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Thursday, March 2

Boys Regional Semifinals at Webster
Sisseton vs. Milbank Area at 6 p.m.
Groton Area vs. Roncalli at 7:30 p.m.

Friday, March 3

Webster vs. Milbank at Groton Area Arena
MS All State Band at Huron
State Debate at Mitchell
United Methodist: World Day of Prayer. 9:30 a.m. MOMS Group.

Saturday, March 4

MS All State Band in Huron
State Debate in Mitchell

Sunday, March 5

Catholic Parish: Mass at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church at 9 a.m., then at St. Joseph in Turton at 11 a.m.

United Methodist Parish: Worship in Conde at 9 a.m., coffee fellowship time at 10 a.m. and worship in Groton at 11 a.m.

PARTS COUNTER SALES

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

Harry Implement Inc.

PO Box 841
Ferney, SD
57439



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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Lifetime Warranty on all Collision Work!

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Allen McKiver, Owner ~ 605/397-4404

SDHSAA Foundation funding to be studied

By Dana Hess

For the S.D. Newspaper Association

PIERRE — The South Dakota High School Activities Association Board of Directors hopes to finally solve the question of how the SDHSAA Foundation should be funded.

At issue in the past have been attempts by the board to direct funds from corporate sponsors into the foundation. Critics of that strategy say they prefer to have the funds pay for dues, postage, subscription fees, catastrophic insurance and liability insurance.

According to a document from SDHSAA made available at Wednesday's board meeting, paying for those items cost just more than \$200,000 in the 2015-2016 school year for the association's 181 members schools.

Corporate sponsorships total \$300,000 per year to the association. Also available at Wednesday's meeting were copies of letters from four corporate sponsors asking that their donations now be sent to the SDHSAA Foundation. Those sponsors are First Premier Bank and Premier Bankcard, Sanford Health, Farmers Union Insurance and the South Dakota National Guard.

SDHSAA Executive Director Wayne Carney said sponsors have not been pleased in the past to learn that their donations were going to pay for the association's on-going expenses.

Summer Schultz, Dell Rapids superintendent representing the S.D. School Superintendents Association, offered this statement to the board from her organization's executive board:

"The South Dakota School Superintendents Association Executive Board is opposed to the South Dakota High School Activities Association Board of Directors approving contracts with corporate sponsors that designate specific use of corporate funds to the foundation — or any other designated fund. Corporate partnerships must remain free of 'strings' or 'conditions' as has been the practice of the SDHSAA since the beginning of corporate partnerships. The current attempt to allow corporate sponsors to designate funds will result in a significant and unnecessary cost burden to member schools, taxpayers, and a reduction of services to students currently participating in SDHSAA activities."

Schultz said the SDHSAA board was being told where to direct the corporate funds from "individuals who have no idea what's going on in our schools."

At last year's association annual meeting, the board was directed by members not to invest money from corporate sponsorships in the SDHSAA Foundation.

"I thought we were clear in giving direction last year," said Jason Selchert, Gayville-Volin superintendent, adding that the idea of not having corporate sponsorships to rely on is causing "a lot of heartburn among school districts."

Board chairman Steve Morford of Spearfish suggested polling members with a method most recently used when the association was trying to get member input on changes to the school calendar. A task force, which did not include any SDHSAA board members, met periodically and came to the board with recommendations.

Board member Brian Maher said he hoped that corporate sponsors would be patient as the board determines what its member schools want to do.

According to board member Sandy Klatt of Brandon Valley, the board needed to take action sooner rather than later.

"When is anybody going to pull up their big boy pants?" Klatt asked.

Fast action was the wrong approach, according to Jason Uttermark of Aberdeen.

"This is going to take some time," Uttermark said. "I don't think we should be flying by the seat of our pants."

The board unanimously approved of Morford contacting a school superintendent to see if he wanted the job of gathering a task force to study how member schools want to use funds from corporate sponsors and how the SDHSAA Foundation should be funded.

Activities board seeks to formulate financial policies

By Dana Hess

For the S.D. Newspaper Association

PIERRE — If the actions they took on Wednesday are any indication, the board of directors of the South Dakota High School Activities Association want their organization to operate more like a school board.

Board member Brian Maher of Sioux Falls said he was surprised to find out that there was no written policy for how the association enters into a contract.

"No such written document currently exists," Maher said.

In the past, SDHSAA contracts—for employment, equipment, television coverage, trophies—were signed by SDHSAA Executive Director Wayne Carney and then presented to the board for approval.

"In Sioux Falls, I can't write a contract without board approval," said Maher who serves as the superintendent of the Sioux Falls School District.

Maher noted that Carney was following past practices. "From a policy perspective, he's done nothing wrong," Maher said.

Board member Sandy Klatt of Brandon Valley said she's never seen an SDHSAA contract that wasn't first signed by Carney. A school board member at Brandon Valley, Klatt said, "The board always approves contracts."

"That's the way it should work," agreed board member Jason Uttermark of Aberdeen, a former board chairman. "We always had it a little backward."

Maher suggested forming a committee of three board members and the association's lawyer to figure out the policies needed by the SDHSAA.

Board member Roger Bordeaux of Tiospa Zina Tribal School said the policy has to be broad enough to allow staff to do the work instead of the board.

"We're not here to negotiate contracts," Bordeaux said.

Carney said he researched SDHSAA contracts going back to 1999 and every one of them had been approved by the board.

"You signed them before you got board approval," Maher said.

Carney responded that without board approval, the contract was not binding.

"If I'm on the other end of that contract, it looks binding to me," Maher said.

The board voted unanimously to have chairman Steve Morford of Spearfish appoint three board members and the association's attorney to a committee that will create the policies.

—30—

Activities association seeks new board member

By Dana Hess

For the S.D. Newspaper Association

PIERRE — High schools across the state will have a chance to vote for a new board member to serve on the South Dakota High School Activities Association Board of Directors at the association's annual meeting in April.

The meeting will be held at 2 p.m. April 18 at Riggs High School in Pierre.

The term of Jason Uttermark, principal at Aberdeen Central High School, is expiring. The next board member will be an athletic director from a Division II school. Those schools include Watertown, Aberdeen Central, Brookings, Yankton, Pierre, Mitchell, Harrisburg, Douglas, Huron, Sturgis, and Sioux Falls O'Gorman.

Brandon Valley is also a member of that division, but it already has a member on the current SDHSAA board.

Nominations for the position will be made at the annual meeting.

Any school can nominate," said Wayne Carney, SDHSAA executive director, "they just have to nominate from that class of schools."

—30—

GROTON KIWANIS CLUB

Tom Paepke, president; led the short business session for Groton Kiwanis, Wednesday noon, at the community center.

Cindy Litch is the club's chef each week.

Lee Schinkel introduced his two guests, Seth and Evan Erickson. The two brothers told of their new business in Groton, the Erickson Insurance Agency.

A new membership committee was formed, of Reed Litch, Lee Schinkel, and Mike Ehreshmann.

