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Monday, Feb. 27

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study at 6:30 a.m.

School Lunch: Sub Sandwich, smile potato, fruit.

School Breakfast: Cheese omelette, muffin, fruit, juice, milk.

Senior Menu: Chicken rice casserole, green beans, spinach salad with dressing, chocolate pudding with bananas, whole wheat bread.

Special School Board Meeting: 7 p.m. at the Columbia American Legion

Tuesday, Feb. 28

First Round of Boys' Basketball Regions at Webster

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

School Lunch: Cheese sticks, mixed vegetables, fruit, carrots and dip.

School Breakfast: Mini pancakes, fruit, juice, milk.

Help Wanted

Office Manager, Dakota Brush, call Topper
605 397 7337

Apts for Rent

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

Open: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave.

The cardboard/paper

recycling trailer at the school is **OPEN**

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PARTS COUNTER SALES

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

Harry Implement Inc.

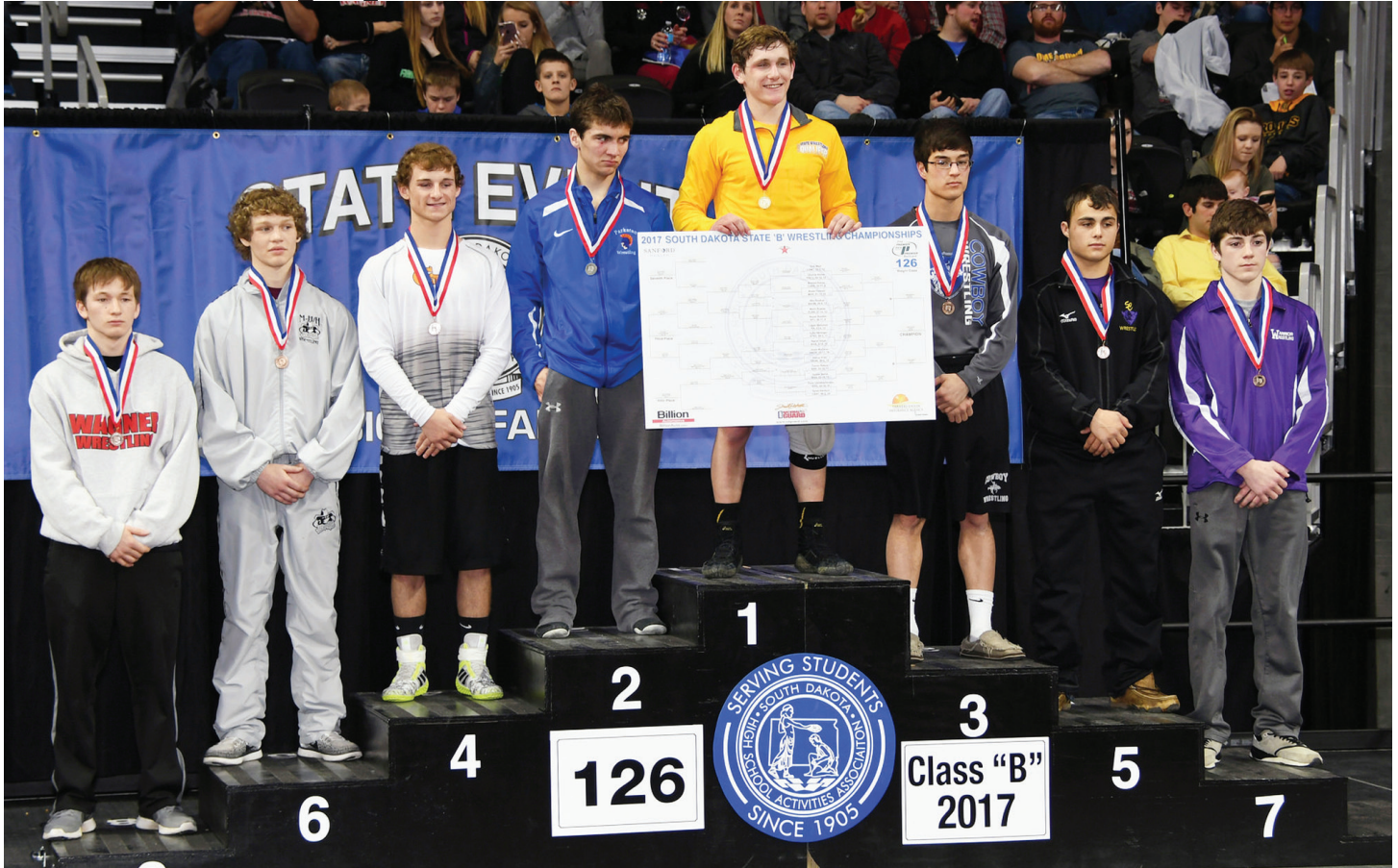
PO Box 841
Ferne, SD
57439



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605-225-3078 ~ 1-800-658-3463

Pray placed fourth at state



Pictured are the state place winners at 126 pounds: Ben Soukup, Wagner, 8th place; Blade Forman, Miller/Highmore-Harrold, 6th place; Trevor Pray, Groton Area, 4th place; Logan Mahoney, Parkston, second place; Dylan Hanisch, Canton, 1st place; Dirk Wolf, Lemmon/McIntosh, 3rd place; Luke Heninger, Stanley County, 5th place; and Trevor Peters, Winner Area, 7th place. (Photo courtesy of South Dakota Public Broadcasting. ©2017 SDPB)

Trevor Pray placed fourth at the state wrestling tournament held this past weekend in Sioux Falls. He lost the championship semifinal match by one point with then thrust him in the wrestlebacks where he won the first one to advance to the third place match before getting pinned in that match.

Trevor Pray, at 126 pounds, pinned Hesse McCann of Harding County, 1:31; he decisioned Luke Heninger of Stanley County, 3-2; he was decisioned by Dylan Hanisch of Canton, 4-3; he decisioned Blade Forman of Miller/Highmore-Harrold, 7-2, and in the third place match, he was pinned by Dirk Wolf of Lemmon-McIntosh in 1:23. Brandyn Anderson at 285 pounds won his first match with a 13-7 decision over Chase Ninceheler of Sully Buttes. He then was decision of Tre'zen Doren of Winner Area, 7-2; and he was decisioned by Adam Miller of Canton, 5-2.

Wyatt Locke, at 220 pounds, was pinned by Braydon Peterson of Lemmon/McIntosh, 4:43; and he was decisioned by Dalton Martian of Mobridge-Pollock, 8-4.

Wyatt Kurtz, at 138 pounds, was pinned by Jaden Shepherd, Mobridge-Pollock, in 2:47; and he was pinned by Rocky Berg of Parker in 1:50.

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Pictured above is Brandyn Anderson and head coach Darin Zoellner and assistant coach Sumption. Pictured below is Wyatt Locke. (Photo courtesy of South Dakota Public Broadcasting. ©2017 SDPB)



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Region 1A Boys Basketball Tournament

#1 Sisseton

Score:

Date: 2 Mar 2017
Time: 6:00
Site: Webster Armory

SWEET 16 QUALIFIER

#4 Webster Area

Score:

Date: 28 Feb 2017
Time: 7:30
Site: Webster Armory

Score:

Score:

#5 Milbank Area

#3 Groton Area

Score:

Date: 28 Feb 2018
Time: 6:00
Site: Webster Armory

Score:

Score:

#6 Britton-Hecla

Date: 2 Mar 2017
Time: 7:30
Site: Webster Armory

SWEET 16 QUALIFIER

#2 Aberdeen Roncalli

Score:

Date: 28 Feb 2017
Time: 4:30
Site: Webster Armory

Score:

Score:

#7 Tiospa Zina

School	Seed Pts.
Sisseton	43.60
Aberdeen Roncalli	43.50
Groton Area	41.55
Webster Area	39.45
Milbank Area	39.40
Britton-Hecla	38.68
Tiospa Zina	37.30

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DI Teams advance to state

CONGRATULATIONS! All of our teams that competed on Saturday did an excellent job presenting their solutions. I had several parents comment how much improvement they saw in the presentations comparing Dessert Theater and Regionals. Way to go teams!

We have one team that will compete at Regions in Custer, due to scheduling conflicts -- good luck on your adventure!

Each team that competed (other than Rising Stars) will be moving on to the state DI competition in Pierre on March 25.

- Julie Milbrandt

Adult Birthday Club

The Adult Birthday Club met at Ella Johnson's home on February 7th as she was the hostess. Prizes were awarded to Darlene Fischer, Gloria Pharis and Deloris Knoll. The honors were awarded to Darlene Fischer. The guests were Gloria Pharis and Arlowyn Spencer. The March 7 meeting will be held at Rosewood Court in Groton with LaVonne Helmer as hostess at 1 p.m.



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

GDI Living Fitness
25 Main St., Downtown Groton

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Today in Weather History

February 26, 1995: Heavy snow fell on the 26th and the 27th in western and central South Dakota near the northern border of the state. McLaughlin received 14 inches, Eureka 12 inches, and McIntosh 11 inches. Snowfall amounts dropped off to two to four inches about 20 miles south of the northern border.

February 26, 1998: A strong area of low pressure moved across central and northeast South Dakota from the morning of the 26th to the morning of the 27th. As the low moved northeast, cold north winds of 25 to 35 mph gusting to 45 mph caused widespread rain to change over to snow. Many roads became icy and poor visibilities in snow and blowing snow and low wind chills developed. Four to 8 inches of snow fell across the counties bordering the Missouri river and in far western McPherson and far western Edmunds counties. Many area schools were dismissed early or canceled. Some residents, especially West River, lost power during the storm. Many McIntosh residents were without power for over 24 hours. Numerous activities and sports events were canceled. There were also some car accidents which did not result in injury. A semi rolled onto its side northwest of Gettysburg on the 26th. Ranchers also experienced some calving problems as a result of the winter storm. Some snowfall amounts included, 4 inches at Selby, Herreid, and Mobridge, 5 inches at Isabel, 6 inches at Gettysburg, 7 inches about 11 miles east of Hosmer, and 8 inches at McIntosh. Some large drifts also developed, especially West River, as a result of the heavy snow and strong winds.

February 26, 2009: A vigorous, but relatively fast moving winter storm system tracked across South Dakota Wednesday night and Thursday. Even with the fairly quick movement of the system, storm total snowfall amounts were quite impressive. In fact, during the peak of the snowstorm, snowfall rates of 1" to 2" per hour were observed!

1910 - Parts of Washington State were in the midst of a storm which produced 129 inches of snow at Laconia between the 24th and the 26th, a single storm record for the state. A series of storms, which began on the 23rd, led to a deadly avalanche on the first of March. By late on the 28th, the snow had changed to rain, setting the stage for disaster. (The Weather Channel)

1972 - The Buffalo Creek disaster occurred in the Buffalo Creek Hollow of Logan County in West Virginia. A coal slag dam on the Middle Fork of Buffalo Creek burst sending a fifty foot wall of water down a narrow valley killing 125 persons and causing 51 million dollars damage. Three days of rain atop a six inches snow cover prompted the dam break. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)



