on the passport found with Kim Jong Nam.

Malaysia Prime Minister Najib Razak told reporters later Monday that he had confidence in the objectivity of his country's police and doctors.

Malaysia had no reason to "paint the North Koreans in a bad light," he said, adding, "We expect them to understand that we apply the rule of law in Malaysia."

Over the weekend, Kang said Malaysia may be "trying to conceal something," an accusation that led the Malaysian foreign ministry to recall its ambassador to Pyongyang "for consultations" and summon Kang to a meeting.

Police have so far arrested four people carrying identity documents from North Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam. Those arrested include two women who were allegedly seen approaching Kim on Feb. 13 as he stood at a ticketing kiosk at the budget terminal of the Kuala Lumpur airport.

Surveillance video, obtained by Japan's Fuji TV and often grainy and blurred, seems to show the two women approaching Kim Jong Nam from different directions that morning. One comes up behind him and appears to hold something over his mouth for a few seconds.

Then the women turn and calmly walk off in different directions. More video shows Kim, a long-estranged half-brother of North Korea's ruler, walking up to airport workers and security officials, gesturing at his eyes and seemingly asking for help. He then walks alongside as they lead him to the airport clinic.

Fuji TV has not revealed how it acquired the video, which was taken by a series of security cameras as Kim arrived for a flight to Macau, where he had a home.

Kim, who was in his mid-40s, died shortly after the attack, en route to a hospital after suffering a seizure, Malaysian officials say.

Investigators are still looking for four North Korean men who arrived in Malaysia on different days beginning Jan. 31 and flew out the same day as the attack. The four were traveling on regular — not diplomatic — passports, Malaysia's deputy national police chief, Noor Rashid Ibrahim, told reporters.

Indonesian officials said three of those men transited through Jakarta after the apparent assassination, leaving on a nighttime flight to Dubai.

Dubai police and the Dubai government media office did not immediately respond to requests for comment. State-owned airline Emirates declined to comment, citing policies on passenger confidentiality.

Police said they also want to question three other people. Noor Rashid said one was North Korean, but that police had not yet identified the other two. It was not clear if they were suspects or simply wanted for questioning.

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Autopsy results on Kim Jong Nam could be released as early as Wednesday, said Health Minister S. Subramaniam.

Investigators want to speak to Kim Jong Nam's next of kin to formally identify the body. He is believed to have two sons and a daughter with two women living in Beijing and Macau.

According to police, the Indonesian woman is a spa masseuse and the Malaysian man, a caterer, is believed to be her boyfriend. The Vietnamese woman works at an entertainment outlet and the North Korean man works in the information technology department of a Malaysian company, they said.

The Indonesian woman has told investigators that she was duped into thinking she was part of a comedy show prank.

The Malaysian foreign ministry said the government has kept the North Korean Embassy informed, telling them that because "the death occurred in Malaysian soil under mysterious circumstances, it is the responsibility of the Malaysian government to conduct an investigation to identify the cause of death."

South Korea has been quick to blame North Korea for the death of Kim Jong Nam, who as the eldest son of the late dictator Kim Jong Il was once seen as the ruler-in-waiting of the isolated nation. However, he fell out of favor more than a decade ago, and has spent most of his time since then living in China or Southeast Asia.

The attack "showed the reckless and brutal nature of the North Korean government," South Korean Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-ahn said Monday during a National Security Council meeting.

Associated Press writers Yuri Kageyama in Tokyo, Hyung-jin Kim in Seoul, South Korea, and Niniek Karmini in Jakarta, Indonesia, contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to eliminate an erroneous reference to Indonesian officials saying a North Korean suspect flew from Jakarta to Bangkok after Kim Jong Nam died.

Trump's weekends in Florida include work and golf

By CATHERINE LUCEY, Associated Press

PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — For the past three weekends, President Donald Trump has flown on Air Force One to his private Florida club, where in addition to work, he has dined with family and friends, attended parties — and played plenty of golf.

Not that long ago, Trump took issue with President Barack Obama for doing much the same. In May, Trump tweeted, "While our wonderful president was out playing golf all day, the TSA is falling apart, just like our government!"

On Sunday, Trump spent the morning at Trump International Golf Club, where he played with professional golfer Rory McIlroy. The White House at first said Trump played a few holes and did not disclose whom Trump was golfing with, but the next day a photo emerged on social media, and McIlroy told golf website nolayingup.com that he played 18 holes with Trump.