Program leader was Lee Schinkel, who presented Cody Swanson, GHS music instructor. Cody accompanied six vocal students, who performed vocal solos. The GHS students were Aleaya Worlie, Micah Poor, Tylan Glover, Miychell Koens, Madilyn Wright, and Macy Knecht. All six students received superior ratings on their vocal solos at the regional music contest in February.

Groton Prairie Mixed

Team Standings: Foxes 11, Cheetahs 11, Chipmunks 9, Coyotes 7, Jackelopes 7, Shih Tzus 3

Men's High Games: Brad Waage 209, 199, Brad Larson 207, Mike Siegler 196

Women's High Games: Nicole Kassube 171, Vicki Jorgensen 171, Lori Giedt 168, Nancy Radke 167

Men's High Series: Brad Waage 603, Brad Larson 518, Ron Belden 517

Women's High Series: Vicki Jorgensen 480, Nancy Radke 473, Nicole Kassube 446



Here is the new police vehicle for the Groton Police Department. Most of the gear has been installed with the cameras to be installed in Sioux Falls.

THE WALL THAT HEALS IS COMING TO CHAMBERLAIN, SD ON AUGUST 10-13, 2017

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Replica Wall and Mobile Education Center spreads healing legacy of The Wall and educates about the impact of the Vietnam War



WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Wall That Heals, a 250-foot replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, along with a mobile Education Center, is coming to Chamberlain on August 10-13, 2017 at the I-90 Information Center/Rest Area (Exit 264) and will be open 24 hours a day and free to the public. The Wall That Heals honors the more than three million Americans who served in the U.S. Armed forces in the Vietnam War and it bears the names of the more than 58,000 men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in Vietnam.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is one of the most visited memorials in our nation's capital, with more than 5.6 million visitors each year. However, many Americans have not been able to visit what has become known to many as "The Wall." The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF), the organization that built The Wall in 1982, wants to give all veterans and their family members all across America an opportunity to see the Memorial.

"Taking The Wall That Heals on the road gives thousands more veterans and their family members an opportunity to see The Wall and honor those who have served and sacrificed so much," said Jim Knotts,

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president and CEO of VVMF. "It helps veterans from all of America's conflicts to find healing and a powerful connection through their common military experiences."

South Dakota Public Broadcasting has arranged for The Wall That Heals to be conveniently located at the rest area off I-90 at Chamberlain near the Dignity sculpture. The exhibit is a part of SDPB's statewide outreach effort to honor veterans from the Vietnam era, Gold Star families, and others affected by the Vietnam War. This effort is in advance of the premiere of The Vietnam War, a new film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, premiering this fall on SDPB and PBS stations nationwide.

"South Dakota has a long tradition of honoring its veterans and others involved in war. Being able to bring The Wall That Heals to South Dakota is a thrill and an honor for South Dakota Public Broadcasting," said Julie Overgaard, Executive Director of SDPB. "We're grateful to have a scenic location that will make The Wall That Heals accessible to thousands of South Dakotans and visitors to our state."

More than 200,000 people visited The Wall That Heals in 2016. Since its debut in 1996, the exhibit has been on display in nearly 500 U.S. communities in addition to an April 1999 tour of the Four Provinces of Ireland and a visit to Canada in 2005. Hosting The Wall That Heals provides a community with a multi-day experience that includes an educational experience for local schools and organizations on the history of the Vietnam era and The Wall. The exhibit includes The Wall replica and a mobile Education Center comprised of: digital displays of photos of service members whose names are on The Wall; letters and memorabilia left at The Wall in D.C.; a map of Vietnam and a chronological overview of the Vietnam War. The exhibits tell the story of the Vietnam War, The Wall and the era surrounding the conflict, and are designed to put American experiences in Vietnam in a historical and cultural context.

VVMF coordinates local stops of The Wall That Heals and the accompanying mobile Education Center. The current schedule and more information can be found at: www.thewallthatheals.org. The 2017 national The Wall That Heals tour is hauled through a partnership with the Truckload Carriers Association (TCA) and generously sponsored by: USAA, PBS, and GEICO. The appearance in South Dakota is made possible by Friends of SDPB.

About the half-scale replica

The replica Wall is approximately 250 feet in length, and like the original Memorial is erected in a chevron-shape. The replica is constructed of powder-coated aluminum, supported by an aluminum frame, and is made up of 24 individual panels, each containing six columns of names.

The names on The Wall That Heals replicate the names on The Wall in Washington, D.C. As on The Wall, the names are listed alphabetically by day of casualty. Beginning at the center/apex, the names start on the East Wall (right-hand side) working their way out to the end of that wing, picking up again at the far end of the West Wall (left-hand side) and working their way back in to the center/apex. Thus, the beginning and ending of the conflict are joined at the center, signifying an epoch in American history.

The Wall That Heals is transported from community to community by a 53-foot trailer with cases built into its sides, allowing it to serve as a mobile Education Center that tells the story of the Vietnam War, The Wall and the divisive era in American history.

About VVMF and the Education Center at The Wall

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) is the nonprofit organization that built the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (The Wall) in Washington, D.C. in 1982. VVMF is dedicated to honoring and preserving the legacy of service in America and educating all generations about the impact of the Vietnam War and era through programs, ceremonies and education materials.

Three decades after building The Wall, the mission continues as VVMF raises funds to build the Education Center at The Wall. The Center will be an interactive learning facility on the National Mall where our military heroes' stories and sacrifice will never be forgotten. The Education Center will feature the faces and stories of the more than 58,000 men and women on The Wall and honor America's Legacy of Service, including those serving in our nation's Armed Forces today. Time Warner is the Lead Gift Benefactor in the campaign to build the Education Center at The Wall. To learn more about VVMF and the future Education Center at The Wall, visit www.vvmf.org or call 202-393-0090.

About South Dakota Public Broadcasting

South Dakota Public Broadcasting is a statewide multi-media network offering quality entertainment and lifelong learning via Television, Radio, Internet and Education & Outreach. For information about SDPB and the Friends of SDPB, go to SDPB.org or call 800-456-0766.

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Carnival of Silver Skates Annual Meeting

Mark your calendars for the CSS Annual Meeting, March 12, 2:00 pm, at the warming house. We will hold the election of officers for the 2018 CSS Executive Board. Please consider joining us to plan the 80th Annual Carnival of Silver Skates!

Chair - leadership and special projects

Co-chair - leadership and special projects

Communication - email and Facebook communications

Secretary - records minutes and provides information to Board

Treasurer - tracks financials and provides reports to the Board

Costume Coordinator - designs and organizes costumes as appropriate for music selections

City Liaison - coordinates with City of Groton to make arrangements for the Carnival specifications

Skating Instruction Coordinator - recruits and manages information for skating instructors

Members at Large - special projects

Contact Rachael Van Liere Crank, Tina Kosel, Kristie Wieseler Flihs, Dawn Imrie, Deb Schuelke, Sarah Keller-Hanten Pamela Opsahl Barse, Coralea Wolter, or Tasha Dunker if you have any questions!