livestream

Upcoming Events

Tuesday, BBB Region

6 p.m. at Webster

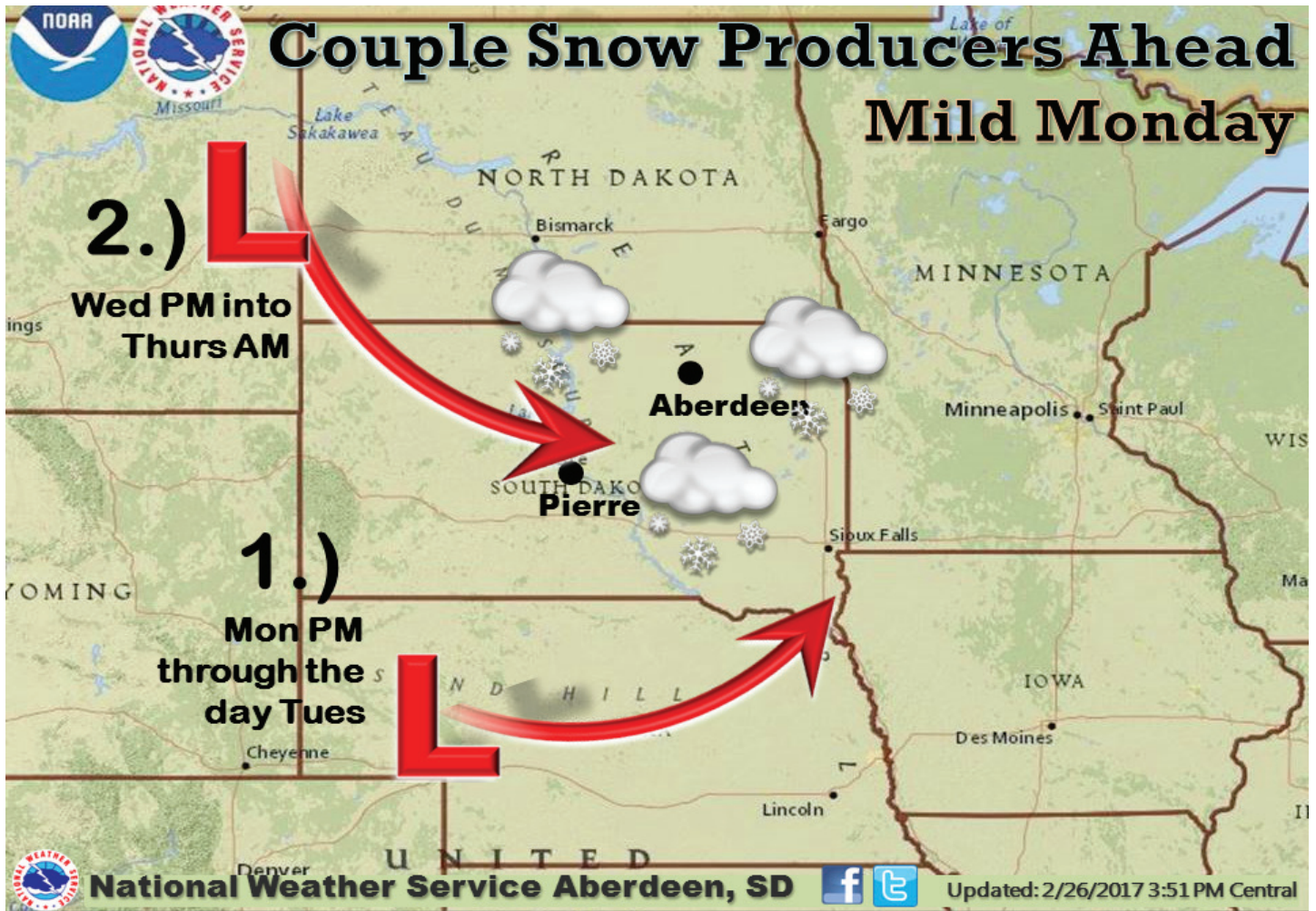
Groton Area vs. Britton-Hecla

gdilive.com

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Tonight	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday	Wednesday Night
Mostly Cloudy	Partly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy then Chance Snow	Chance Snow then Slight Chance Snow	Mostly Cloudy	Slight Chance Snow then Mostly Sunny	Chance Snow
Low: 20 °F	High: 43 °F	Low: 22 °F	High: 31 °F	Low: 16 °F	High: 34 °F	Low: 14 °F



Published on: 02/26/2017 at 3:58PM

The start of the work-week will be very mild with highs in the mid to low 40s for many. Then, a more active pattern sets up. We'll be dealing with a couple inches of snow accumulation with Monday night/Tuesday's system and then another swath of accumulating snow possible with Wednesday night's clipper system. Otherwise, temps stay seasonable Tuesday through Thursday with highs near 32 degrees.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 37.8 F at 2:57 PM

Low Outside Temp: 11.9 F at 4:22 AM

High Gust: 24.0 Mph at 11:36 AM

Rain: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 65° in 1896

Record Low: -20 in 1962

Average High: 32°F

Average Low: 12°F

Average Precip in Feb.: 0.50

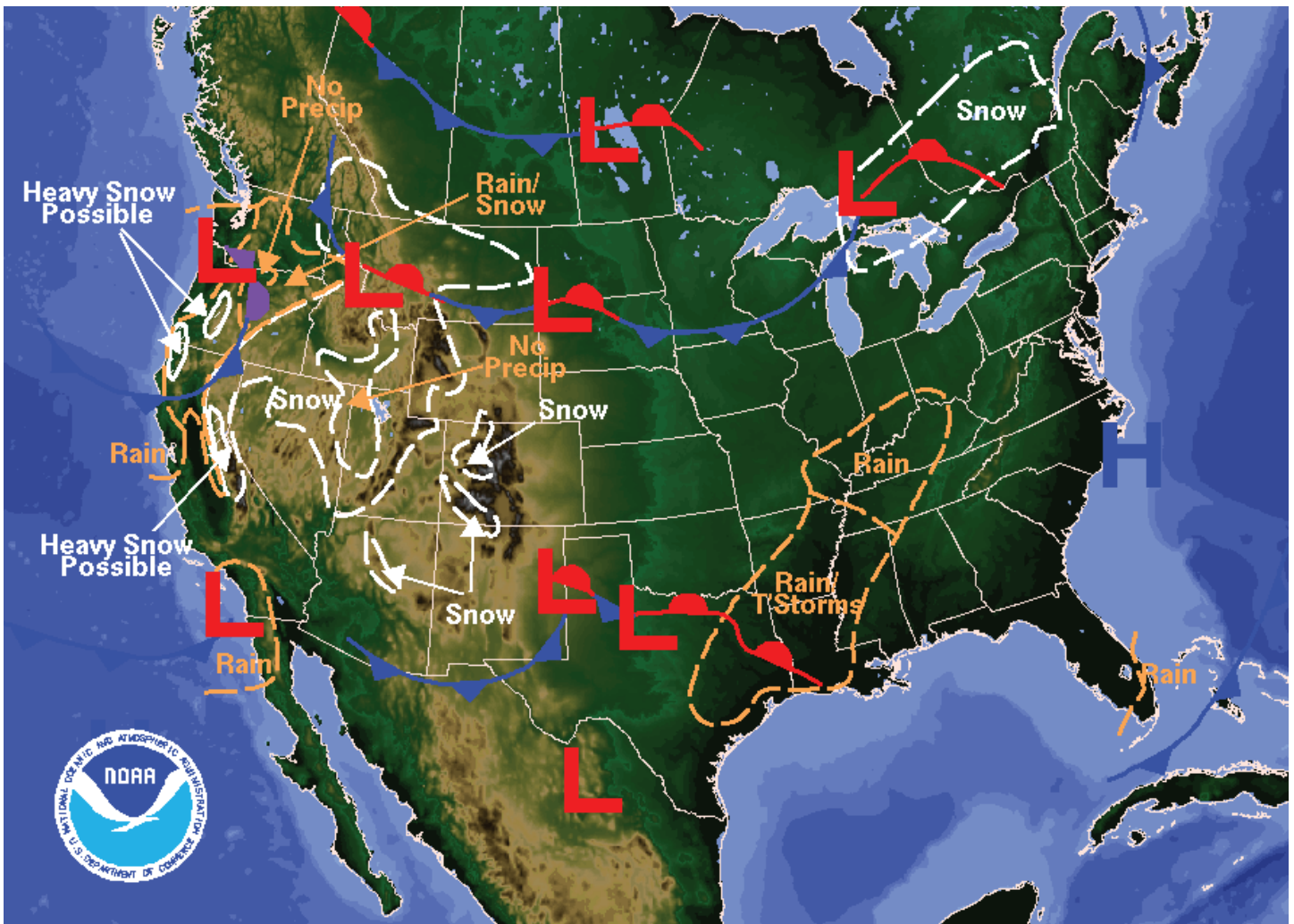
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.97

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 6:17 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:14 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Sun, Feb 26, 2017, issued 3:49 PM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Reinhart based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

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AT LEAST ONE MORE THING

The elderly deacon was encouraging a young, yet very successful, entrepreneur to pray and surrender his life to the Lord. Arrogantly he said, "There's no need for me to pray. I have everything I can imagine. I am young, handsome and rich. What else is there?"

"Well," replied the man graciously, "there's at least one more thing to consider. You may want to think about asking God for humility."

It is fascinating to recall the fact that God created the universe out of nothing and that unless we are willing to become nothing, the Lord will be unable to make anything significant out of us. Pride is a destructive force in so many lives.

When we come to believe that we deserve what we have and become self-centered and self-serving, we are creating an attitude of self-dependence and not God-dependence. We forget the fact that whatever we have we have by the grace of God, and that our abilities to accomplish anything and everything come from Him. When this happens we tend to become greedy and forget our responsibility to honor God with everything that we have.

The cure for being self-centered and self-serving is humility. Humility shows that we are submissive and dependent on God and that we approach Him in meekness and respect. David said that the "Lord leads the humble in what is right." God can only lead the humble.

Prayer: Father, we need Your leadership in our lives. Without Your guidance and direction we may achieve much but we will miss the great things You have for us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: James 4:6 But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."

News from the Associated Press

Wisconsin troopers not wearing name tags in North Dakota

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Seventeen Wisconsin State Patrol troopers sent to North Dakota to help disperse an encampment of Dakota Access oil pipeline protesters aren't wearing name tags or numbers on their uniforms during their nine-day assignment.

The state Department of Transportation says the anonymity is intended to protect the officers' privacy in an emotionally charged situation but the decision faces criticism from civil rights advocates, the Wisconsin State Journal reported Sunday (<http://bit.ly/2mzrk7V>).

"When individuals are peacefully exercising their rights to free speech and assembly, law enforcement should be trained and supervised so that they do not intimidate free-speech rights by covering up name tags — an implicit threat that police will engage in practices for which they do not want to be held accountable," said Molly Collins, interim executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin.

Jim Palmer, executive director of the Wisconsin Professional Police Association, said officers generally should wear name badges, or at least unique identifying numbers when there are safety concerns, but he didn't criticize the Patrol's decision, saying officer safety is paramount.

"Given the fact that the small number of troopers were sent, and the likelihood that videographers will be utilized, there should still be adequate means for the State Patrol to effectively identify and investigate any matter involving a trooper while they are there," Palmer said. "That strikes us as a good balance of the competing interests here."

Authorities last week cleared the last holdouts from the camp near the Standing Rock Reservation, which straddles the North Dakota and South Dakota border. Thousands of people stayed there before the area was buried in winter blizzards. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers then moved into the evacuated camp to finish the cleanup before spring flooding. The pipeline operator is now rushing to complete construction of the last remaining pipeline segment and says oil could flow as soon as March 6. American Indian tribes are continuing their fight against the pipeline in court.

The Wisconsin State Patrol sent the 17 officers last week under a multi-state compact that allows state and local governments to request police assistance from other states and pay reimbursement for the help.

The Patrol's standard policy is for officers to wear name tags, but under "a verbal directive specific to that deployment" the officers sent to North Dakota "have been directed to remove their name plates from their uniforms," Col. Charles Teasdale said. They are still wearing other agency identifiers such as patches and badges.

Information from: Wisconsin State Journal, <http://www.madison.com/wsj>

Report: Hotel near Mount Rushmore faces more problems

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The owner of a hotel near Mount Rushmore has bigger problems than just a potential shutdown of his septic system by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, according to a report published Sunday.

Mark Arend, of St. Paul, Minnesota, owner of The Lodge at Mount Rushmore, also owes hundreds of thousands of dollars in back taxes, and a lawsuit by Pennington County alleging that he violated septic system laws is due to go to trial next month, The Rapid City Journal reported Sunday (<http://bit.ly/2IZIhNh>). There's also an arrest warrant out for him for allegedly telling an underage employee to serve alcohol in 2015. The newspaper reported his problems with the EPA last week.

Arend told The Associated Press on Sunday that he's working with the EPA and Pennington County to resolve the septic system issues and has spent over \$37,000 in the last 12 months on system upgrades. He said the septic system is now in its best operational shape ever, and that the upgrades went beyond what the county sought.

He also said he's in the process of refinancing the hotel, which will allow him to pay the back taxes. And he said he looks forward to working with Pennington County to resolve the misdemeanor alcohol charge.

"We look forward to getting all these issues resolved so we can welcome all our guests back to The Lodge at Mount Rushmore for a fabulous summer season," he said.

Last week, the EPA said it intended to deny a permit for the hotel's septic system, pending a 30-day comment period, alleging the lodge discharged wastewater onto a neighbor's land and could be contaminating the hotel's own drinking water and other nearby wells. Since then, the Journal has used public records and interviews to document Arend's other legal and regulatory problems.

Arend runs the Winona Inn Limited Partnership, which owns The Lodge at Mount Rushmore, a seasonal 50-room hotel near Keystone that's 4.5 miles from Mount Rushmore National Memorial. The company acquired the lodge in 2008. It lost another hotel, a Quality Inn in Winona, Minnesota, to foreclosure and filed for bankruptcy in 2012. The company emerged in 2014 with a court-approved plan to pay or partially pay creditors whose claims totaled \$5.31 million.