Asked if Trump played a full round with McIlroy, White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said, "He intended to play a few holes and decided to play longer."

During his holiday weekend in Florida, Trump and his wife, Melania, also stopped by a benefit Saturday night at Mar-a-Lago, hosted by the Dana Farber Cancer Institute. He did not list the event on his public schedule, but staff confirmed his attendance after it was reported in a local newspaper. And Trump briefly appeared at a fundraiser luncheon at Mar-a-Lago Monday, the White House confirmed after pictures popped up on social media.

For years on Twitter, Trump railed against Obama for taking vacations and playing golf. As a candidate, Trump said if he won he'd probably be too busy to golf and would only play with people with whom he was looking to make deals.

On Twitter in August 2014, Trump said Obama's motto was "If I don't go on tax payer funded vacations & constantly fundraise then the terrorists win."

When Trump hosted Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe this month, the two played at two of Trump's

courses — Trump International and his course in Jupiter, Florida.

Obama was an avid golfer, though he did not play during his first few months in office, according to Mark Knoller of CBS News, who tracked his golf outings. He also took regular family trips to Martha's Vineyard and Hawaii, but did not have private vacation homes where he routinely spent weekends.

Trump also conducted serious business over the weekend. He interviewed contenders for national security adviser, choosing Army Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster, and attended a strategy session on how to repeal and replace Obama's health care law.

Amid protests, UK lawmakers debate downgrading Trump visit

By JILL LAWLESS, Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Thousands of protesters against U.S. President Donald Trump rallied outside Britain's Parliament on Monday, while lawmakers inside urged the government to rescind its offer to the president of a state visit stamped with pomp, pageantry and royal approval.

In a passionate debate that's unlikely to change the British government's position, Trump was labeled a misogynist, a bigot and a "petulant child" by opposition legislators. They argued that a state visit planned for later this year will demean the U.K. and Queen Elizabeth II, the president's official host.

Conservative lawmakers, however, said revoking the invitation would do far more harm. Tory lawmaker Edward Leigh said canceling the state visit would be "catastrophic" to the trans-Atlantic relationship.

"He is the duly elected president of the United States. ... It would be a disaster if this invitation is rescinded," Leigh said.

Monday's debate was called after more than 1.8 million people signed an online petition calling for the state visit to be downgraded.

All petitions on the government's website that receive more than 100,000 signatures are eligible for debate in Parliament, though not a binding vote. Lawmakers on Monday also considered an opposing petition, with more than 300,000 signatures, backing the state visit.

No formal vote was held at the end of the three-hour debate, which took place in a side-room of Parliament rather than the House of Commons chamber. The chants of protesters outside could be heard as lawmakers spoke.

Labour Party legislator Tulip Siddiq said Trump should not be allowed to spread "his bigotry, his misogyny, his division" in Britain. Another Labour lawmaker, Daniel Zeichner, called the president "a disgusting, immoral man."

"We do not welcome bigots," he said.

Labour's Paul Flynn pointed out that a state visit was a "rare privilege" given to only two other U.S. presidents since the 1950s — George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

State visits are distinct from official visits, and see foreign leaders welcomed with royal pomp and military ceremony. Most stay at Buckingham Palace as guests of the monarch, and Flynn said a state visit would make it appear as if the queen were "approving the acts of Donald J. Trump" — a man Flynn said had behaved "like a petulant child."

Both Bush and Obama made their state visits several years into their tenures. Prime Minister Theresa May invited Trump a week after his Jan. 20 inauguration.

Some lawmakers said May's haste to bolster the trans-Atlantic "special relationship" as the U.K. prepares to leave the European Union had an edge of desperation.

"We didn't do this for Kennedy," Labour lawmaker David Lammy said. "We didn't do this for Truman. We didn't do this for Reagan. But for this man, after seven days, we say 'Please come and we will lay on everything because we are so desperate for your company?'... I am ashamed that it has come to this."

During her 65-year reign, Elizabeth has welcomed many leaders with less-than-spotless records, including Russian President Vladimir Putin and the late Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. A 2015 state visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping drew protests from Tibetan groups and human rights activists.

Conservative lawmaker Jacob Rees-Mogg said critics of Trump's pending visit were being hypocritical.