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

GDI Living Fitness
25 Main St., Downtown Groton

Today in Weather History

March 2, 1966: The blizzard began late on March 2nd in the west and moved very slowly across the state reaching the extreme east on the 4th continuing into the 5th. Snow depths ranged from 2 to 4 inches in southeast South Dakota to nearly 3 feet in north central South Dakota. Winds of 40 to 55 mph with gusts to 70 mph caused widespread blowing snow and near zero visibilities during the storm. Drifts up to 30 feet were reported in sheltered areas with open fields nearly bare. The storm caused heavy livestock losses. Estimated losses were 50,000 cattle, 46,000 sheep, and 1800 hogs. The largest losses were in the central and north central parts of the state. The heavy snow also collapsed a number of structures. Three deaths were directly caused by the storm due to exposure and 3 deaths were indirectly caused by the storm; 2 due to heart attacks and 1 by asphyxiation. The blizzard was rated as one of the most severe that has been experienced in South Dakota. Many roads were blocked for days along with many schools and businesses closed.

March 2, 2007: A strong area of low pressure moved slowly northeast across the central and northern plains bringing widespread snowfall along with intense winds. The combination of the falling snow and the existing snow cover resulted in blizzard conditions with visibilities to zero at times. This blizzard event was part of the same upper level low pressure trough that brought the heavy snowfall to the area on February 28th. Additional snowfall occurred on March 1st and 2nd across the area as a large area of snowfall wrapped in from the east. Widespread blizzard conditions developed by noon on March 2nd and continued into the early morning hours of the 3rd. Snowfall amounts, including the snow on February 28th, ranged from 2 inches to as much as 22 inches across central and northeast South Dakota. The heaviest snowfall amounts were across northeast South Dakota where total snow depths were in the 25 to 30 inch range. Northwest winds of 30 to 45 mph with gusts near 60 mph brought zero visibilities at times across the area along with creating large snowdrifts. Schools, businesses, airports, roads, and interstates were closed for up to two days. Travel was not advised across the area. Also, many cars were ditched along with several accidents. Many travelers were stranded and several shelters were opened. The Emergency Operations Center was activated in Pierre and the Governor declared the blizzard area a disaster. Some of the most significant snowfall amounts over the 3 day period included, 11 inches

at Andover, Hosmer, and Redfield, 12 inches at Webster, 13 inches at Miller, 14 inches at Victor, Groton, and Clark, 15 inches at Castlewood and Summit, 16 inches at Watertown and Roy Lake, 19 inches at Sisseton, 20 inches at Milbank, 21 inches at Bryant, and 22 inches at Clear Lake.

1927: Raleigh, North Carolina was buried under 17.8 inches of snow in 24 hours, a record for that location until 2000. On January 25, 2000, Raleigh saw 17.9 inches of snow in 24 hours.










livestream

Upcoming Events
Thursday, BBB Region
7:30 p.m. at Webster
Groton Area vs. Roncalli

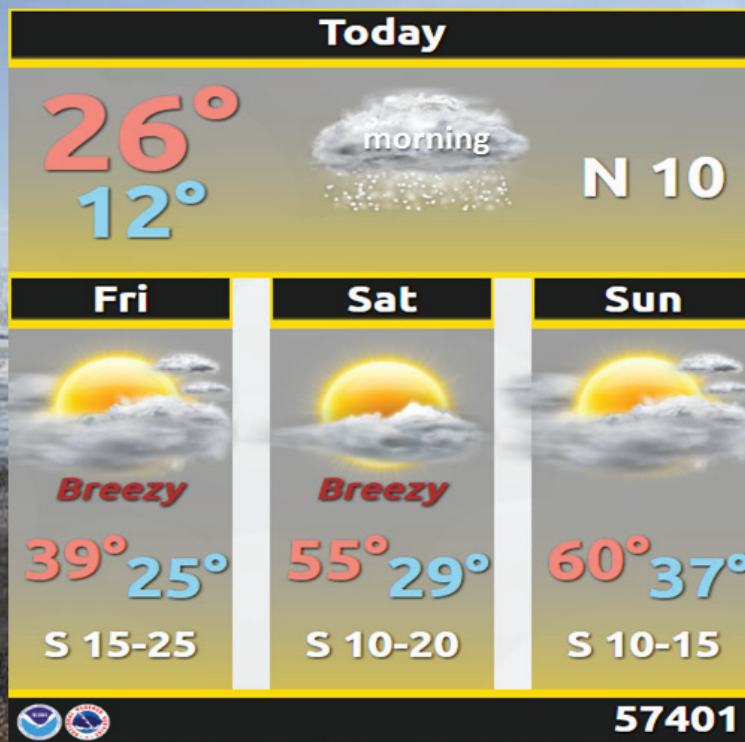
gdilive.com

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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
						
Snow then Partly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny
High: 25 °F	Low: 12 °F	High: 39 °F	Low: 25 °F	High: 54 °F	Low: 30 °F	High: 58 °F

Warming Up This Weekend!



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD



Updated: 3/2/2017 5:44 AM Central

Published on: 03/02/2017 at 5:47AM

Light snow will gradually come to an end over north central and northeast South Dakota later this morning, leaving behind a swath of a half inch to around 2 inches. Highs today will be on the chilly side, with readings in the 20s and 30s. A big warm up is in store for the weekend, with highs in the 50s and 60s across the region.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 28.8