Pennington County Treasurer Janet Saylor said Arend's company still owes \$368,257 in taxes. She said the bankruptcy has prevented the county from seizing the hotel and selling it to recover the debt.

Complaints about the septic system date to at least 2015 and have brought government inspectors to the hotel numerous times over the past two years. On some visits, inspectors noted a stench emanating from the system and observed raw sewage surfacing from an underground drain field.

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

Koch leads fight to deregulate African-style braiding

By MATT O'BRIEN, Associated Press

PAWTUCKET, R.I. (AP) — The billionaire industrialist Charles Koch and hair braider Jocelyn DoCouto have at least one thing in common. They are both part of a national movement to deregulate the business of African-style braiding.

DoCouto is pushing for legislation in Rhode Island that would exempt her from the cumbersome and expensive occupational licensing requirements for hairdressers and barbers.

"It's something that's taught through generations," said DoCouto, who has been braiding her hair into Senegalese twists, also known as rope braids, since she was 11. "It's part of my culture."

She is supported by the Koch-affiliated libertarian law firm Institute for Justice, based in Arlington, Virginia, which through lawsuits and lobbying in more than a dozen states has been fighting to deregulate the practice of natural hairstyling.

The group's 25-year battle has found new momentum in the past year, most recently in South Dakota, where Republican Gov. Dennis Daugaard signed a bill this month that exempts braiders from cosmetology licensing rules. Republican Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad also signed a law in the summer exempting African-style hair braiding from the 2,100 hours of training it takes to get a cosmetology license. Democrats have supported similar measures, especially after then-President Barack Obama launched an occupational licensing reform initiative last year.

"We're now at 21 states that do not require a license," said Christina Walsh, the Institute for Justice's activism director. The Koch-supported group has been heralding what it calls "braiding freedom" along with the nonprofit Virginia-based education group Charles Koch Institute, and Koch himself, as part of a larger fight against occupational licensing regulations.

"Charles Koch and Koch Industries are committed to pursuing policies that can help all Americans realize their potential and improve their lives," said Dave Dziok, a spokesman for Wichita, Kansas-based Koch Industries, in a written statement. "Occupational licenses required for hundreds of occupations have restricted the creation of millions of jobs and inhibit entrepreneurship, harming low-income individuals and communities the most."

Beauty schools and some hairdressers generally oppose the deregulation efforts and argue braiders

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shouldn't be excused from training and oversight in sanitation and safety.

But African-style braiders such as DoCouto are increasingly finding bipartisan support from lawmakers in many states.

DoCouto, whose family comes from Senegal and Cape Verde, said Rhode Island's cosmetology schools don't teach what she learned how to do from her aunt. She describes it as "protective styling," using braiding and weaving to promote natural curls without using dyes, reactive chemicals or chemical hair-joining agents.

DoCouto does some braiding from her home in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, and would like to open her own salon, but the 26-year-old said parenthood and her day job at a bank don't leave her enough time or money to take irrelevant and costly cosmetology classes.

A Republican-sponsored braiding deregulation bill got little traction in the Democrat-controlled Rhode Island General Assembly last year, but this year a Democrat has enthusiastically taken up the cause.

In New Hampshire, the state Board of Barbering, Cosmetology and Esthetics is warning against similar legislation. Jeanne Chappell, a board member and owner of Keene Beauty Academy, said it's possible to pass diseases with the tools used for hair braiding if they aren't cleaned properly, something taught through cosmetology programs.

"It's really easy to pass that kind of thing from one person to another," she said.

But Chappell said the board is willing to work with lawmakers to modify the bipartisan bill. Hair braiding is not a skill tested by the licensing board, and she thinks there could be a middle ground for registering braiders without requiring the full licensing process. That way, Chappell said, the board could still discipline practitioners who don't follow the proper procedures.

"We're not suggesting," she said, "that somebody who wants to braid and just do braiding or just hair extensions or sew-ins or weaves go through the entire 1,500-hour program."

Associated Press writer Kathleen Ronayne in Concord, New Hampshire, contributed to this report.

Saturday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Menno 74, Centerville 37

Mitchell Christian 65, Wessington Springs 32

Platte-Geddes 51, Gregory 35

Vermillion 63, Canton 36

District 2AA

First Round

Harrisburg 58, Yankton 54

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

District 5B

Championship

DeSmet 38, Castlewood 21

District 8B

Championship

Ethan 50, Howard 24

District 9B

Championship

Parker 76, Freeman 63

District 10B

Championship

Irene-Wakonda 61, Gayville-Volin 41

District 13B

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Championship
Lyman 66, Kadoka Area 46
District 2AA
First Round
Sioux Falls Washington 42, Yankton 36
Region 3A
Regional Semifinal
Dell Rapids 59, Sioux Falls Christian 51
Madison 63, Flandreau 51
Region 4A
Regional Semifinal
Lennox 58, Elk Point-Jefferson 35
Region 7A
Regional Semifinal
Little Wound 63, Winner 49
Todd County 70, St. Francis Indian 49

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) _ These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Saturday:

Dakota Cash

08-12-23-31-32

(eight, twelve, twenty-three, thirty-one, thirty-two)

Estimated jackpot: \$20,000

Hot Lotto

02-04-25-34-44, Hot Ball: 12

(two, four, twenty-five, thirty-four, forty-four; Hot Ball: twelve)

Estimated jackpot: \$4.24 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$73 million

Powerball

06-32-47-62-65, Powerball: 19, Power Play: 2

(six, thirty-two, forty-seven, sixty-two, sixty-five; Powerball: nineteen; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$40 million

South Dakota beats IUPUI 92-85, wins Summit League title

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Matt Mooney scored 27 points and South Dakota held off IUPUI's late rally for a 92-85 victory and the Summit League regular season title on Saturday night.

South Dakota (21-10, 12-4) has won six straight, and grabbed the title outright and the No. 1 seed into the league tournament when North Dakota State lost to Omaha 96-92.

The Coyotes had a 10-point lead with about three minutes left before IUPUI used an 8-1 spurt to pull to 80-77. Mooney missed a deep 3-pointer, but the Coyotes kept possession when Carlton Hurst grabbed the rebound with 1:08 to play. Triston Simpson, who finished with 14 points, all from the free-throw line, scored eight points and Mooney added four more free throws in the final minute to seal it.

IUPUI (13-17, 7-9) will be the sixth or seventh seed into the league tournament.

Darell Combs scored 19 points and Matt O'Leary had 18 for IUPUI, and both topped 1,000 points for their careers.

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Daum nets 30 in South Dakota State's win over Denver

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Mike Daum scored 30 points on 11-of-19 shooting and made three 3-pointers to help South Dakota State beat Denver 88-64 on Saturday.

A.J. Hess added 14 points. Chris Howell and Skyler Flatten added 11 each for the Jackrabbits (15-16, 8-8 Summit).

South Dakota State had a 25-8 run to build a 41-24 lead late in the first half and led by at least 17 throughout the second.

Joe Rosga had 15 points and C.J. Bobbitt had 13 for the Pioneers (16-13, 8-8). Denver's bench outscored the Jackrabbits 64-21.

South Dakota State made 14 of 28 from 3-point range and 33 of 58 (56.9 percent) overall. Denver made 41.7 percent from both the arc and the field.

Ellsworth officials ready if base closures become reality

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Supporters of the Ellsworth Air Force Base near Rapid City say the facility is in good position should it need to survive another round of base closures.

U.S. Democratic Rep. Adam Smith, of Washington, introduced a bill in January seeking to convene a new Base Realignment and Closure Commission, known as BRAC.

Ellsworth Development Authority director Scott Landguth tells the Rapid City Journal (<http://bit.ly/2kXfisI>) that his group has continued to work on improving conditions at the base since the last closure round in 2005.

South Dakota's congressional delegation is opposed to new base closures and Rep. Kristi Noem says she doesn't expect the bill to get much support. However, Republican Sens. John McCain and Jack Reed have said they're open to discussing the possibility with new Defense Secretary James Mattis.

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

Final cleanup begins at Dakota Access pipeline protest camp

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has moved into the evacuated Dakota Access pipeline protest camp to finish the cleanup started weeks ago by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe.

A Florida-based company has been hired to provide trash removal and environmental cleanup in the main Oceti Sakowin camp on the north side of the Cannonball River and the smaller Rosebud camp on the south side. Both are on federal land.

Authorities this week cleared the last holdouts from the camp near the Standing Rock Reservation, which straddles the North Dakota and South Dakota border. Thousands of people stayed there before the area was buried in winter blizzards.

Corps officials say about 240 dumpsters have been hauled out of the main camp, each brimming with debris of old food stores, structures, tents, building materials and abandoned personal belongings. Officials estimate another 240 loads or so will get the job done, the Bismarck Tribune reported (<http://bit.ly/2lVklJS>).

The corps and the tribe are doing a cultural survey to see if any special items, such as teepees, require separate handling and consultation. The contract also included a special environmental crew to deal with any potentially hazardous or toxic materials.

Tribal contractors were helping to clear the Rosebud site, including Logan Thompson, who brought skid steers, loaders and a crew of 10.

"The mud is killing us," Thompson said. "I'm hoping if it stays cold like this, by Monday we could be done."

Many protesters moved into other camps on the reservation. Tribal officials, along with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, are moving to clear those camps and may get some help from the state.

A spokesman for North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum said the office supports Standing Rock's efforts, but there are no definite plans to deploy any state resources. He said the North Dakota Highway Patrol can assist on public roadways, but using the National Guard requires an official request from either Sioux

County or the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

"There are no specific plans, but he stands ready to assist, if requested," Mike Nowatzki said.

The concrete barricades that have been used to blockade and route traffic near the Oceti Sakowin camp were also being moved Friday, but Highway 1806 remains closed north and south of the camp.

Highway Patrol Lt. Tom Iverson said reopening the highway to through traffic is a priority, but it's not clear when that will happen.

Information from: Bismarck Tribune, <http://www.bismarcktribune.com>

Yankton looks to create new identity for downtown area

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — Yankton downtown business owners have created a district to give the area an identity.

Some initial projects and initiatives identified by the Meridian District group include marketing, signage and art events, the Yankton Daily Press and Dakotan (<http://bit.ly/2kOfbvK>) reported. The group will also work to find events to bring people to the area.

"We are creating a Snapchat geo filter, so anytime you are in the district, you can add a filter from the Meridian District," Mollie Grey, development coordinator for downtown. "Events, concerts and promotion of our district are something that we will be doing. We will constantly be promoting our local businesses on our Facebook page and website."

Directories and pamphlets are also in the making.

The district is the creation of downtown business owners, building owners and community members who see a need for change.

Grey said she hopes the group will become a non-profit and that it focuses on the continuous improvements of downtown and financially sustains through different funding streams.

She also said financial structure for the group hasn't been decided, but it'll take something like a business improvement district to keep initial projects sustainable.

"I don't think it will be a membership model," she said. "I think when you are trying to encourage people to open up businesses in downtown, charging them a fee at times is discouraging."

Information from: Yankton Press and Dakotan, <http://www.yankton.net/>

Lawmakers push bill to address dropped rural cellphone calls

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — U.S. senators from South Dakota, Minnesota and Montana are pushing a bill that would address the problem of dropped rural cellphone calls.

Carrie Johnson of SDN Communications told the Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2laGC58>) that about 80 percent of South Dakota's land area is impacted by the issue.

"If you're a rural business and you lost a business opportunity, sometimes you don't even know it," Johnson said.

She said more resources are needed to operate networks without the customer base to support it.

Now, Republican Sen. John Thune, Democratic Sen. Amy Klobuchar and Democratic Sen. John Tester have reintroduced a bipartisan bill that failed to make the floor before the end of last year's session.

"For most Americans, grabbing the phone, dialing a number, and waiting for someone to pick up on the other end is a task as routine as they come," Thune said. "But believe it or not, for a lot of folks who live in rural states like South Dakota, call completion and reliability can still be a challenge today."

The bill would require the Federal Communications Commission to establish minimum standards for quality in voice call transmission. It would also require least cost routers to register with the commission and ban telecom companies from using unregistered intermediaries.

Last month, the proposed bill passed out of the Senate Commerce Committee, and companion legislation has passed through the House of Representatives.

It's unclear when the bill could appear for debate on the Senate floor.

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

Police say drunk driver caused Mardi Gras crash that hurt 28

By REBECCA SANTANA, Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Police on Sunday identified the man who allegedly plowed into a crowd enjoying a Mardi Gras parade in New Orleans while intoxicated.

The New Orleans Police Department issued a statement identifying the man as 25-year-old Neilson Rizzuto. He's being held at the city's jail and being charged with first-degree negligent vehicular injuring, hit-and-run driving causing serious injury and reckless operation of a vehicle.