“What complaint did the honorable member make when Emperor Hirohito came here?” he asked Flynn. The Japanese emperor’s 1971 state visit was highly controversial at the time. But Trump’s invitation has sparked unprecedented opposition, especially after he issued an executive order temporarily barring citizens of seven majority-Muslim nations from entering the United States. The order has since been suspended by U.S. courts.

Thousands of people demonstrated against the order in British towns and cities, and London Mayor Sadiq Khan urged the government to reconsider its invitation in light of Trump’s “cruel” migrant ban.

House of Commons Speaker John Bercow set aside his customary political neutrality to say that Trump should not be invited to address Parliament when he comes to Britain.

The government insists Trump’s visit will take place, though dates have not been announced.

“We believe it is absolutely right that we should use all the tools at our disposal to build common ground with President Trump,” Foreign Office Minister Alan Duncan told lawmakers.

“The visit should happen, the visit will happen,” he added. “And when it does I trust the United Kingdom will extend a polite and generous welcome to President Donald Trump.”

Teen suicide attempts fell as same-sex marriage became legal

By LINDSEY TANNER, AP Medical Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — Teen suicide attempts in the U.S. declined after same-sex marriage became legal and the biggest impact was among gay, lesbian and bisexual kids, a study found.

The research found declines in states that passed laws allowing gays to marry before the Supreme Court made it legal nationwide. The results don’t prove there’s a connection, but researchers said policymakers should be aware of the measures’ potential benefits for youth mental health.

Suicide is the second-leading cause of death for all U.S. teens. Suicidal behavior is much more common among gay, lesbian and bisexual kids and adults; about 29 percent of these teens in the study reported attempting suicide, compared with just 6 percent of straight teens.

Laws that have the greatest impact on gay adults may make gay kids feel “more hopeful for the future,” said lead author Julia Raifman, a researcher at Johns Hopkins’ Bloomberg School of Public Health.

The measures also could create more tolerance and less bullying, making these teens feel less stigmatized. Those effects could also benefit straight teens but more research is needed to determine how the laws might influence teen behavior, Raifman said.

The study was published Monday in JAMA Pediatrics .

The researchers analyzed data on more than 700,000 public high school students who participated in government surveys on risky youth behavior from 1999 through 2015, the year the Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage.

About 230,000 students reported being gay, lesbian or bisexual. The surveys didn’t ask about transgender status. They included questions about suicide attempts, smoking and alcohol or drug use.

In 32 states that enacted same-sex marriage laws during the study, suicide attempts dropped 7 percent among all students and 14 percent among gay kids after the laws were passed. There was no change in suicide attempts in states without those laws.

The study only included suicide attempts, not deaths.

The new work makes an important contribution to identifying how laws limiting gay rights may affect psychological and physical health, said Columbia University public health researcher Mark Hatzenbuehler.

But more research is needed to determine which teens are most vulnerable to policies that limit gay rights, he wrote in an accompanying editorial.

Online:

CDC statistics: <http://tinyurl.com/zbojvgx>

American Academy of Pediatrics: <http://tinyurl.com/zker97o>

Follow AP Medical Writer Lindsey Tanner at <http://www.twitter.com/LindseyTanner>. Her work can be found at <http://bigstory.ap.org/content/lindsey-tanner>

Pence tries to reassure European leaders shaken by Trump

By KEN THOMAS and LORNE COOK, Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — U.S. Vice President Mike Pence on Monday vowed to stand with the European Union and the NATO military alliance, but was met with some skepticism from leaders shaken by President Donald Trump's more critical comments.

European Union Council President Donald Tusk said he had "open and frank talks" with Pence and that the bloc would watch closely to ensure the U.S. acts on its words of support.

"I heard words which are promising for the future, words which explain a lot about the new approach in Washington," Tusk said.

"Too many new and sometimes surprising opinions have been voiced over this time about our relations — and our common security — for us to pretend that everything is as it used to be," he said, adding that Europe was counting on the United States' "wholehearted and unequivocal" support.

Tusk added, "Both Europeans and Americans must simply practice what they preach."

Trump's benevolence toward Russian President Vladimir Putin and campaign rhetoric that included branding NATO obsolete and vowing to undo a series of multinational trade deals has sparked anxiety in Europe. Trump was also supportive of Britain's vote last year to leave the 28-nation EU, a withdrawal known as Brexit. And he has suggested that the EU itself could soon fall apart.

In a visit Brussels, Pence said Trump had asked him "to express the strong commitment of the United States to continued cooperation and partnership with the European Union."