Low Outside Temp: 15.2

High Gust: 21.0 Mph

Rain: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 72° in 1905

Record Low: -21 in 1913

Average High: 33°F

Average Low: 14°F

Average Precip in March.: 0.06

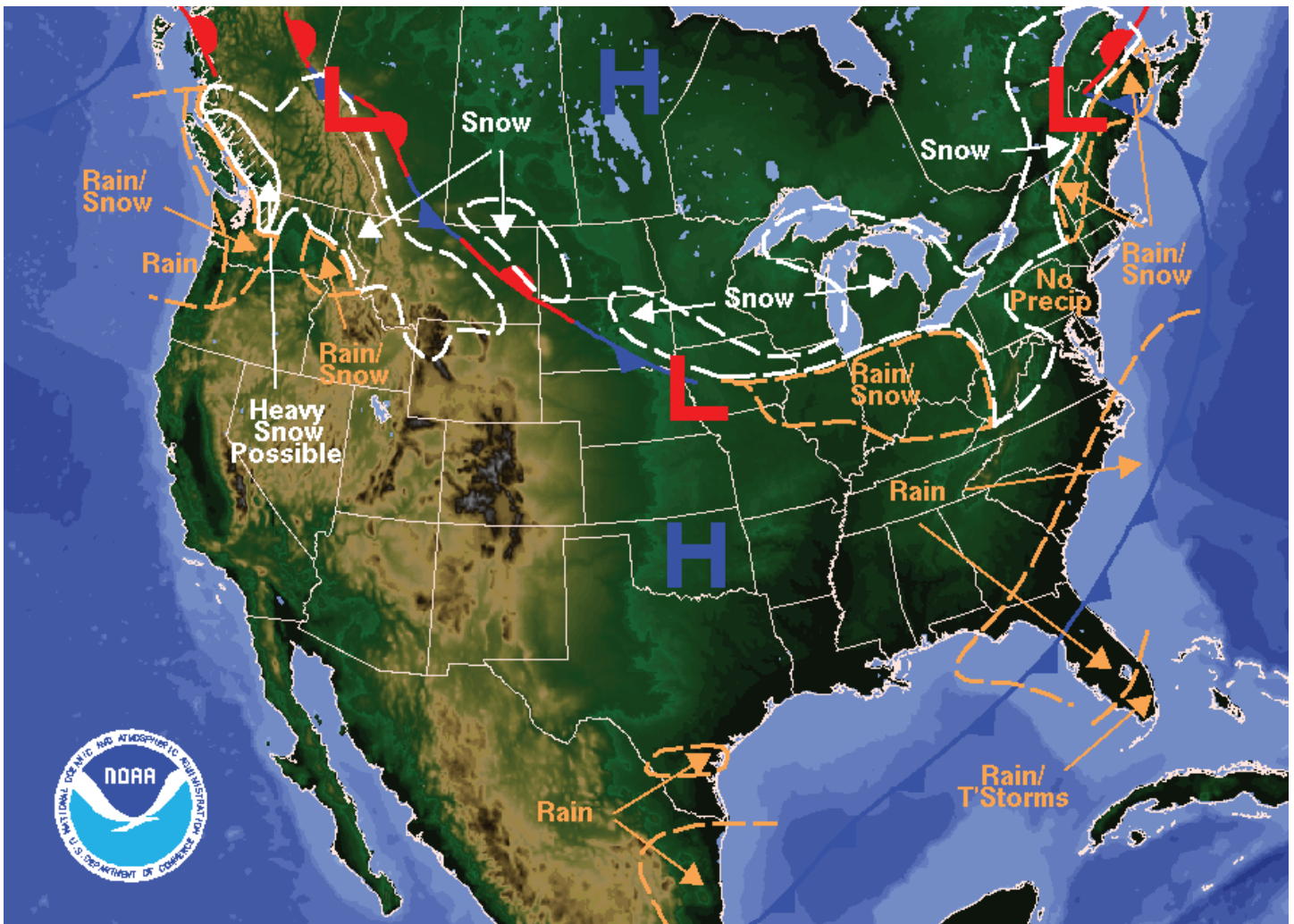
Precip to date in March.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 1.08

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 6:22 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:07 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Thu, Mar 02, 2017, issued 3:46 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

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THE SOURCE OF PEACE

Russ Ortiz was an outstanding baseball pitcher for the Atlanta Braves. In fact, in one season he won twenty-one games.

On one occasion a reporter asked him how he kept calm in situations when it looked like he would lose control of the game. Quickly he replied, "When I am on the mound and need a calming experience I look under the bill of my cap. You see, I keep a Bible verse there," he explained. "When I started doing it," he continued, "it helped me put things in perspective."

The Christian is never guaranteed a life free from stress, strife or the worries of the world. It does not assure us of quiet paths and calm waters. But it does assure us that when we keep our minds securely focused on God and His Word we will know perfect peace even in the most turbulent times.

Isaiah, in a song of praise to the Lord wrote, "You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in You, whose thoughts are fixed on You!"

This is a powerful promise for the believer. His Word promises us that God will give us His perfect peace when we trust Him, obey Him and are faithful in following Him. It exceeds all of the wisdom, knowledge and understanding that we find in the writings of worldly authors. In Him we have everything we need: His unending and unchanging love. When we accept that fact, there is no reason for us to fear the chaos that confronts us or the confusion that surrounds us.

Prayer: Lord, may we accept the peace that You offer us through Your Son, our Savior. Help us to rely on Him and His power to protect and preserve us in all things. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Isaiah 26:3 You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.

News from the Associated Press

Vanity closing its stores after filing for bankruptcy

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — A Fargo-based women's clothing chain plans to close its 140 stores after more than 50 years in business.

Vanity board chairman Jim Bennett tells KFGO (<http://bit.ly/2IVRdS8>) the company has filed for bankruptcy protection. Bennett says competition from internet retailers significantly impacted the company's bottom line.

Vanity employs as many as 1,700 people, with more than 100 employees at its corporate headquarters in Fargo.

Vanity has stores in 27 states. Vanity was incorporated in 1966.

Information from: KFGO-AM, <http://www.kfgo.com>

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Wednesday:

Dakota Cash

06-12-19-21-31

(six, twelve, nineteen, twenty-one, thirty-one)

Estimated jackpot: \$20,000

Hot Lotto

10-14-21-38-44, Hot Ball: 18

(ten, fourteen, twenty-one, thirty-eight, forty-four; Hot Ball: eighteen)

Estimated jackpot: \$4.34 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$83 million

Powerball

10-16-40-52-55, Powerball: 17, Power Play: 10

(ten, sixteen, forty, fifty-two, fifty-five; Powerball: seventeen; Power Play: ten)

Estimated jackpot: \$53 million

Senate panel endorses plan to allow guns in the Capitol

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A bill that would allow people to bring guns into the state Capitol is one step away from the governor's desk after a Senate panel advanced it Wednesday to the chamber's floor.

The State Affairs Committee voted 5-4 to approve the plan, which would allow people who have an enhanced permit to bring concealed handguns into the Capitol if they register beforehand with security. The proposal has advanced farther than at least two similar bills proposed last legislative session, but Gov. Dennis Daugaard's opposition to the legislation is a steep obstacle for supporters.

The measure, which would also include qualified law enforcement officers and qualified retired officers, has already passed through the House. House Majority Leader Lee Qualm, its main sponsor, said he believes Capitol security is good.

"We are still sitting in a fishbowl, and anyone can walk here at any time with a weapon and do great harm before he is ever stopped," Qualm said.

Secretary of State Shantel Krebs also supported the measure, saying her office participated in a scenario in which they had to decide a method of self-defense if an active shooter came to the Capitol.

"Our office decided that the paper cutter and that the state flag, with the spear on top, was going to our

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self-defense mechanisms," Krebs said. "We do have some enhanced permit carriers in our office, and I think that would just make me feel a little bit more comfortable so that we don't have to rely upon trying to find something within your office to defend yourself."

At the end of February, there were 92,850 active regular and enhanced permits in South Dakota, according to the Secretary of State's office. In 2016, 1,460 new enhanced permits were issued.

There are no metal detectors or other security checks at the Capitol entrances to enforce the current prohibition on most people carrying guns in the building. Republican Sen. Bob Ewing, who opposed the bill, said he's worried that approving it would likely mean metal detectors appearing in Capitol doorways.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol, which provides security, opposed the bill.

A different Senate panel voted Wednesday to approve a bill that would allow people who can legally carry a concealed handgun in South Dakota to do so without a permit.

Daugaard has said he would veto both measures if they reach his desk.