The accident happened Saturday during one of the busiest nights of Mardi Gras when thousands of people throng the streets of Mid-City to watch the elaborate floats and clamor to catch beads and trinkets tossed from riders.

Police say 28 people were hurt in the accident that sent three people to the hospital with moderate to serious injuries. There were no fatalities.

Police say a breath alcohol test determined that Rizzuto's alcohol level was three times the legal limit after the he was arrested.

"We suspect that that subject was highly intoxicated," Police Chief Michael Harrison had said on Saturday evening.

Harrison was asked by the media if terrorism was suspected. While he didn't say "No," he did say it looks like a case of DWI.

Twenty-one people were hospitalized after the crash with five victims taken to the trauma center in guarded condition. However, their conditions did not seem to be life-threatening, said Dr. Jeff Elder, city emergency services director.

Seven others declined to be hospitalized, he said.

The victims range in age from as young as 3 or 4 to adults in their 30s and 40s, Elder said.

Among the injured was one New Orleans police officer. Harrison said the officer, who was on duty, was undergoing tests to determine the extent of her injuries. She was in "good spirits," he said.

As police and city officials assessed the accident scene, people streamed home as plastic bags that used to hold trinkets and discarded beads littered the ground.

Saturday night's parade was put on by the Krewe of Endymion, which is known for its long, elaborate floats and the big party it hosts at the Superdome after the parade.

One woman at the scene told The New Orleans Advocate (<http://bit.ly/2miOHGP>) that a silver truck whisked closely by her as she was walking through the intersection.

Carrie Kinsella said, "I felt a rush it was so fast."

Kourtney McKinnis, 20, told the Advocate that the driver of the truck seemed almost unaware of what he had just done.

"He was just kind of out of it," she said.

Associated Press writer Kevin McGill contributed to this story.

Storm chasers honor "Twister" star with GPS tribute

By GILLIAN FLACCUS, Associated Press

Nearly 200 storm chasers paid tribute Sunday to the late actor Bill Paxton by spelling out his initials using GPS coordinates on a map depicting the heart of Tornado Alley.

The effort coordinated by Spotter Network spelled out "BP" to honor the leading man in the disaster movie "Twister," which inspired a generation of storm chasers.

Storm chasers and storm spotters have spelled out the initials of fellow chasers in the tight-knit commu-

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nity four or five times before, but never for a non-chaser, said John Wetter, president of the nonprofit that tracks the positions of tornado chasers and works with the National Weather Service to update weather forecasts.

"There are probably hundreds, if not thousands, of meteorologists today — myself included — who were impacted by the movie 'Twister' and the role Bill played in that," Wetter told The Associated Press in a phone interview. " 'Twister' was kind of the first time in a mass media place the meteorologist became cool, if only for a little while."

The storm chasers spelled the initials on a map that was centered around Wakita, Oklahoma, a real town in the heart of Tornado Alley that served as the set for almost all of the movie, Wetter said.

Most people participating did not travel to log their dot on the map, but they instead entered GPS coordinates manually to spell the letters after the Spotter Network posted a rough outline of the project on its Facebook page and asked for help, Wetter said.

The letters took shape in real time on a map that went viral on Twitter as the day went on. The initials, made of red dots, stretched across parts of Texas, Kansas and Oklahoma on a black map.

Jake DeFlicht was one of the few storm chasers who drove to a point on the map to register his GPS dot. The 23-year-old graduate student at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma, traveled about 20 minutes, he said, and then waited for the right moment to log his contribution.

"I waited until all the letters lined up," said DeFlicht, who recently dropped radar-equipped pods in front of tornados as part of a research project. "I was part of the 'P,' right below one of the connections, where the half-circle came back and connected with the straight line."

In the 1996 blockbuster, Paxton plays a storm chaser who's researching tornados during a twister outbreak in Oklahoma. Paxton and co-star Helen Hunt scramble to release a data-collection probe into the funnel of a tornado as they compete with another, better-funded research team that's using similar technology.

Paxton's death at age 61 after complications from surgery was announced Sunday.

Follow Gillian Flaccus on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/gflaccus>

Egypt's Christians flee terror in north Sinai security void

By BRIAN ROHAN, Associated Press

ISMAILIA, Egypt (AP) — After Islamic militants barged into his uncle's house, shot him and his son dead, then looted the place and set it on fire, Said Sameh Adel Fawzy knew it was time to leave.

The 35-year-old Christian, who owns a plumbing supply business in Egypt's troubled northern Sinai town of el-Arish, packed up a few belongings and brought his family to the Suez Canal city of Ismailia, joining hundreds of Christians fleeing a spate of sectarian killings last week.

"My cousin went to open the door after he heard knocking," Fawzy said, speaking from a youth hostel where authorities were putting up dozens of families who fled the town. "Masked extremists, terrorists with a pistol, took him inside and shot him in the head," then dragged his screaming mother out to the street half-dressed and killed her husband. The woman, still in shock after the Tuesday night slayings, sat nearby.

"They're thirsty for the blood of any Christian," said Wafaa Fawzy, the sister-in-law of Saad Hana, the man who was killed along with his son. "They were pretty clear when they said they won't leave any Christian in peace. They want an Islamic state."

The killings, two of seven brutal slayings in recent weeks, come after a devastating IS suicide bombing at a Cairo church in December that killed nearly 30 people. The violence poses a fresh challenge to President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi's government to put down an IS-led insurgency in northern Sinai and prevent spillover that at times has reached the mainland.

The group's local affiliate recently vowed to step up a wave of attacks on the embattled Christian minority, pointing to a shift in tactics toward targeting Christians and their holy sites, which are less protected than the military and police installations that are their usual targets.

Northern Sinai has for years been the epicenter of an insurgency by Islamic militants, and the area's few

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Christians have slowly been trickling out. But departures surged after suspected militants again gunned down a Christian man in front of his family two days after Fawzy's uncle and cousin were killed, stoking panic among Christians.

No militant group claimed has responsibility for the attacks. But the IS affiliate, which is based in northern Sinai, released a video vowing to step up attacks against Christians, who it describes as "infidels" empowering the West against Muslims.

Coptic Christians, who make up about 10 percent of Egypt's population, have always been a favorite target of Islamic extremists. But attacks on churches have increased since the 2013 military overthrow of an Islamist president. Christians overwhelmingly supported the army chief-turned-president, el-Sissi, who led the ouster, and extremists have used their support as a pretext to increase attacks against them.

The Christian exodus continued for a fourth day Sunday, bringing to more than 100 the number of families who have fled el-Arish, said Nabil Shukrallah, an official with the city's Evangelical Church.

Families arrive frightened and in need of supplies, which are being stockpiled at the church from donations from several parishes, he said. The new arrivals are then housed in and around the city, in private homes or in accommodations provided by the government.

"They're exhausted, with urgent needs for food and children's clothing," he said, as one father carried a sick infant to be evacuated by ambulance. "They're terrified of the violence and brutality."

Before Egypt's 2011 Arab Spring uprising, some 5,000 Christians lived in northern Sinai, but that number has since dwindled to fewer than 1,000, according to Christian clergy members and residents. Egypt does not keep official statistics on the number of Christians in specific regions or nationwide.

Rights activists say the displacement is a clear sign the government has failed to provide security for the embattled minority in Egypt's volatile northeastern corner, where they have faced threats before. They point to the fact that the government only agreed to put up the fleeing Christians in government housing after pressure on social media.

Blacksmith Ezzat Yacoub Ishak said he and his two sons left their apartments carrying "absolutely nothing."

"The security forces, they're all hiding and scared for their lives, scared to confront those people," he said, speaking from a Spartan room furnished with only a mattress in a rented apartment in Ismailia. "There is no security. Yes, there are military and police at the check points, but for my protection as a human there is nothing."

The military's fight against the Sinai militants has been bitter.

Hundreds of troops have been killed, the army has razed hundreds of houses to stop alleged militant infiltration through tunnels from neighboring Gaza, and in 2014, el-Sissi declared a state of emergency and curfew after suicide bombings killed more than 30 soldiers. Still, the insurgency has shown little sign of abating.

Mina Misak, another new arrival in Ismailia, said the spate of recent killings made life in el-Arish too much to bear. He said militants killed his father, Misak Nasrallah Misak, in a drive-by shooting a year ago as he left his job at a hospital.

"It tore me to pieces when I found out, and now it's even worse — there's no reason to stay," the 20-year-old said. "It's difficult to do anything. Most of my friends and family have left. And Muslims are scared too, of course."

"In el-Arish, there are seven checkpoint buildings lining the road to town, but inside, you hardly see a soldier," said Nabil, who like other fleeing Christians declined to give his last name for fear of reprisals. "Whenever there's an attack they come after we telephone them, sometimes days later, and ask for descriptions of the killers. But that's all."

At the Ismailia youth hostel where authorities were putting up some 45 families, luggage, boxes of food and the newly displaced arrived throughout the day.

"I don't want to stay there and die as a casualty in the war that has hit el-Arish," said Reda, a Christian civil servant who arrived two days earlier with six family members, including grandchildren. "If they allow us we will stay here until the terrorism is over and the government makes peace."

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At the Evangelical Church, a shop owner named Fayeze arrived with a truckload of furniture ahead of his family to seek a place to relocate.

"Hopefully we'll find a home and be able to stay here, but I don't know how I would move my business," he said. "Daily life looks normal in el-Arish, until you hear about terrorists shooting people in their own homes."

Follow Brian Rohan on Twitter at: www.twitter.com/brian_rohan

Family representative says actor Bill Paxton has died

By LINDSEY BAHR, AP Film Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Bill Paxton, a prolific and charismatic actor who had memorable roles in such blockbusters as "Apollo 13" and "Titanic" while also cherishing his work in "One False Move" and other low-budget movies and in the HBO series "Big Love," has died from complications due to surgery. He was 61.

A family representative issued a statement Sunday on the death but provided no further details.

Paxton, a Fort Worth, Texas, native, appeared in dozens of movies and television shows and seemed to be around when history was made both on and off screen. As a boy, he was in the crowd that welcomed President John F. Kennedy in Texas on the morning of Nov. 22, 1963, hours before Kennedy was killed in Dallas. As a young man, he worked in the art department for "B" movie king Roger Corman, who helped launch the careers of numerous actors and filmmakers.

Paxton's movie credits included some of the signature works of the past 40 years, from "Titanic" and "Apollo 13" to "The Terminator" and "Aliens." Television fans knew him for his role as a polygamist, with three wives who expected the best from him, in the HBO series "Big Love," for which he received three Golden Globe nominations.

"Bill Paxton was a big-hearted, thoughtful and honorable person," his "Big Love" co-star Chloe Sevigny said in a statement. "He always had a smile on his face and could entertain any room with his wonderful stories of his many amazing years in Hollywood."

Paxton was currently starring in the CBS drama "Training Day," which premiered Feb. 2. The network has not yet announced whether it will continue to air the completed episodes.

Paxton is survived by his wife of 30 years, Louise Newbury, and their two children. His first marriage, to Kelly Rowan, ended in divorce.

His death adds a sad note to Sunday night's Academy Awards ceremonies. Paxton was never nominated but appeared in several Oscar-winning movies and was beloved and respected throughout Hollywood and beyond.

"On this Oscar Sunday, watch 'One False Move' or 'A Simple Plan' to see this lovely leading man, at his finest," Paxton's friend Rob Lowe tweeted.

Paxton brought a reliably human dimension to big-budget action adventures and science fiction. He was, sci-fi fans like to point out, the only actor killed by a Predator, a Terminator and an Alien. But Paxton, famously genial and approachable, defined his career less by his marquee status than as a character actor whose regular Joes appeared across the likes of "One False Move," "A Simple Plan" and "Nightcrawler."

"I'm a frustrated romantic actor," he told The Associated Press in 2006. "I wanted to play the Bud part in 'Splendor in the Grass,' I wanted to play Romeo — the great, unrequited, tragic love stories. I've gotten to mix it up a bit with the ladies but the romance has been a subplot, running from the tornado or whatever."

"I feel like I'm a regionalist and a populist who's never fit in among the intellectuals," he added. "I think there's where the heart of American art is. My greatest roles have been in regional films, whether it was 'One False Move' or 'Frailty' or 'Simple Plan' or 'Traveller.'"

Paxton often spoke warmly of his upbringing, and how his father exposed him early to movies and the stage. His father, John Paxton, also shared his son's knack for being around famous people. A childhood neighbor was the artist Thomas Hart Benton. John Paxton later belonged to the same golfing club as the great Ben Hogan, whom Bill Paxton got to know growing up.