After talks with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, Pence reiterated the administration's strong support for the alliance, but warned that Trump wants to see "real progress" by the end of the year on boosting defense spending.

NATO leaders agreed in 2014 that alliance members needed to start spending at least 2 percent of their gross domestic product by 2024. Only five nations currently do so: the United States, Britain, Poland, Estonia and Greece.

"The truth is many others, including some of our largest allies, still lack a clear and credible path to meet this minimum goal," Pence said.

Asked what the administration would do if allies failed to meet the defense spending target, Pence said, "I don't know what the answer is to 'or else,' but I know that the patience of the American people will not endure forever."

Pence's meetings in Brussels were aimed at assuring European leaders that his words reflected the views of Trump and would not easily be swept away at the whim of the U.S. president or undermined by statements issued on Twitter.

Pence, as he did in an address Saturday at the Munich Security Conference, also said Trump would demand that Russia honor its commitments to end the fighting in Ukraine.

"In the interest of peace and in the interest of innocent human lives, we hope and pray that this cease-fire takes hold," he said.

The vice president also noted the "heartbreaking" suicide bombings at the Brussels airport and subway system in March 2016, and said the U.S. would continue to collaborate with EU partners to address safety and combat terrorism.

"The United States' commitment to the European Union is steadfast and enduring," he said.

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

AP, other media ask judge to order release of iPhone records

By ERIC TUCKER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Associated Press and two other news organizations asked a judge Monday to force the federal government to reveal how much it paid for a tool to unlock an iPhone used by one of the San Bernardino, California, shooters.

The news organizations said in a court filing there was “no adequate justification” for the FBI to continue to withhold information on the cost of the tool or the identity of the vendor that sold it. They said their requests were narrowly tailored and, contrary to the arguments of the FBI and Justice Department, did not seek information that would jeopardize national security or be exploited by America’s enemies.

“While it is undisputed that the vendor developed the iPhone access tool, the government has identified no rational reason why knowing the vendor’s identity is linked in any way to the substance of the tool, much less how such knowledge would reveal any information about the tool’s application,” lawyers for the news organizations wrote in the filing to the U.S. District Court in Washington.

The AP, Vice Media LLC and Gannett, the parent company of USA Today, sued the FBI in September. The news organizations sought to learn more about the mysterious transaction that cut short a legal dispute in which the government won a court order to force Apple Inc. to unlock the work phone of Syed Rizwan Farook, who along with his wife killed 14 people in the December 2015 San Bernardino attack.

The FBI had maintained for weeks that only Apple could access the information on its phone, which was protected by encryption, but announced in March that it had ultimately broken or bypassed the company’s digital locks with the help of an unidentified third party. The government has refused to say how it acquired the tool or how much it paid, though FBI Director James Comey dropped a hint in April when he said the cost was more than he would make for the duration of his job— roughly seven years.

The Justice Department last month provided some heavily redacted records from the transaction, but withheld critical details that the AP was seeking. The government argued that the information it withheld, if released, could be seized upon by “hostile entities” that could develop their own “countermeasures” and interfere with the FBI’s intelligence gathering. It also said that disclosure “would result in severe damage to the FBI’s efforts to detect and apprehend violators of the United States’ national security and criminal laws through these very activities and methods.”

But in their latest court filing, the news organizations said they never sought the sensitive information the FBI has said it wants to protect, such as how the tool worked. They said the government was improperly invoking national security exemptions to the Freedom of Information Act, which they say mandates the release of the information.

“Release of this information goes to the very heart of FOIA’s purpose, allowing the public to assess government activity — here, the decision to pay public funds to an outside entity in possession of a tool that can compromise the digital security of millions of Americans,” the lawyers wrote.

Follow Eric Tucker on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/etuckerAP>

American flag has 51 stars for Pence visit to European Union

BRUSSELS (AP) — The Star-Spangled Banner looked more starry than usual during one of U.S. Vice President Mike Pence’s appearances in Brussels.

A background picture of the American flag that went up alongside the European Union flag as Pence and EU leader Donald Tusk spoke on Monday had 51 stars instead of the usual 50, one for each state.

The Brussels version of the flag had three rows of nine stars and three rows with eight stars each. American flags typically feature a total of nine alternating rows of five or six stars.

The EU flag featuring 12 stars in a circle against a blue background was configured correctly. And the American flag had the right number of stripes — 13.