Senate panel rejects disclosure of top advocacy group donors

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A state Senate panel has rejected new campaign finance rules that would have forced nonprofit advocacy groups to reveal top donors if the groups contributed significant sums to ballot measure campaigns.

The Senate Judiciary Committee voted 5-2 Wednesday to kill the proposal.

It would have required the disclosure of the 50 largest contributors to such groups, including labor organizations, business leagues and social welfare organizations, that gave \$25,000 or more in a year to a South Dakota ballot measure committee.

Critics have argued that South Dakota residents have the right to support causes they believe in without fear of harassment.

House Speaker Mark Mickelson, the legislation's main sponsor, has said that the identity of the messenger matters as much as the message.

AP Exclusive: Taxes could flow with Dakota Access pipeline

By JAMES MacPHERSON, Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — North Dakota stands to gain more than \$110 million annually in tax revenue after oil begins coursing through the Dakota Access pipeline, an analysis by The Associated Press shows.

The calculation shows the potential payoff for a state whose officials have supported the pipeline despite concerns from Native American tribes and other opponents who fear it could harm drinking water and sacred sites. The money the state stands to make in just one year far outstrips the \$33 million in costs to police a section of the pipeline that's been the subject of intense and sometimes violent protests over the last year.

"The amount of the windfall to the state doesn't surprise me at all," said Payu Harris, an American Indian activist and pipeline opponent. "That's why the state of North Dakota expended the resources they did."

Dallas-based Energy Transfer Partners' \$3.8 billion pipeline will carry oil more than 1,000 miles to a shipping point in Illinois and may be moving oil as early as next week. Its completion would be welcome both for drillers seeking a cheaper path to market and for the state government in North Dakota, where declining tax revenue has clouded its budget.

"Every dollar they get extra is good for the state as well," state tax commissioner Ryan Rauschenberger said.

State budget analysts and an economic consulting firm working on the revenue forecast that lawmakers will use to create a spending plan for the next two years may take the potential tax benefits into account, State Budget Director Pam Sharp said. The new forecast will be released next week.

North Dakota in the past decade has become the second-biggest oil producer in the United States, behind Texas. But its location in the northern Plains, far from major oil markets, means less profit on each barrel of oil. North Dakota lowers its tax on each barrel to keep its crude competitive with other states.

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Much of North Dakota's oil is shipped by truck or train. The 1,200-mile Dakota Access pipeline would carry the oil through South Dakota and Iowa to a shipping point in Illinois. It could shave shipping costs by more than \$3 a barrel, according to Ron Ness, president of the North Dakota Petroleum Council. State tax officials estimate every dollar saved means about \$33.6 million in added tax revenue each year.

"Every dollar back is a win for producers, the state and mineral owners," said Ness, who called the Dakota Access pipeline the most important infrastructure project in North Dakota since the interstate highway system.

It also will link to pipelines serving Gulf Coast refineries, which pay premium prices for high quality sweet crude like that drilled in North Dakota.

In addition to oil tax revenue, the pipeline is estimated to generate \$55 million in property taxes annually in the four states it crosses, including more than \$10 million a year in North Dakota, said Rauschenberger, the state tax commissioner.

That will provide much-needed revenue to rural counties, he said.

"It's going to benefit schools and counties and more valuation means lower property tax bills for everybody," Rauschenberger said.

The AP's analysis calculated the more than \$10 million property tax gain combined with the additional \$100 million in oil taxes from higher crude prices that drillers expect to achieve once the pipeline is in place.

The pipeline was first announced in 2014, days after then-Gov. Jack Dalrymple, a Republican, urged that more oil and gas pipelines be built to reduce hazardous truck and oil train traffic and to curb the flaring — or burning off — of natural gas at wellheads.

Dakota Access sailed through the state's approval process, only to run into resistance from the Standing Rock Sioux, whose reservation straddling the North Dakota-South Dakota border is near the pipeline's route. The Standing Rock Sioux and other tribes urged the U.S. government not to allow the project to move forward and fought the pipeline in court and with protests at a nearby encampment on federal land that at times grew to include thousands of people.

The opponents were dealt a devastating setback in January when President Donald Trump signed an executive order to advance the pipeline's construction. The Army subsequently gave approval for ETP to put the last final big chunk of pipe under a Missouri River reservoir near the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation. The Army has authority over that stretch because its Corps of Engineers manages the Missouri River.

Authorities last week cleared the last vestiges of the protest camp ahead of spring flooding, although the Standing Rock and Cheyenne River Sioux continue to fight the project in court.

Senate endorses creating panel to study ballot questions

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The state Senate has approved a measure that would create a legislative task force to weigh changes to South Dakota's ballot question process.

Members voted 28-7 Wednesday to approve the bill, which previously passed through the House. Democrats opposed it.

It would create an Initiative and Referendum Task Force to examine potential changes to the initiated measure, constitutional amendment and referred law processes. The task force could propose draft legislation and policy recommendations.

GOP Sen. Jim Bolin, a supporter, says he thinks there's a need for study on the subjects. Republicans have discussed changes to the ballot question system after an election season with 10 initiatives that brought in millions of dollars from out-of-state groups.

Sioux Falls day care owner charged with manslaughter

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Sioux Falls day care provider has been charged with manslaughter in the death of an infant in her care.

Twenty-eight-year-old Jennifer Jonnes was charged by a grand jury with first-degree manslaughter, abuse or cruelty to a minor, contributing to the abuse of a child, and providing false information to police.

Officials were called to the in-home day care on Sept. 23 and found the 2-month-old boy unresponsive in a car seat. He was pronounced dead at a hospital.

Police spokesman Sam Clemens says the coroner determined the baby ended up in a position where he couldn't breathe. He says Jonnes was the only adult in the home while caring for 10 children.

Jonnes surrendered Tuesday and was released on bond. She doesn't have a listed phone number.

Report: Tech-savvy, young drivers are the most unsafe

By SAMUEL BLACKSTONE, Rapid City Journal

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Young millennials, the group of adults ages 19-24, are seen in many ways as the backbone of our nation's future.

But experts worry that some may not see that future if they continue to drive their cars the way they do, the Rapid City Journal (<http://bit.ly/2m8wjzt>) reported.

A recent report from the American Automobile Association says that group of young adults exhibits far more risky behavior behind the wheel than any other age category.

In a report released this month by AAA, young millennial drivers were found to engage in the riskiest driving behavior of any age group, with 88 percent of 19- to 24-year-olds admitting they had exhibited at least one risky driving behavior in the past 30 days, such as speeding, running red lights or using a cellphone while driving. The report was based on a survey of 2,511 licensed drivers ages 16 and older.

The AAA report comes on the heels of another report last week by the National Safety Council, which showed the number of motor vehicle deaths in 2016 in the United States was 40,200, a 6 percent increase from 2015. In 2015, U.S. traffic deaths rose more than 7 percent, the largest single-year increase in more than 50 years, according to AAA.

South Dakota, on the other hand, had just 116 traffic fatalities in 2016, a decrease of 13 percent from 133 fatalities in 2015.

Tony Mangan, a spokesman for the South Dakota Department of Public Safety, said the figures in the state didn't come as a surprise.