One of the industry's busiest actors, Paxton once said the hardest part of his career wasn't the work

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itself, but the time in between.

"You know all the time I've been in this business which is a long, long time now, I go from having incredible days like shooting the part of Sam Houston and then all of a sudden I'm home and I'm out of work and it's two o'clock in the afternoon, I'm in my boxer shorts watching Turner Classic Movies," he told the AP in 2015. "And all I can tell you is, thank God for Turner Classic Movies and Robert Osborne."

AP Film Writer Jake Coyle, AP National Writer Hillel Italie and AP Television Writer Lynn Elber contributed to this report.

Will 'La La' have another day of sun at Sunday's Oscars?

By JAKE COYLE, AP Film Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Will the 89th Academy Awards be a parade of political speeches or landslide for "La La Land"? Probably both.

Sunday night's Oscars are shaping up to be one of the most turbulent and politically charged ceremonies in recent memory. The three-hour-plus telecast, which begins at 8:30 p.m. on ABC, is expected to resemble one very glitzy protest against President Donald Trump, whom award-winners — like Meryl Streep at the Golden Globes — have railed against throughout Hollywood's awards season.

An unusually tense atmosphere has coalesced before the Dolby Theatre ceremony, with protests, rallies and boycotts swirling around this year's Oscars. Even the normally sunny California weather has been stormy, with rain drenching Los Angeles early Sunday — though only clouds are expected for red carpet arrivals.

Yet most expect another day of sun for Damien Chazelle's celebrated musical "La La Land," up for a record-tying 14 nominations. A best picture upset, while unlikely, isn't out the question, though. Barry Jenkins' eight-time nominated "Moonlight" on Saturday took best feature at the Film Independent Spirit Awards, where "La La Land" wasn't eligible.

The other films up for best picture are Denis Villeneuve's "Arrival," Denzel Washington's "Fences," Mel Gibson's "Hacksaw Ridge," David Mackenzie's "Hell or High Water," Theodore Melfi's "Hidden Figures," Kenneth Lonergan's "Manchester by the Sea" and Garth Davis' "Lion."

The "OscarsSoWhite" crisis of the last two years was largely quelled this season by a richly diverse slate of nominees, thanks to films like "Moonlight," "Fences" and "Hidden Figures." A record six black actors are nominated. For the first time ever, a person of color is nominated in each acting category. And four of the five best documentary nominees were also directed by black filmmakers.

The nominees follow the efforts by Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences President Cheryl Boone Isaacs to diversify the membership of the largely white, older and male film academy. In June, the academy added 683 new members: 46 percent of them were female; 41-percent were nonwhite; and they pulled from 59 countries.

But just how political the ABC show becomes will depend in part on the tone set by host Jimmy Kimmel, who'll have a delicate balancing act to maintain. Play it too light and he'll appear out of sync with the mood. Hammer too hard and he'll alienate viewers already inundated by politics. Some Trump supporters, expecting political speeches, have said they will boycott the broadcast.

The academy and ABC will be hoping to improve on last year's telecast. The Chris Rock-hosted show drew 34.4 million viewers, an eight-year low. Ads this year are still going for \$2.1 million for 30-second spots.

There are some sources of suspense at this year's Oscars, most notably in the best actor category. While Casey Affleck ("Manchester by the Sea") was the favorite through most of awards season, Washington ("Fences") took the highly predictive Screen Actors Guild award, setting him up as the odds-makers' favored pick.

Affleck, wearing a shirt with the word "love" in Arabic, was among those to speak bluntly against Trump at Saturday's Spirit Awards.

"The policies of this administration are abhorrent and will not last," said Affleck, accepting the best actor award.

Politics pervaded Oscar weekend, usually a time of frothy anticipation of Hollywood's big night:

— On Friday, the United Talent Agency, forgoing its usual Oscar party, instead held a rally protesting President over immigration. "We will not tolerate chaos and ineptitude and war-mongering," Jodie Foster told attendees.

— Also on Friday, the six directors of the foreign film nominees released a joint statement condemning "the climate of fanaticism and nationalism we see today in the U.S. and in so many other countries." The signees included the Iranian director Asghar Farhadi, whose "The Salesman" is favored to win him his second foreign language Oscar. He isn't attending the awards in protest of Trump's proposed travel ban of seven predominantly Muslim nations, including Iran.

— U.S. immigration authorities are barring entry to a 21-year-old Syrian cinematographer who worked on the documentary short nominee "The White Helmets," about the nation's civil war.

— The Academy of Motion Pictures also made a late but notable addition to its presenter best actress nominee Streep ("Florence Foster Jenkins") to its lineup of A-list presenters. Her fiery remarks at the Golden Globes prompted Trump to call her "overrated."

Follow AP Film Writer Jake Coyle on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/jakecoyleAP>

Report warns of state money fallout from health law repeal

By **BEN NUCKOLS** and **RICARDO ALONZO-ZALDIVAR**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A sobering report to governors about the potential consequences of repealing the Obama-era health care law warns that federal spending cuts probably would create funding gaps for states and threaten many people with the loss of insurance coverage.

The Affordable Care Act has two main components for expanding coverage: subsidized private health insurance available in all 50 states, and an optional Medicaid expansion that has been accepted by 31 states and the District of Columbia. Those two components of the health law cover more than 20 million people.

A report by the consulting firms Avalere Health and McKinsey & Company concluded that the changes under consideration by the GOP-led House would reduce significantly federal dollars for Medicaid and subsidized private insurance.

The effect on Medicaid would be far-reaching. The federal-state program for low-income people covers more than 70 million Americans, many of whom have high health care needs.

The Associated Press obtained a copy of a slide presentation made by the consultants to governors meeting this weekend in Washington.

The report said the combination of phasing out Medicaid expansion money from the U.S. government, plus transforming the overall program from an open-ended federal entitlement to one that operates under a cap would likely result in state funding gaps. States that expanded Medicaid would face the deepest cuts.

States would get more flexibility to design their programs, but the money crunch could lead to cuts in eligibility, benefits, or payments to hospitals and other service providers. The impact of federal spending reductions would compound over time.

Reduced Medicaid spending could also hurt states with dampened economic activity and fewer jobs, the consultants said. Hospitals, which benefit from Medicaid coverage, are big employers in local communities. Costs of care for uninsured patients could become an issue.

In addition, the private insurance subsidies provided under Obama's law would also be scaled back, according to the report.

Although states would get some additional safety-net funding, reductions in federal insurance subsidies would expose some consumers to new costs for their coverage. That would probably result in fewer people covered, as some consumers drop their plans.

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, Medicaid consumed an average 19 percent of state budgets in 2015, the most current year available, ranging from 7 percent in Utah to 41 percent in New Hampshire.

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Gov. John Kasich, R-Ohio, said he thinks "there's going to be a problem in the House of getting anything out of there that still provides coverage to people. That's why the Republicans have to reach out to some of the Democrats. I don't know whether this is going to happen," he told CBS' "Face the Nation."

With President Donald Trump set to give his first speech to Congress on Tuesday night and his words on health care to be closely watched, a White House spokeswoman said the administration's goal is ensure people do not lose their coverage and that costs are lowered.

"So we're looking at every possible way to do exactly that: repeal a terrible, failed system and replace with something better," Sarah Huckabee Sanders told ABC's "This Week."

She depicted the current system as "collapsing under itself," a view not shared by independent experts. It is widely acknowledged that affordability is a serious problem, but the system is not regarded as teetering on the edge.

Governors on Saturday met privately with Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price, who according to several of the state leaders said the Trump administration wanted to work with states to overhaul health care, but he did not provide specifics.

A Medicaid proposal by GOP governors, a draft of which was obtained by the AP, urges Congress to change Medicaid from an open-ended federal entitlement to a program designed by each state within a financial limit.

Some of the governors behind the proposal, including Kasich, opted to expand Medicaid in their states despite pressure from conservatives.

"I think there are some very conservative Republicans in the House who are going to say just get rid of the whole thing. And that's not acceptable," he said.

He added: "Republicans can go and do what they want, and I'm going to talk to them. But at the end of the day I'm going to stand up for the people that wouldn't have the coverage if they don't get this thing right. And I happen to believe that the best way to get this right over time is for actually both parties to work together. I know that's considered an impossibility now, but what's at stake is not some political thing. What's at stake here are 20 million Americans."

Casualties mount as Iraqi troops advance in IS-held Mosul

By SUSANNAH GEORGE, Associated Press

MOSUL, Iraq (AP) — "We have wounded!" the men shouted from the roadside. Two soldiers, bleeding, were being bandaged beside their smoking vehicle on the side of a dusty dirt road.

Iraqi special forces Maj. Saif Ali yelled to his driver to stop and leaped out. "Put one inside and the other on top!" he called to his men. One was put in Ali's seat, the other laid on the vehicle's hood. "Go!" he shouted, crouching on the hood next to the wounded man. His driver blared the horn and the gunner shot into the air trying to clear a way through a sea of fleeing civilians and livestock.

As Iraqi forces push deeper into western Mosul, the assault is bringing a surge of casualties — at least 30 Iraqi security forces and more than 200 civilians killed or wounded in the last three days. Iraq's military does not release official casualty reports, but medics at front-line clinics provided figures on condition of anonymity.

The sudden spike in casualty numbers mirrors what played out in Mosul's east as the fight moved from rural villages to dense urban areas. Front-line medic stations that stood empty for the first days of the assault on Mosul's west announced last week, are now overflowing. At one clinic Sunday, the dead had to be moved to the ground to free up beds as more injured arrived.

The soldiers that Maj. Ali picked up had been wounded when a mortar — fired from districts held by the Islamic State group — hit them along a route used by the thousands of civilians fleeing Mosul on foot in the days after Iraqi forces first punched into Mamun neighborhood on Friday.

Ali had been on his way back to base after a quick visit to the edge of Mamun neighborhood. Now he was gripping the grate of his Humvee, using his own weight to keep the wounded man from sliding off the hood.

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In the front passenger seat, the other soldier -- with a head wound -- sat with his eyes wide open and glassy. Everyone inside the vehicle rode in almost complete silence as Ali and his gunner shouted directions to the driver and yelled for civilians to move out of the way.

Blood slowly soaked through the black shirt of the man sitting in Ali's seat. The nearest clinic was five kilometers (3 miles) away -- down bumpy dirt roads, crowded with people. After a few moments the soldier went completely limp, his body swaying slackly with each bump the Humvee hit. He was dead.

On Sunday afternoon Iraq's special forces were still struggling to clear the Mamun neighborhood, bringing them back to a phase of grueling urban combat similar to the fight for eastern Mosul in early November when military attrition rates spiked.

Iraqi forces at a base a few kilometers (miles) south of the front called in airstrikes to take out small units of two or three IS fighters who repeatedly managed to halt advancing Iraqi convoys.

The number of car bombs targeting Iraqi forces in western Mosul has been fewer than what forces experienced in the east: approximately four a day in the west compared to more than dozen a day in the east.

But the number of armed IS drones has ballooned. In a singled day drones dropped more than 70 munitions on Iraqi forces. The bombs mostly caused light injuries but they disrupted operations and monopolized the finite surveillance capabilities available from Iraq's military and the U.S.-led coalition backing the Mosul fight.

The whizz of mortars on the edge of Mamun neighborhood repeatedly sent families scattering for cover as they tried to flee Mosul's city limits. The route civilians are using to flee Mosul's west on foot is still within mortar range of IS fighters inside the city and largely out in the open, leaving people more vulnerable than those who fled the city's eastern side.

"You can see this road is continually being hit by mortars from (the Islamic State group)," said Lt. Gen. Abdel Ghani al-Asadi a few kilometers back from the front, pointing to the clouds of dust kicked up by the munitions on Mosul's edge.

At the clinic south of Mosul casualties came in waves: Humvees and pickup trucks swerved in front of the row of simple cots manned by a team of about a dozen doctors and medics.

Rahma Ghanim anxiously looked up as doctors checked her for serious wounds. The 19-year-old had been separated from the rest of her family when Iraqi security forces evacuated them from the edge of Mosul.

Her uncle had stepped on a roadside bomb. The blast killed him instantly, struck her in the back with mild shrapnel wounds and took a finger off her oldest brother's hand.

A Humvee arrived with the rest of her family and she screamed with joy, pulling away from the doctors treating her when she saw her father and aunt on the hood. The three embraced in tears.

"Where are the rest?" she asked.

Soldiers began opening the doors and six children climbed out, but in one seat was a small body wrapped in a colorful blanket.

"He's dead! Oh God! Oh God!" Rahma collapsed to the ground with her aunt. She screamed cursing IS, "may God destroy their houses! May God burn their hearts!"