The EU Council did not immediately respond when asked about the error with the misplaced star-state.

Trump tries to move past controversies, toward legislating

By JULIE PACE, AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — As President Donald Trump begins his second month in office, his team is trying to move past the crush of controversies that overtook his first month and make progress on health care and tax overhauls long sought by Republicans.

Both issues thrust Trump, a real estate executive who has never held elected office, into the unfamiliar world of legislating. The president has thus far relied exclusively on executive powers to muscle through policy priorities and has offered few details about what he'll require in any final legislative packages, like how the proposals should be paid for. The White House also sent conflicting signals about whether the president will send Congress his own legislative blueprints or let lawmakers drive the process.

White House chief of staff Reince Priebus told The Associated Press that he expects a health care plan to emerge in "the first few days of March." Pressed on whether the plan would be coming from the White House, Priebus said, "We don't work in a vacuum."

On Sunday, White House advisers held a three-hour meeting on health care at Trump's South Florida club, their third lengthy discussion on the topic in four days. Gary Cohn, the former Goldman Sachs banker now serving as Trump's top economic adviser, and newly sworn in Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin have been leading talks with Republican lawmakers and business leaders on taxes. Neither man has prior government experience.

Republicans long blamed Democrats for blocking efforts to overhaul the nation's complicated tax code and make changes to the sweeping 2010 health care law signed by President Barack Obama. But with the GOP now in control of both the White House and Congress, making good on those promises rests almost entirely with the president and his party.

To some Republicans' chagrin, both issues were overshadowed during Trump's first month. The president spent more time publicly fighting the media than selling Americans on his vision for a new health care law. Fresh questions emerged about Trump's ties to Russia, particularly after national security adviser Michael Flynn was fired for misleading the White House about his conversations with a Russian envoy. The White House botched the rollout of a refugee and immigration executive order, Trump's most substantive policy initiative to date, and the directive was quickly blocked by the courts.

Priebus said the distractions did not slow down work happening behind the scenes on the president's legislative priorities.

"Obviously with the White House staff, you're able to walk and chew gum at the same time," Priebus said. "The economic team isn't screwing around with the legal case and the lawyers aren't screwing around with tax reform."

One of the biggest questions on Capitol Hill is how involved Trump plans to be in legislative minutia. One GOP leadership aide whose office has been working with the White House described the president as a "big picture guy" and said he expected Trump to defer to Capitol Hill on health care in particular. The aide was not authorized to speak publicly and insisted on anonymity.

Priebus said he expects Congress to pass both a tax package and legislation repealing and replacing Obama's health care law by the end of the year. But the White House's outward confidence belies major roadblocks on both matters.

After spending years criticizing "Obamacare," Republicans are grappling with how to replace it and pay for a new law. While some lawmakers worry about getting blamed for taking health insurance away from millions of people, others worry the party won't go far enough in upending the current system.

"My worry now is that many people are talking about a partial repeal of Obamacare," Rep. Rand Paul, R-Ky., said. "If you only repeal part of it and you leave it some sort of Obamacare light, which some are talking about, my fear is the situation actually gets worse."

Trump has said he wants to keep popular provisions like guaranteeing coverage for people with pre-existing medical conditions and allowing young people to stay on their parents' insurance plans until age 26. He's also raised the prospect of allowing people to buy insurance across states lines, which is not part

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of the law.

On taxes, Republicans have a potentially more vexing impasse. House Republicans want to scrap the 35 percent tax on corporate profits, which is riddled with exemptions, deductions and credits, and replace it with a "border adjustment tax." The system would tax all imports coming into the U.S., but exclude exports from taxation.

House Speaker Paul Ryan's office has been vigorously promoting the idea to Trump, who has called the system "too complicated." Some House aides have privately voiced optimism that the White House is coming around, though Priebus would only say that border adjustment was "an option we're all discussing and debating."

The president has said he plans to release a "phenomenal" tax plan in the coming weeks.

Associated Press writers Erica Werner and Andrew Taylor contributed to this report.

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

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Feb. 21, the 52nd day of 2017. There are 313 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 21, 1947, inventor Edwin H. Land publicly demonstrated his Polaroid Land camera, which used self-developing film to produce a black & white photograph in 60 seconds.

On this date:

In 1513, Pope Julius II, who commissioned Michelangelo to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, died nearly four months after the project was completed.