"We are trending lower than the national average, for not just the year, but the five-year average," he said. "What we're doing is, we're doing a lot of cooperation efforts with safety groups, law enforcement and the public."

Marilyn Buskohl, a spokeswoman for AAA in South Dakota, said she wasn't surprised by the national figures, either, placing some of the blame on distracted driving.

"I think that even though there's been a lot of awareness about the dangers of distracted driving, we haven't seen people's behaviors change and modify that much," she said.

Buskohl said AAA supports making violations of seat-belt and cellphone usage laws primary offenses. Currently they are secondary offenses, meaning police officers may not pull over and issue citations without there being another, primary offense first.

Jerry Johnson, 62, has been teaching driver's education courses to teens for more than 20 years at the Black Hills Career Learning Center. He believes technology is just as much to blame as the risky behaviors of millennial drivers. In the AAA report, drivers ages 19 to 24 were 1.6 times likelier (66.1 percent vs. 40.2 percent) to read a text message or email while driving than other drivers. They were also almost twice as likely (59.3 percent vs. 31.4 percent) to type or send a text or email while driving.

"Young people have grown up with technology," Johnson said. "That's the culture and that transfers, unfortunately, to trying to drive a car at the same time."

Johnson said texting, talking on the phone or using a navigation system leads to distracted drivers. Mix in poor driving habits such as rolling through stop signs, running red lights and speeding, and spikes in accidents and traffic deaths are the result. Drivers ages 19 to 24 were 1.4 times likelier to drive 10 mph over the speed limit on residential streets and nearly 1.4 times likelier to run a red light.

Destin Spellman, 20, a student from Aberdeen enrolled at the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology, said he doesn't always come to a complete stop at stop signs when he's in rural areas, but that's about it.

"I personally don't (text) while I drive, but I know most people my age do," Spellman said.

Diamond Tuhy, 21, another Mines student, admitted she is among those who do.

"I'll answer personal calls," Tuhy said. "I do go through the occasional yellow light."

Tuhy said the 19-24 age group "tends to be a little more reckless," but her parents use their phones to call, text and email while they drive, too.

"Adults have to be the role models," Johnson said, noting that when his lessons are over, his students are picked up by parents who often disregard the lessons he's just taught their children.

"Habits help define you as a person and certainly as a driver. You can be the best driver in the world, but the people around you are not. Technology certainly has its place (in the problem), but I think drivers in general and certainly young ones are more risk-taking and have the confidence that they can answer their phone, text and drive ... while driving a 3,000-pound weapon down the highway."

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

Midwest economy: February state-by-state glance

By The Associated Press

The Institute for Supply Management, formerly the Purchasing Management Association, began formally surveying its membership in 1931 to gauge business conditions.

The Creighton Economic Forecasting Group uses the same methodology as the national survey to consult supply managers and business leaders. Creighton University economics professor Ernie Goss oversees the report.

The overall index ranges between 0 and 100. Growth neutral is 50, and a figure greater than 50 indicates an expanding economy over the next three to six months.

Here are the state-by-state results for February:

Arkansas: The state's overall index for February rose to 58.9 from January's 55.3. Components of the index were new orders at 66.0, production or sales at 68.3, delivery lead time at 50.9, inventories at 54.7 and employment at 54.3. Recent surveys point to solid state growth for the next six months, with job additions of about 4,000. Leading industries: trucking and health services. Lagging industries: retail trade, durable-goods manufacturing.

Iowa: Iowa's overall index soared to 62.6 from 51.8 in January. Components of the overall index were new orders at 67.4, production or sales at 69.7, delivery lead time at 52.0, employment at 57.7 and inventories at 66.4. Recent surveys point to solid growth for the next six months, with job additions of about 4,500. Leading industries: food processing and ethanol production. Lagging industries: metal manufacturers and agriculture equipment producers.

Kansas: The state's overall index jumped to 61.5 last month from 53.2 in January. Components of the index were new orders at 66.9, production or sales at 69.3, delivery lead time at 51.7, employment at 56.7 and inventories at 62.9. Recent surveys point to solid growth for the next six months, with about 2,500 new jobs. Leading industries: aircraft and aircraft parts manufacturers and food processing. Lagging industries: metal manufacturers and agriculture equipment producers.

Minnesota: Minnesota's overall index slid last month to 54.3 from 54.7 in January. Components of the overall index were new orders at 55.4, production or sales at 67.4, delivery lead time at 50.1, inventories at 46.5 and employment at 52.0. Recent surveys point to positive but slow growth for the next six months. Leading industries: ethanol and medical equipment manufacturers. Lagging industries: vehicle parts manufacturers and agriculture equipment producers.

Missouri: The state's overall index shot up in February to 66.8 from January's 53.7. Components of the overall index from the survey of supply managers were new orders at 73.7, production or sales at 76.3, delivery lead time at 57.2, inventories at 53.4 and employment at 73.5. Recent surveys point to healthy growth for the next six months, with job additions of about 16,000. Leading industries: banking and finance, and trucking. Lagging industries: motor vehicle and vehicle parts manufacturers and metal manufacturers.

Nebraska: Nebraska's overall index dipped to 55.4 last month from 56.9 in January. Components of the index were new orders at 56.5, production or sales at 67.1, delivery lead time at 50.4, inventories at 49.6

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and employment at 52.9. Recent surveys point to positive but slow growth for the next six months, with expectations of about 2,200 new jobs. Leading industries: ethanol and trucking. Lagging industries: metal manufacturers and agriculture equipment producers.

North Dakota: The state's overall index rocketed to 66.8 last month from 49.7 in January. Components of the overall index were new orders at 54.7, production or sales at 71.5, delivery lead time at 53.4, employment at 62.0 and inventories at 81.2. Recent surveys point to soft growth over the next six months, with about 2,800 new jobs. Leading industries: oil exploration and health services. Lagging industries: durable-goods manufacturing.

Oklahoma: Oklahoma's overall index increased to 59.0 in February from 52.3 in January. Components of the overall index were new orders at 66.0, production or sales at 68.4, delivery lead time at 50.9, inventories at 55.1 and employment at 54.5. Recent surveys point to solid growth for the next six months, with job additions of about 14,000. Leading industries: mining support firms and food processing. Lagging industries: machinery manufacturing.

South Dakota: The state's overall index rose to 62.4 from January's 57.2. Components of the overall index were new orders at 67.3, production or sales at 69.7, delivery lead time at 51.9, inventories at 65.7 and employment at 57.5. Recent surveys point to healthy state growth for the next six months, with job additions of about 4,200. Leading industries: banking and finance and nondurable-goods manufacturing. Lagging industries: durable-goods producers.

College student spends semester in Aberdeen's namesake

By KATHERINE GRANSTRAND, American News

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — Northern State University student Maris Grewe grew up in Aberdeen.

Now in her senior year of college, a literary trip to Europe last year made her realize that she wanted to do a study abroad program, the American News (<http://bit.ly/2lr7nPI>) reported.