Her father Ghanim Hussein staggered to a sofa in shock, his face caked with dust and blood. "His name was Shukran," he said, "he was my youngest, four years old."

Soldiers moved the small body to the side of the road and sped off back to the front as quickly as they arrived.

"Inside Mamun the streets are full of bodies," Rawa Salem, Rahma's cousin said. "I saw twenty dead with my own eyes, many of them children."

New Dem Party chairman Perez pledges to repair, unite party

By HOPE YEN and BILL BARROW, Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Newly elected Democratic national chairman Tom Perez pledged on Sunday to unite a fractured party, rebuild at all levels from "school board to the Senate" and reach out to chunks of rural America left feeling forgotten in the 2016 election.

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Speaking in television interviews, Perez indicated that an important first step was joining with vanquished rival Minnesota Rep. Keith Ellison, who agreed at Perez's invitation to serve as the Democratic National Committee's deputy chairman. Perez said the two would work hard to put out an affirmative party message while opposing President Donald Trump's policies, adding that he and Ellison were already getting a "good kick" that Trump was stirred to tweet that the DNC election was "rigged."

"We lead with our values and we lead with our actions," Perez said, describing a party focus that will emphasize protecting Social Security, Medicare and "growing good jobs in this economy."

"You know, our unity as a party is our greatest strength. And it's his worst nightmare," he said. "And, frankly, what we need to be looking at is whether this election was rigged by Donald Trump and his buddy Vladimir Putin."

The former labor secretary in the Obama administration acknowledged that swaths of the U.S. had felt neglected, saying he had heard from rural America that "Democrats haven't been there for us recently."

"That's exactly what we're going to do," Perez said, stressing grass-roots efforts in all 50 states. He pointed to Democrats' success Saturday in one of their strongholds, Delaware, where they found themselves in an unexpectedly competitive race. Stephanie Hansen won a special election for a state Senate seat after vigorous party campaigning that helped preserve Democrats' control of the chamber.

As DNC chair, Perez must now rebuild a party that in the last decade has lost about 1,000 elected posts from the White House to Congress to the 50 statehouses, a power deficit Democrats have not seen nationally in 90 years.

"A lot of people feel forgotten, and we will not allow that to happen," he said.

On Saturday, the DNC elected Perez as its chair in a competitive race that took two rounds of voting — unprecedented in recent memory for either major party. They picked Perez, who was backed by former President Barack Obama, over Ellison, backed by liberal Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont.

Sanders had pushed the party's eventual nominee, Hillary Clinton, into a protracted 2016 Democratic primary fight, gaining strong support from young voters in particular as he described a primary process as "rigged" by party establishment.

Piercing cheers after Perez's election were boos, yells and expletives from more than a few young Ellison supporters in the gallery, some of them in tears. Reaction wasn't enthusiastic among the liberal groups that had embraced Sanders and have intensified their efforts since Trump's stunning victory over Clinton in the November election.

"We don't have the luxury of walking out of this room divided," Ellison said Saturday over the jeers. Afterward, he told reporters he trusts Perez and that the burgeoning resistance movement aimed at Trump should do the same.

On Sunday, Sanders praised Ellison's strong bid to be DNC chair, taking on "Democratic insiders." Describing the party as broken and urging a "total transformation," the Vermont senator said Perez now "has a real opportunity on his hands. And I hope he seizes it."

Sanders said the party has to open up to working people and youth, and "make it crystal clear that the Democratic Party is going to take on Wall Street, it's going to take on the greed of the pharmaceutical industry, it's going to take on corporate America that is shutting down plants in this country and moving our jobs abroad."

Perez, the first Latino to be DNC chair, indicated Sunday that Democrats would continue to speak out forcefully against Trump's policies, even if it meant at times coming across as a "party of no." He referred to what he described as harmful policies, such as a "racist" travel ban affecting seven predominantly Muslim countries and administration efforts that he said would restrict overtime pay and make it harder to save for retirement.

"We've seen no evidence of anything constructive from this president," Perez said. "He's governed from the far right in everything he's done."

Besides Trump in the Oval Office, Republicans now control Congress and about two-thirds of statehouses, and they're one Senate confirmation vote away from a conservative majority on the Supreme Court.

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After Perez's victory, Trump took to his preferred medium to rub it in. "Congratulations to Thomas Perez, who has just been named chairman of the DNC. I could not be happier for him, or for the Republican Party!" the president wrote on Twitter. Early Sunday, the president asserted that the Democratic contest was "of course, totally 'rigged.' Bernie's guy, like Bernie himself, never had a chance. Clinton demanded Perez!"

Progressive Democrats reacted to Perez's election with dismay. Jim Dean, chair of Democracy for America, called Perez's election "incredibly disappointing" and said the "resistance will persist ... with or without the leadership of the Democratic National Committee." Dan Kantor, leader of the Working Families Party, said Democrats "missed an opportunity."

The son of Dominican immigrants, Perez actually comes to the job with a demonstrably liberal record as a civil rights attorney and backer of organized labor. In the chairman's race he carried the establishment label as a Maryland resident who's spent years in the Washington orbit, working in the Justice Department and ultimately as an Obama Cabinet secretary.

Perez and Sanders spoke on CNN's "State of the Union;" Perez also appeared on NBC's "Meet the Press" and ABC's "This Week."

Yen reported from Washington. Associated Press writer Michele Salcedo contributed to this report.

Russians march to honor slain opposition leader Nemtsov

By HOWARD AMOS, Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Thousands of Russians marched through Moscow on Sunday shouting slogans such as "Russia will be free!" and "Putin is war!" to mark two years since opposition leader Boris Nemtsov was gunned down outside the Kremlin.

Nemtsov, a former deputy prime minister, was a fierce critic of President Vladimir Putin. His Feb. 27, 2015, death, in what appeared to be a contract killing, sparked an outpouring of anger and fear in Russia's beleaguered opposition movement.

The memorial protest was the largest opposition gathering since a similar march for Nemtsov in 2016. Organizers put the number of participants at just over 15,000. The police, known for underestimating attendance at political rallies, said about 5,000 people showed up.

"It's very important that after two years people continue to come out and show their solidarity with the ideas for which Boris Nemtsov fought for and gave his life," opposition activist Ilya Yashin, who was Nemtsov's friend and colleague, told the Interfax news agency.

Demonstrators carried Russian flags, banners of opposition political parties and placards with quotes from Nemtsov, including "If there's Putin, there's no Russia," and "Our only chance left is the street." Some carried cardboard Russian flags with bullet holes in them.

"For us, Nemtsov represents free-thinking Russia and the democratic values for which we strive: free elections and no corruption," participant Yekaterina Getgarts said.

Five men went on trial for Nemtsov's murder in a Moscow military court last year, but no verdicts have been returned in the ongoing case. Investigators allege that the man who shot Nemtsov was Zaur Dadaev, a former officer in an elite Chechen police unit.

But Nemtsov's family and friends say it was a political hit with a trail that leads to senior officials in the North Caucasus republic of Chechnya who have not been charged or even questioned.

The Moscow rally largely passed without incident, but an unknown assailant threw green dye in the face of opposition leader Mikhail Kasyanov. Police made several arrests.

"This is the hysteria of the government. They do not know what to do. The government is afraid," opposition activist Gennady Gudkov, a former deputy in the lower house of parliament, said of the attack on Kasyanov.

While large crowds are rare at opposition demonstrations in Putin's Russia, the attendance at Sunday's rally was significantly lower than a year ago, when organizers estimated almost 25,000 people joined a Nemtsov memorial march.

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Russia's opposition has been fragmented in recent years by pressure from the Kremlin, the flight abroad of leading activists and political infighting.

After the march, thousands of people laid flowers on the bridge where Nemtsov was shot in the back several times while walking home with his girlfriend.

Similar demonstrations took place Sunday in other Russian cities, including St. Petersburg and Nemtsov's hometown of Nizhny Novgorod. Several thousand people participated in St. Petersburg, but the turnout was low elsewhere.

Dmitri Kozlov and Sergei Fedotov contributed to this report from Moscow.

Congress returns, with health care, Supreme Court on agenda

By ERICA WERNER, AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress returns to Washington this week to confront dramatic decisions on health care and the Supreme Court that may help determine the course of Donald Trump's presidency.

First, the president will have his say, in his maiden speech to a joint session of Congress on Tuesday night. Majority Republicans in the House and Senate will be closely watching the prime-time address for guidance, marching orders or any specifics Trump might embrace on health care or taxes, areas where some of his preferences remain a mystery.

Congressional Republicans insist they are working closely with the new administration as they prepare to start taking votes on health legislation, with the moment finally upon them to make good on seven years of promises to repeal and replace former President Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act. House Republicans hope to pass their legislation by early April and send it to the Senate, with action there also possible before Easter.

Republicans will be "keeping our promise to the American people," House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., said as he sent lawmakers home for the Presidents Day recess armed with informational packets to defend planned GOP changes to the health law.

But land mines await.

The recess was dominated by raucous town halls where Republicans faced tough questions about their plans to replace the far-reaching law with a new system built around tax credits, health savings accounts and high risk pools. Important questions are unanswered, such as the overall cost and how many people will be covered. There's also uncertainty about how to resolve divisions among states over Medicaid money.

The lack of clarity created anxiety among voters who peppered lawmakers from coast to coast with questions about what would become of their own health coverage and that of their friends and family. It's forced Republicans to offer assurances that they don't intend to take away the law and leave nothing in its place, even though some House conservatives favor doing just that.

"What I have said is repeal and replace and more recently I have defined that as repairing the ACA moving forward," Rep. Leonard Lance, R-N.J., insisted to an overflow crowd in his politically divided district this past week. "I think we have a responsibility in Washington to try to make the system better."

It remains to be seen whether the release of detailed legislation in the coming days will calm, or heighten, voters' concerns. Details on the size of tax credits to help people buy insurance, and how many fewer people will be covered than the 20 million who gained coverage under Obama's law, could create bigger pushback and even more complications.

With lawmakers set to return to the Capitol on Monday, it will become clearer whether the earful many got back home will affect their plans. GOP leaders are determined to move forward, reckoning that when confronted with the reality of voting on the party's repeal and replace plan, Republicans will have no choice but to vote "yes."

Many Republicans say that how they will handle health legislation will set the stage for the next big battle, over taxes. And that fight, many believe, will be even trickier than health care. Already, it has opened major rifts between House and Senate Republicans.

Senators also will be weighing the nomination of federal appeals Judge Neil Gorsuch, Trump's pick for

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the Supreme Court. Hearings soon will get underway in the Senate Judiciary Committee; floor action is expected before Easter.

Despite Gorsuch's sterling credentials, Democrats are under pressure from their liberal supporters to oppose him, given voters' disdain for Trump and the GOP's refusal last year to allow even a hearing for Obama's nominee for the high court vacancy, federal appeals Judge Merrick Garland.

Yet some Democrats are already predicting that one way or another, Gorsuch will be confirmed. Even if he doesn't pick up the 60 votes he needs, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., could use a procedural gambit to eliminate Democrats' ability to filibuster Gorsuch, an outcome that Trump has endorsed.

Congress is awaiting a budget from the Trump administration, and the slow process of rounding out Trump's Cabinet will move forward as Republicans tee up more nominees over Democratic protests. The Senate has confirmed 14 Cabinet and Cabinet-level officials, fewer than other presidents at this point.

The most controversial nominees, including Education Secretary Betsy DeVos and Environmental Protection Agency head Scott Pruitt have been confirmed. Next up: financier Wilbur Ross for commerce secretary, Rep. Ryan Zinke to lead the Interior Department, retired neurosurgeon and 2016 GOP presidential candidate Ben Carson to be housing secretary and former Texas Gov. Rick Perry at the energy department.

How Democrats vote will be telling, given the extreme pressures on them to oppose Trump at every turn. It's a dynamic to which those with potential presidential ambitions are particularly sensitive. Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, among others, took heat for voting in favor of Carson in committee, while Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand of New York as opposed nearly all the nominees.

Iraq: Police Commandos recapture new neighborhood in Mosul

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA and SUSANNAH GEORGE, Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraqi militarized police captured two neighborhoods on the western side of Mosul on Sunday amid fierce clashes with Islamic State militants, as thousands of people continued to flee the battle to government-controlled areas, security officials said.

Iraqi forces, backed by aerial support by the U.S.-led international coalition, launched a new push last week to drive IS militants from Mosul's west, capturing so far the city's international airport and an adjacent military base. Iraqi authorities declared Mosul's eastern half "fully liberated" from the Sunni militants in January, three months after launching the operation to take back Iraq's second-largest city.