In 1613, Mikhail Romanov, 16, was unanimously chosen by Russia's national assembly to be czar, beginning a dynasty that would last three centuries.

In 1885, the Washington Monument was dedicated.

In 1916, the World War I Battle of Verdun began in France as German forces attacked; the French were able to prevail after 10 months of fighting.

In 1945, during the World War II Battle of Iwo Jima, the escort carrier USS Bismarck Sea was sunk by kamikazes with the loss of 318 men.

In 1958, the USS Gudgeon (SS-567) became the first American submarine to complete a round-the-world cruise, eight months after departing from Pearl Harbor in Hawaii.

In 1965, black Muslim leader and civil rights activist Malcolm X, 39, was shot to death inside Harlem's Audubon Ballroom in New York by assassins identified as members of the Nation of Islam. (Three men were convicted of murder and imprisoned; all were eventually paroled.)

In 1972, President Richard M. Nixon began his historic visit to China as he and his wife, Pat, arrived in Beijing.

In 1975, former Attorney General John N. Mitchell and former White House aides H.R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman were sentenced to 2 1/2 to 8 years in prison for their roles in the Watergate cover-up (each ended up serving a year and a-half).

In 1986, Larry Wu-tai Chin, the first American found guilty of spying for China, killed himself in his Virginia jail cell.

In 1992, Kristi Yamaguchi (yah-mah-GOO'-chee) of the United States won the gold medal in ladies' figure skating at the Albertville Olympics; Midori Ito (mee-doh-ree ee-toh) of Japan won the silver, Nancy Kerrigan of the U.S. the bronze.

In 1997, a bomb exploded at The Otherside Lounge, a gay and lesbian nightclub in Atlanta, injuring five people. (Eric Rudolph later admitted targeting the club.)

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Ten years ago: British Prime Minister Tony Blair announced his country would withdraw around 1,600 troops from Iraq in the coming months; Denmark, meanwhile, said it would withdraw its 460 troops. A U.S. helicopter was shot down north of Baghdad; all aboard were safely evacuated by a second helicopter.

Five years ago: The 17-nation eurozone approved a \$170 billion bailout for Greece, which received the news with a mixture of relief and foreboding. Publisher Barney Rosset, 89, who introduced the U.S. to such underground classics as "Tropic of Cancer" and "Lady Chatterley's Lover," died in New York.

One year ago: Bombings claimed by the Islamic State group in the Syrian cities of Damascus and Homs killed nearly 130 people. Pope Francis, speaking at the Vatican, urged Catholic leaders to show "exemplary" courage by not allowing executions "in this Holy Year of Mercy." Denny Hamlin won the Daytona 500, edging Martin Truex Jr. by inches at the finish line.

Today's Birthdays: Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe is 93. Fashion designer Hubert de Givenchy is 90. Movie director Bob Rafelson is 84. Actor Gary Lockwood is 80. Actor-director Richard Beymer is 78. Actor Peter McEnery is 77. U.S. Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., is 77. Film/music company executive David Geffen is 74. Actress Tyne Daly is 71. Actor Anthony Daniels is 71. Tricia Nixon Cox is 71. Former Sen. Olympia J. Snowe, R-Maine, is 70. Rock musician Jerry Harrison (The Heads) is 68. Actress Christine Ebersole is 64. Actor William Petersen is 64. Actor Kelsey Grammer is 62. Country singer Mary Chapin Carpenter is 59. Actor Kim Coates is 59. Actor Jack Coleman is 59. Actor Christopher Atkins is 56. Rock singer Ranking Roger is 56. Actor William Baldwin is 54. Rock musician Michael Ward is 50. Actress Aunjanue Ellis is 48. Blues musician Corey Harris is 48. Country singer Eric Heatherly is 47. Rock musician Eric Wilson is 47. Rock musician Tad Kinchla (Blues Traveler) is 44. Singer Rhiannon Giddens (Carolina Chocolate Drops) is 40. Actor Tituss Burgess is 38. Actress Jennifer Love Hewitt is 38. Comedian-actor Jordan Peele (TV: "Key and Peele") is 38. Actor Brendan Sexton III is 37. Singer Charlotte Church is 31. Actress Ashley Greene is 30. Actress Ellen Page is 30. Actor Corbin Bleu is 28. Actress Hayley Orrantia is 23. Actress Sophie Turner is 21.

Thought for Today: "Tomorrow is often the busiest day of the week." — Spanish proverb.