"I never really left, until now," Grewe said in a Skype interview from Scotland.

Naturally, she decided to go to Aberdeen.

The one in Scotland, that is. The one for which South Dakota's is named.

Grewe started classes at Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen, Scotland, in mid-September and returned at the end of January. Spring semester classes start Monday at Northern, but Grewe has it worked out to be three weeks late in her return to campus.

"I'll be finishing finals here and starting my next semester all at the same time," she said. "It will be a little stressful, but it will be alright."

Her major is management with an emphasis on international business, and she's taking management courses in Scotland.

The original Aberdeen is on the northeast coast of Scotland, making it cold in its own way, Grewe said. All the cold air comes off the sea, which wasn't something she was expecting.

But in many ways, it's warmer than her hometown.

"There's not a lot of snow here," Grewe said, visiting right after Christmas. "It snowed for the first time a few days ago, actually, but it's gone now."

Many of the people Grewe has encountered in Scotland are familiar with some of the U.S.'s bigger cities — New York and Los Angeles, for instance — but have no idea where South Dakota is, she said. She explains that it's a two-day drive to New York, and a six-hour drive to the nearest metro area from Aberdeen.

"They're like, 'You could drive through all of the U.K. in six hours,'" Grewe said. "When I told the person about driving to New York they're like, 'You could get from one end of Europe to the other ... in less than that amount of time.'"

Aberdeen, Scotland, is much older than Aberdeen, S.D., and developers have devised a way to marry modernity with the historic, Grewe said.

"A lot of the shops on the main street are pretty old, but you've got a KFC in this great big old building, and Starbucks in this great big old building," Grewe said. "It looks really fancy on the outside and it's just

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like your normal, American Starbucks or KFC on the inside, which is kind of strange, but really cool.”

And while there are a lot of the same fast food chains in both cities, Grewe said there are not many drive-thru windows in Scotland, because many people don't have vehicles.

“I live with six other girls, and three of them are from Scotland and only one of them has a vehicle here, the other two just take the bus or the train,” Grewe said.

The buses in town can be a little dodgy, but traveling through the country varies by price paid, she said.

“I took the sleeper train back and forth to London, and that was pretty nice,” Grewe said. “But when we would travel during the day from London to Edinburgh, we would just take the normal day train. It's nice, but it's nothing special.”

But getting to experience life as a student, rather than a tourist, has been an amazing experience, Grewe said.

“Especially as a business major, I think this has been really eye-opening for me because, in class, you learn about different cultures, but you don't get to really experience them,” she said. “It's more than I would have learned sitting in a classroom at Northern.”

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

South Dakota official's immigration stance reflects Trump's

By MARK WALKER, Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Alexander Salgado shouldn't have killed 16-year-old Jasmine Guevara.

He shouldn't have even been in the country, according to South Dakota's top prosecutor, the Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2lqSrkk>) reported.

Attorney General Marty Jackley's views on immigration were significantly shaped by the 2009 case, in which the immigrant living in the U.S. illegally pleaded guilty to second-degree murder. Jackley has generally supported President Donald Trump's tougher stance on immigration, and that support stems in large part from the Salgado case, one of the state's most brutal murders in recent memory.

Salgado admitted to helping his then girlfriend Maricela Diaz slit Guevara's throat and leave the teen to burn alive in the trunk of a car in a Hansen County field. He is currently serving life in prison without parole.

A native of Guerrero, Mexico, Salgado had ties to Mexican drug cartels, and before his arrest in South Dakota, was suspected in a series of crimes in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

“He was being held in a holding facility in Indiana and they let him go,” Jackley said. “There was a little girl here in South Dakota that was harmed, and that could have been prevented on the federal side had they done their jobs.”

To Jackley, the case underscores the need for federal immigration reform. A more comprehensive approach to immigration, he said, might have prevented Salgado from coming to South Dakota and killing Guevara.

“There's always been a recognition of the need for a proper vetting procedure that will not only make America safe, but would also be a supplement to our workforce,” Jackley said. “When it's not done, we are left with situations like the Salgado case.”

The following year, Jackley backed Arizona after it was sued by the federal government for a bill its governor signed giving police the power to question anyone who they had reasonable suspicion of being an illegal immigrant. And in 2014, he was among the attorneys general and governors who sued the federal government over former President Obama's order offering temporary legal status to millions of immigrants living in the U.S. illegally.

His frustration is amplified by another case in which he was unable to protect victims and witnesses from deportation after they testified in a human trafficking case.

In his previous role as U.S. Attorney, he prosecuted Robert John Farrell and his wife, Angelita Magat Farrell, who were convicted by a federal jury in November 2007 after hearing from four victims who had been treated as modern-day slaves by the couple. The Farrells first committed visa fraud to bring Philippine workers into the United States, then chained them to the cleaning and front desk duties at the hotel

they owned in Oacoma.

Jackley's office tried to secure visas for cooperating witnesses and victims, but the attempts were unsuccessful. The workers fell into the hands of the federal Immigration Custom and Enforcement. It's unclear whether the victims returned to the Philippines.

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

Langford man develops new killer camouflage pattern

By ANDREW JOHNSON, American News

LANGFORD, S.D. (AP) — Sometimes the best ideas show up in the strangest places. Just ask Jordan Deutsch, who came up with a new camouflage idea while farming.

Three years ago during harvest season, Deutsch was sitting in a tractor cab, grain cart in tow, as he waited for the combine to make its rounds in the cornfield. That's where the idea to start Fallin' Fowl Camo was born, the American News (<http://bit.ly/2lrbMSA>) reported.

"I was looking at the field and wondered why someone hadn't come out with a corn or cornfield camo pattern," he said. "I always felt other camo patterns were too dark and stuck out too much. I love Real-tree and Mossy Oak for deer hunting and all that, but some of their newer waterfowl patterns don't look anything like where we hunt up here, like cornfields."

Once harvest was complete, Deutsch took the initiative to explore what options were available for an upstart to introduce a corn-themed camo pattern, which he named Killer Korn, to the waterfowl market.

"I checked with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, and they told me to submit my ideas with some pictures to get the patent going," said Deutsch, who is 25 and returned to the Langford area to farm with his extended family after receiving an agriculture degree from Lake Area Tech in Watertown. "We took a bunch of pictures, picked three and a graphic designer from the USPTO meshed them together. Then we tweaked it three or four times from there until we got it where I wanted it and put a patent on it."

After receiving a patent on the Killer Korn pattern, Deutsch decided to also trademark his Fallin' Fowl Camo brand name.

"The next step was how to get the actual pattern onto clothing," he said. "That was the tough part."

Deutsch said some exhaustive online research finally lead him to Jest Textiles, a New Jersey-based company that offered the printing and design services he'd need to screen the Killer Korn pattern onto material.

"I got in touch with them and sent them the file for my camo," he said. "They ran a sample, and once I got that back I wanted to tweak it a little bit more."

He said minor adjustments were necessary, as there were slight differences in color and size from how the pattern's image looked on a computer screen compared to how it actually printed on clothing. As a result, Deutsch altered the color and scale of his pattern several times prior to settling on a final design.