At dawn Sunday, the Federal Police Commandos Division moved into the Tayaran neighborhood amid fierce clashes, Maj. Gen. Haider al-Maturi told The Associated Press from Baghdad. Al-Maturi said the neighborhood "is now under their full control."

Al-Maturi said IS militants deployed at least 10 suicide car bombs, but nine of them were blown up before reaching their targets. The 10th killed two policemen and wounded five. Al-Maturi added that his forces arrested two militants — an Iraqi and a foreigner who speaks Russian.

Further west, Iraqi special forces captured the Mamun neighborhood by early Sunday afternoon, Brig. Gen. Haider Fadhil of the special forces said. Fadhil said IS militants attacked the advancing troops with more than 15 suicide car bombs, but all were blown up before hitting the troops.

"The neighborhood is fully liberated," he said. "We are clearing it up and beefing up fortifications."

Up to 3,000 people fled from the Mamun neighborhood Sunday morning, according to Iraqi special forces Brig. Gen. Salam Hashed, who oversees a screening center south of Mosul. Hashed said just over 2,500 people fled the previous day.

According to the U.N. figures, about 750,000 civilians are believed to be trapped in their houses in western Mosul, one of several challenges expected to slow the advance of the Iraqi troops. Another complication is western Mosul's old and narrow streets, which will force Iraqi soldiers to leave the relative safety of their armored vehicles.

Western Mosul is the last significant urban area IS holds in Iraq. The city is split roughly in half by the Tigris River.

Mosul fell to IS in the summer of 2014, along with large swaths of northern and western Iraq.

George reported from south of Mosul. Associated Press writer Sinan Salaheddin in Baghdad contributed to this report.

Malaysia: Poisoning of Kim caused paralysis, quick death

By EILEEN NG, Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Malaysia's health minister said Sunday that the dose of nerve agent given to North Korean ruler Kim Jong Un's exiled half brother was so high that it killed him within 20 minutes and caused "very serious paralysis."

Kim Jong Nam died Feb. 13 at Kuala Lumpur's airport in what Malaysian police say was a well-planned hit by two women who wiped a liquid on Kim's face. Police revealed Friday that the banned chemical weapon VX nerve agent was used to kill Kim, raising the stakes in the case.

Health Minister Subramaniam Sathasivam said the dose of VX given to Kim was so high that he showed symptoms within minutes. Kim fainted at the airport clinic and died in the ambulance while en route to a hospital, he said.

"VX only requires 10 milligrams to be absorbed into the system to be lethal, so I presume that the amount of dose that went in is more than that," he said at a news conference. "The doses were so high and it did it so fast and all over the body, so it would have affected his heart, it would have affected his lungs, it would have affected everything."

Asked how long it took for Kim to die after he was attacked, Subramaniam said, "I would think it was about, from the time of onset, from the time of application, 15-20 minutes."

Malaysia hasn't directly accused the North Korean government of being behind the attack, but officials have said four North Korean men provided two women with poison to carry it out. The four men fled Malaysia on the same day as the killing, while the women — one from Indonesia and the other Vietnamese — were arrested.

Experts say the nerve agent used to kill Kim was almost certainly produced in a sophisticated state weapons laboratory and is banned under an international treaty. But North Korea never signed the treaty, and has spent decades developing a complex chemical weapons program.

Kim was not an obvious political threat to his estranged half brother, Kim Jong Un. But he may have been seen as a potential rival in North Korea's dynastic dictatorship, even though he had lived in exile for years.

North Korea has denied any role in the attack.

Earlier Sunday, Subramaniam said the state chemistry department's finding of the VX toxin confirmed the hospital's autopsy result that suggested a "chemical agent caused very serious paralysis" that led to death "in a very short period of time." The VX agent can lead to death very quickly in high doses, he said.

He said the final autopsy report would be submitted to police soon.

Subramaniam also said that there have been no reports of anyone else being sickened by the toxin, but that medical workers who attended to Kim would remain under observation for possible delayed effects.

Tens of thousands of passengers have passed through the airport since the apparent assassination was carried out. No areas were cordoned off and protective measures were not taken.

Early Sunday, more than a dozen officers in protective gear swept the budget terminal where Kim was attacked and said they found no traces of VX.

Abdul Samah Mat, the police official leading the investigation, said the terminal was "free from any form of contamination of hazardous material" and declared it a "safe zone" after a two-hour sweep.

He also said a condominium on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur that was raided by police last week had been rented by the four North Korean suspects who left the country. He said police were still testing a seized substance for traces of any chemicals.

Abdul Samah said the Indonesian woman who was arrested, Siti Aisyah, vomited in a taxi on the way from the airport after the attack but is fine now. He said that more tests were needed to determine if the

two arrested suspects were given antidotes so the nerve agent wouldn't kill them.

An antidote, atropine, can be injected after exposure and is carried by medics in war zones where weapons of mass destruction are suspected.

On Saturday, representatives from the Indonesian and Vietnamese embassies met with the two arrested women, who both said they thought they were part of a prank show. Aisyah said she was paid the equivalent of \$90, according to Andriano Erwin, Indonesia's deputy ambassador to Malaysia.

Copy this: Vatican stakes out rights to Pope Francis' image

By **DANICA KIRKA** and **NICOLE WINFIELD**, Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — God's love may be free, but the Vatican says it has a copyright on the pope.

Unnerved by the proliferation of papal-themed T-shirts, snow globes and tea towels around the world, the Vatican has warned it intends to "protect" the image of Pope Francis and "stop situations of illegality that may be discovered." It also wants to protect the crossed keys emblem of the Holy See.

"The secretary of state will undertake systematic surveillance aimed at monitoring the way in which the image of the Holy Father and the emblems of the Holy See are used, intervening with opportune measures when necessary," the Vatican said in a statement.

To back up this declaration, the Vatican has hired the global law firm Baker McKenzie to protect its intellectual property rights, the Italian daily Corriere della Sera reported. without citing the source of the information. Baker McKenzie declined to comment.

The threat of enforcement marks a sea change for a church that for some 2,000 years has seen popes venerated on all manner of flags, banners and medals. But the popularity of Francis and the ease with which his image can be copied in the internet age has spawned a flood of papal trinkets, causing the Holy See to worry that they are losing control of his image.

"The pope's image rights are no different from those of any other famous celebrity and so it's not surprising that the Vatican is giving notice that it will protect its (intellectual property) rights as necessary," said Nick Kounoupas, the founder of an intellectual property consultancy in London. "What will be interesting to see, however, is how vigorously these rights are pursued, given who the IP owner is."

Francis' many travels have taken him to countries like the Philippines and Sri Lanka, where factories can quickly churn out pope hats, T-shirts and towels. Vatican officials have grown fearful the faithful will think that the church is making money off the merchandise, experts say. Worse still, they see the conditions in which some of the items are made and worry about being associated with labor abuses.

The decision reflects an evolution in the last decade as the Vatican adapted to modern markets. While in the past the Holy See might get word of improper use of the pope's image through local church organizations around the globe, the approach was random.

"It's not new that people were selling T-shirts of the pope, but (previously) those were probably little local vendors," said Mark McKenna, an intellectual property expert at the Notre Dame Law School in Indiana.

What's changed is the magnitude of what can be produced and how quickly it can be distributed through online platforms.

"In a world of Etsy, you are able to do it on a bigger scale," he said.

Although the Vatican did not elaborate on how it would crack down, the warning seemed a pre-emptive move to explain why the Vatican is going after the unauthorized commercial uses of the pope's image. There was no immediate indication that souvenir buyers would risk fines or legal action.

It's not as if the church refrains from selling its own pope-themed material.

On the Vatican website, one can buy Francis medals, icons and rosary boxes. The Vatican museum boutiques offer silk ties and scarves and watches showing scenes from Michelangelo's frescoes on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. And that may be part of the Vatican's motivation in safeguarding Francis' face — and warning that they will challenge the copycats.

"It's probably also the case that there is some genuine commercial motivation," McKenna said. "They

want to be sure they're the only ones selling this stuff."

Kirka reported from London.

Muhammad Ali's son asked, 'Are you Muslim?' by border agents

By BRUCE SCHREINER, Associated Press

Muhammad Ali's son, who bears the boxing great's name, was detained by immigration officials at a Florida airport and questioned about his ancestry and religion in what amounted to unconstitutional profiling, a family friend said Saturday.

Ali Jr., 44, who confirmed his Muslim faith, was detained about two hours, despite telling officials that he's Ali's son and a native-born U.S. citizen, said Chris Mancini, a family friend and attorney.

Returning from a Black History Month event in Jamaica, Muhammad Ali Jr. and his mother, Khalilah Camacho Ali, were pulled aside and separated from each other on Feb. 7 at the immigration checkpoint at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport, said Mancini.

Camacho Ali was released a short time later after showing a photo of herself with her ex-husband, the former heavyweight boxing champion, Mancini said. But Ali Jr. was not carrying a photo of his world-famous father — a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

It was the first time Ali Jr. and his mother have ever been asked if they're Muslim when re-entering the United States, Mancini said.

"From the way they were treated, from what was said to them, they can come up with no other rational explanation except they fell into a profiling program run by customs, which is designed to obtain information from anyone who says they're a Muslim," Mancini said in a phone interview. "It's quite clear that what triggered his detention was his Arabic name and his religion."

U.S. Customs and Border Protection spokesman Daniel Hetlage confirmed Saturday evening that Ali Jr. was held for questioning by customs officers, but said "it wasn't because he's a Muslim and it wasn't because of his Arabic-sounding name."

The agency said in a statement that its officers process more than 1.2 million international travelers daily with "vigilance and in accordance with the law." It said it does not discriminate based on religion, race, ethnicity or sexual orientation.

"We treat all travelers with respect and sensitivity," the agency said. "Integrity is our cornerstone. We are guided by the highest ethical and moral principles."

During his detention, Ali Jr. was asked repeatedly about his lineage and his name, "as if that was a pre-programmed question that was part of a profile," Mancini said.

Ali Jr. and his mother have been frequent global travelers. The family connects their treatment to President Donald Trump's efforts to restrict immigration after calling during his campaign for a ban on Muslims entering the U.S.

"This has never happened to them before," Mancini said. "They're asked specifically about their Arabic names. Where they got their names from and whether they're Muslims. It doesn't take much to connect those dots to what Trump is doing."

Camacho Ali and Ali Jr. live in Florida. They have not traveled abroad since, and are considering filing a federal lawsuit, he said.

Asked why the matter was just now coming to light, Mancini said: "Khalilah had prior commitments as did I and when she finally got in to see me for a legal opinion of what they did, I brought it to the media immediately."

Ali, the three-time heavyweight champion and humanitarian, died last June at age 74 after a long battle with Parkinson's disease. People lined the streets of Louisville, Kentucky, to say goodbye to the city's most celebrated son before a star-studded memorial service watched worldwide.

Police: Car plows into parade crowd in New Orleans; 28 hurt

By REBECCA SANTANA, Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — A suspect is in custody after 28 people were injured Saturday when a vehicle plowed into a crowd watching the Krewe of Endymion parade in the Mid-City section of New Orleans, police said.

Police Chief Michael Harrison said the suspect is being investigated for driving while intoxicated. Harrison was asked twice by the media if terrorism was suspected. While he didn't say "No" he did say it looks like a case of DWI.

"We suspect that that subject was highly intoxicated," he said.

Twenty-one people were hospitalized after the crash with five victims in guarded condition. Seven others declined to be hospitalized, city Emergency Services Director, Dr. Jeff Elder said.

The victims range in age from as young as 3 or 4-years-old to adults in their 30s and 40s, said Elder.

Among the injured was one New Orleans police officer. Harrison said the officer, who was on duty, was undergoing tests to determine the extent of her injuries. She was in "good spirits," he said.

The accident came during one of the busiest nights of Mardi Gras when thousands of people throng the streets of Mid-City to watch the elaborate floats and clamor to catch beads and trinkets tossed from riders. As police and city officials were assessing the accident scene, people were streaming home as plastic bags that used to hold trinkets and discarded beads littered the ground. The area where the accident occurred was cordoned off with police barricades.

One woman at the scene told The New Orleans Advocate (<http://bit.ly/2miOHGP>) that a silver truck whisked by her just feet away as she was walking through the intersection.

Carrie Kinsella said, "I felt a rush it was so fast."

Twenty-year-old Kourtney McKinnis told the Advocate that the driver of the truck seemed almost unaware of what he had just done.

"He was just kind of out of it," she said.

Associated Press writer Kevin McGill contributed to this story.

This story has been corrected to fix the spelling of Dr. Jeff Elder's name from Selder.

A cadre of casually clad stars come through Oscar rehearsals

By SANDY COHEN, AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Dwayne Johnson posed for a solo pic on the Dolby Theatre stage. Taraji P. Henson pretended to run off with the wooden prop Oscar. And a makeup-free, casually clad Halle Berry made a rehearsal actor's day when she kissed him on the cheek as he came onstage to accept an award.

"That's Halle Berry!" the actor said, eyes wide.

Saturday is rehearsal day for Sunday's Academy Awards, when a parade of superstar presenters comes through the Dolby Theatre to practice their lines — another famous face every 15 minutes. It's also casual day at the Dolby, as most stars come dressed down — except for the women's feet: Many actresses wear their show-day shoes to try them out on the Oscar stage.

Salma Hayek, however, was not dressed down. Wearing all black, from her blazer and blouse down to her stiletto-heeled boots, she looked like she just walked out of a magazine spread.

"OK, let's do this," she said from center stage.

Ryan Gosling and Emma Stone had fun with a microphone sound-check. Stone asked the stage manager if they should begin reading their lines and was surprised to hear her voice amplified to the room.

"Hot mike," Gosling said, putting his mouth on the microphone.

"Sibilance," Stone responded, invoking an old "Wayne's World" sketch as she leaned into the mike.

"Sibilance," Gosling replied.

Judd Apatow accompanied wife Leslie Mann to her read-through, and he documented the experience

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with his cellphone. He shot photos of Mann on stage and took pictures of her seat-saving placard. He also helped write her script for Sunday.

"I think we're going to fix it up a little bit and practice for tomorrow," Mann told a stage manager.

Vince Vaughn also plans to pen a portion of his Sunday night script, he said from the stage Saturday.

Amy Adams brought a very special guest along to rehearsals: her 6-year-old daughter, Aviana. Mother and daughter also wore matching outfits: Gray sweatshirts with rainbow-striped sleeves that read "Good vibes only." Adams paired hers with skinny jeans and tall silver platform shoes.

When she finished her lines, her daughter came to meet her onstage, but nearly tripped on the way up.

"Her and Jennifer Lawrence, you know," Adams joked, referencing Lawrence's fall on her way to accept her Oscar in 2013.

"Fifty Shades of Grey" stars Dakota Johnson and Jamie Dornan looked out from the stage to try to find their seats in the theater, all marked by photo placards.

"Oh my God, I'm in the corner," she said, smiling at having found it. "I'm way in the corner."

"I'm probably up there," Dornan said, pointing up to the balcony. (He's actually seated near his co-star.)

Brie Larson wore an ACLU T-shirt under a denim jacket to rehearsals. Kate McKinnon paired black leggings and gray hoodie with towering black platforms, worn over socks. Samuel L. Jackson kept things relaxed, wearing a gray tracksuit and backward ball cap. He snapped a few cellphone photos of the stage after running through his lines. Scarlett Johansson didn't bother with heels. She wore clogs with her black pants and white moto jacket, and took a moment to admire the stage when she walked onto it.

"It's very beautiful," she said.

Jason Bateman was in a joking mood. When a stage manager told him not to read the teleprompter lines in red, Bateman replied, "I say it louder, right? That's why it's in red." David Oyelowo made rehearsals a family affair: his wife and four children sat in the theater as he rehearsed.

Other stars rehearsing Saturday included Jennifer Aniston, Chris Evans, Alicia Vikander, Felicity Jones and nominee Dev Patel, who confessed to a stage manager, "I'm very nervous."

But the presenters who had the most fun at rehearsals were the stars of "Hidden Figures." Henson and supporting actress nominee Octavia Spencer were all giggles onstage.

"I'd like to thank the academy for opening the curtains for such a grand entrance," Spencer said, putting on a British accent.

"It was my idea!" Henson shouted. "Right, academy?"

Their co-star Janelle Monae, who looked camera-ready in a colorblock sweater, stayed quiet.

"She's the straight man in this group," Henson told a stagehand. But not so straight that she wasn't willing to strike a "Charlie's Angels"-style pose with Henson and Spencer when the curtains opened to reveal the women onstage.

They practiced their entrance before presenting the prop Oscar. As Henson handed it to the fake winners, she said, "You're amazing. Hire me!"

Follow AP Entertainment Writer Sandy Cohen at www.twitter.com/APSandy .

'Moonlight' sweeps Spirit Awards; Affleck wins best actor

By JAKE COYLE, AP Film Writer

SANTA MONICA, Calif. (AP) — Sunday might be dominated by "La La Land," but Saturday belonged to "Moonlight."

Barry Jenkins' luminous coming-of-age tale swept Saturday's Film Independent Spirit Awards, taking home six awards including best feature. "Moonlight" won every award it was nominated for at the 32nd annual indie awards, the dressed-down, beachside ceremony held the day before the Academy Awards.

"Moonlight" won for its directing, screenplay, cinematography and editing. It was also honored for its ensemble cast in the Spirit Awards' Robert Altman Award. Backstage, Jenkins said its tale of a poor, young, black kid in Miami stood in stark contrast to President Donald Trump's administration.

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"I think 'Moonlight' exists as a beacon of inclusivity," said Jenkins, flanked by his African-American cast and producers.

The afternoon ceremony frequently had a strong political tenor. Casey Affleck, who won best actor for "Manchester by the Sea," wore a shirt with the word "love" in Arabic.

"The policies of this administration are abhorrent and will not last," said Affleck, accepting his award. Backstage, he spoke about "the torrent of terrifying news that comes out of Washington every day"

Some Oscar contenders were missing their presumed rivals at the Spirit Awards, which only nominated films made for \$20 million or less (and thus disqualifying the Academy Awards favorite "La La Land"). But if "Moonlight," nominated for eight Oscars including best picture, is to pull off the upset Sunday, it has some history on its side. The last three Spirit Awards best-feature winners — "Spotlight," "Birdman," "12 Years a Slave" — all went on to win best picture at the Oscars.

Host Nick Kroll and John Mulaney maintained a rigorously irreverent tone through a ceremony often punctuated by belly laughs. In their opening monologue, Kroll mockingly defended the common charge of "liberal elitism" often thrown at Hollywood events like the Spirits.

"We're not in a bubble. We're in a tent," said Kroll, referring to the Spirits' Santa Monica, Calif., home. "We're fringe artists on a California beach. If we leaned any further to the left, we'd topple into the ocean."

Instead of a lengthy in memoriam reel, they opted instead for a highlight of those who didn't die, singling out Milos Foreman and Tim Allen while Andy Samberg, doing his best Eddie Vedder, sang Pearl Jam's "Alive."

Best actress went to Isabelle Huppert, the French actress of "Elle," who bested Natalie Portman and Annette Bening. Just as Affleck wasn't up against Oscar favorite Denzel Washington in best actor, the best actress category was missing Emma Stone of "La La Land."

Molly Shannon, the former "Saturday Night Live" cast member, supplied one of the afternoon's highpoints. She was visibly overjoyed by winning best supporting actress for her performance in "Other People." She concluded her speech by exclaiming, "I really truly feel like a ... SUPERSTAR!" — aping her old "SNL" character.

Other awards also went to films far outside the Oscar candidates. Robert Eggers' well-researched "The Witch," set in 17th century Massachusetts, won for both best first feature and best first screenplay. He thanked the Puritans for "writing down so much stuff."

Ezra Edelman's "O.J.: Made in America" took best documentary. Best foreign language film went to Maren Ade's "Toni Erdmann."

The Cassavettes Award, which honors the best feature made for less than \$500,000 went to Andrew Ahn's Korean gay-immigrant drama "Spa Night." Taking the stage Ahn first remarked, "I'm going to barf," but quickly collected himself, speaking tenderly about his parents' acceptance of their gay son and the need for acceptance of immigrants, gays and other communities.

"We are part of this great country," said Ahn. "And we are undeniable."

Follow AP Film Writer Jake Coyle on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/jakecoyleAP>

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Sunday, Feb. 26, the 57th day of 2017. There are 308 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History:

On Feb. 26, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson signed a congressional act establishing Mount McKinley National Park (now Denali National Park) in the Alaska Territory. The Original Dixieland Jass Band (an all-white group) made what's generally regarded as the first commercial jazz recording, "Dixie Jass Band One-Step" and "Livery Stable Blues," in New York for the Victor label.

On this date:

In 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte escaped from exile on the Island of Elba and headed back to France in a bid to regain power.

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In 1904, the United States and Panama proclaimed a treaty under which the U.S. agreed to undertake efforts to build a ship canal across the Panama isthmus.

In 1919, President Woodrow Wilson signed a congressional act establishing Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona.

In 1929, President Calvin Coolidge signed a measure establishing Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming.

In 1942, "How Green Was My Valley" won the Academy Award for best picture of 1941, beating out nine other films, including "The Maltese Falcon" and "Citizen Kane"; Gary Cooper was named best actor for "Sergeant York," while Joan Fontaine was recognized as best actress for "Suspicion."

In 1945, authorities ordered a midnight curfew at nightclubs, bars and other places of entertainment across the nation.

In 1952, Prime Minister Winston Churchill announced that Britain had developed its own atomic bomb.

In 1962, after becoming the first American to orbit the Earth, astronaut John Glenn told a joint meeting of Congress, "Exploration and the pursuit of knowledge have always paid dividends in the long run."

In 1970, National Public Radio was incorporated.

In 1987, the Tower Commission, which investigated the Iran-Contra affair, issued a report rebuking President Ronald Reagan for failing to control his national security staff.

In 1992, Armenian forces attacked the village of Khodzhaly (koh-JAH'-lee), resulting in the deaths of 613 Azerbaijanis (ah-zur-by-JAHN'-eez), according to Azerbaijani authorities. (Armenia does not deny the attack, but calls the reported death toll exaggerated.)

In 1993, a truck bomb built by terrorists exploded in the parking garage of New York's World Trade Center, killing six people and injuring more than 1,000 others.

Ten years ago: Iraq's Shiite vice president, Adel Abdul-Mahdi (ah-DEEL' AHB'-dool-MAH'-dee), narrowly escaped death as a blast ripped through a government meeting hall just hours after it had been searched by U.S. teams with bomb-sniffing dogs; at least 10 people were killed.

Five years ago: Trayvon Martin, 17, was shot to death in Sanford, Florida, during an altercation with neighborhood watch volunteer George Zimmerman, who said he acted in self-defense. (Zimmerman was later acquitted of second-degree murder.) The black-and-white silent film "The Artist" won best picture at the Academy Awards, as well as best actor for its star, Jean Dujardin (zhahn doo-zhahr-DAN'); Meryl Streep won best actress for "The Iron Lady." The West held off a late charge from the East in a 152-149 victory in the NBA All-Star game in Orlando, Florida. The Daytona 500 was postponed for the first time in its 54-year history because of heavy rain.

One year ago: New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie stunned the Republican establishment by endorsing Donald Trump for president. A gunman killed four people in a home in Mason County, Washington, before fatally shooting himself after a standoff. A teenager who raped and killed his high school math teacher was sentenced in Salem, Massachusetts, to life in prison with eligibility for parole in 40 years.

Today's Birthdays: Game show host Tom Kennedy is 90. Singer Fats Domino is 89. Country-rock musician Paul Cotton (Poco) is 74. Actor-director Bill Duke is 74. Singer Mitch Ryder is 72. Actress Marta Kristen (TV: "Lost in Space") is 72. Rock musician Jonathan Cain (Journey) is 67. Singer Michael Bolton is 64. The president of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan (REH'-jehp TY'-ihp UR'-doh-wahn), is 63. Actor Greg Germann is 59. Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., is 59. Bandleader John McDaniel is 56. Actor-martial artist Mark Dacascos is 53. Actress Jennifer Grant is 51. Rock musician Tim Commerford (Audioslave) is 49. Singer Erykah Badu (EHR'-ih-kah bah-DOO') is 46. Rhythm-and-blues singer Rico Wade (Society of Soul) is 45. Olympic gold medal swimmer Jenny Thompson is 44. Rhythm-and-blues singer Kyle Norman (Jagged Edge) is 42. Actor Greg Kikaart is 40. Rock musician Chris Culos (O.A.R.) is 38. Rhythm-and-blues singer Corinne Bailey Rae is 38. Country singer Rodney Hayden is 37. Pop singer Nate Ruess (roos) (fun.) is 35. Tennis player Li Na is 35. Latin singer Natalia Lafourcade is 33. Actress Teresa Palmer (Film: "The Choice") is 31. Actor Alex Heartman is 27. Actress Taylor Dooley is 24.

Thought for Today: "Nothing is more frightful than laughter when it comes to jealousy." — Françoise Sagan (sa-GAHN'), French author (1935-2004).