"As far as scale goes it really depends on the ground, but we averaged out what a corn ear would normally be," he said. "Some are 7 or 8 inches, and some really big corn is 13 inches. We settled on 9 to 10 inches and went from there, blowing up the husk size so it was lifelike and would mimic what actual corn looks like in a field."

Through the process, Deutsch said he also came to another important realization.

"There's corn from North Dakota all the way to Texas, and not all corn is the same," he said. "Some might have more green in it, while some varieties might be more red. Plus, corn in the fall has a totally different color than it does in spring after it's been sitting around all winter. I finally had to bite the bullet and settle on a design."

With the help of Jest Textiles, Deutsch had the Killer Korn camo pattern printed on some pants, hooded sweatshirts and beanies, and the first batches of his product started arriving in November and December.

It's been a long process for Deutsch, who said the idea for Fallin' Fowl Camo first took off in January 2014.

"Here it is, three years later, and I finally got it where I want it," he said. "Now that I have my product, I'm trying to figure out which direction to go. I don't want to go too far in the direction of selling it myself,

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but would rather have a licensing deal where companies can put it on whatever they want.”

Deutsch said he’s working on a potential partnership with Heavy Hauler Outdoor Gear, a company from Kingsley, Iowa, that specializes in waterfowl products.

“I’ve actually been working with Heavy Hauler and trying to work out a deal with them,” he said. “They’ve put the pattern on a sample blind, blind bag and gun case, and we’re working out the details. They make the Scheels-brand blinds along with some other products, and that was part of my dream, to invent something and see it in a store like Scheels or Cabela’s.”

For Deutsch, a camo pattern that looks identical to corn fills a vacant need in the waterfowling world. He also believes it could mean less work in the long run for duck and goose hunters who don’t take the time to properly stuff their blinds. Stuffing corn stalks and husks, wheat stubble and other vegetation into a layout blind’s exterior to help it melt into its surroundings is necessary while field hunting, but Deutsch said some hunters fail to do it properly.

“Staying hidden is the key to waterfowl hunting, and I was sick and tired of people not stuffing blinds and ruining the hunt,” he said. “That’s why I came up with the pattern. I wanted something that blended in a lot better, because most of the time we hunt waterfowl in corn.”

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

Midwest survey suggests manufacturing boosting economy

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Results from a monthly survey of business supply managers suggest that manufacturing is boosting economic conditions in nine Midwest and Plains states, according to a report issued Wednesday.

The Mid-America Business Conditions Index report said the overall economic index for the region rose to 60.5 in February from 54.7 in January. It’s the highest figure since April 2014.

“This is the fourth consecutive month the index has increased and points to an improving regional manufacturing economy,” said Creighton University economist Ernie Goss, who oversees the survey. “I expect this to generate even healthier growth for both manufacturing and nonmanufacturing through the third quarter of this year.”

The survey results are compiled into a collection of indexes ranging from zero to 100. Survey organizers say any score above 50 suggests growth in that factor. A score below that suggests decline. The survey covers Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma and South Dakota.

Economic optimism, as reflected by the February business confidence index, rose to 71.3 from 69.5 in January.

“This is the highest confidence reading that we have recorded in six years,” Goss said.

In other measures, the regional new export orders index rose to 63.6 from 48.7 in January, and the import index climbed to 54.1 from January’s 46.7.

The February employment index remained above growth neutral but slipped to 55.6 last month from January’s 57.0.

“The growth gap between regional manufacturing and nonmanufacturing is closing,” Goss said. “However, rural job growth in the nine-state region continues to significantly lag that of urban areas in the region.”

Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press

Capital Journal, Pierre, Feb. 26

When press freedom is attacked, all of our freedoms are attacked

The American people, it seems, are forgetting what made their country great in the first place.

We don’t usually like to give commentary on national politics but there is a disturbing trend emerging that we feel should concern every red-blooded American. That being the demonization of the one inde-

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pendent institution charged with holding government accountable to its actions.

We write, of course, about the Trump administration's treatment of the news media and the President's own attacks on the first amendment protections for a free press. President Trump has waged an open war of words against the news media. Denouncing stories in such famed American institutions as the New York Times and Washington Post as fake news because those stories painted his administration in a negative light.

On Friday, Trump's press secretary barred reporters from the New York Times, CNN and Politico, among others from a daily press briefing.

To be fair, many of the stories Trump has denounced relied on unnamed sources. That's a practice that most reporters avoid because we believe sources should be willing to stand behind the information they're giving us. If they're not willing to stand behind the information, we have to question their motives and credibility.

Still, using unnamed sources is sometimes the only way to get important information out to our readers.

In truth, President Trump's attacks on the news media aren't entirely new. Powerful people have always treated the press as a double-edged sword praising us when the story aligns with their views and denouncing us when it doesn't. It's a fault that can be found on both sides of the aisle.

Still, Trump's attacks on the news media are something darker than we've seen before. Not content with simply treating the press as an adversary, Trump has accused the news media of being an enemy of the American people. Largely, he's done this because the press has refused to simply go along with his version of events.

The political press corps owns a portion of the blame for this state of affairs, to be sure. They've let previous administrations get away with a lot. The Obama administration, for example, was rated by the Associated Press in 2014 as one of the most secretive Presidential administrations ever. That didn't get a whole lot of ink. Certainly not nearly as much as Trump's actions have.

Maybe Trump expected the same level of deference that Obama got.

What makes all this so scary is that when Trump overtly attacks the press or when Obama covertly pressured reporters to give up their sources, the highest levels of government are attacking one of the American people's most fundamental rights — a free press.

Press freedom is one of the five freedoms the federal government is expressly forbidden from meddling with by the first amendment to our constitution. The first amendment, like all of the original 10 amendments, was considered so important that many states would have refused to ratify the constitution if they weren't included in it.

To put this in perspective, what would be the reaction in South Dakota if Trump was out there attacking the second amendment?

The first and second amendments as well as the other eight amendments included in the bill of rights all are equally important to the maintenance of the individual freedoms we are granted by virtue of our birth. Freedoms we formed our government itself to protect. A threat to one of our freedoms is a threat to all of them.

It is the news media's job to hold government accountable, even to be adversarial when necessary. That's how we maintain a free and open society. It's how we prevent ourselves from being bamboozled into totalitarianism.

Cheering a government official's threats to "rein in" press freedoms undermines our own freedom more than it undermines the other side of the political aisle, whether you're on the right or the left.

All Americans should stand in support of a free press.

Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, Yankton, Feb. 28

It Turns Out Health Issues Are Hard ...

Everything that President Donald Trump says or tweets keeps news cycles churning, which is not out of the norm for any president. But in Trump's case, he regularly says things that are, in turns, either provocative, exhilarating, self-congratulatory, potent or pungent. That's what he was as a businessman, then as a candidate for office. Nothing has changed since November, and almost nothing he says seems to surprise

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us anymore — for better or for worse.

However, an exception to this may have occurred Monday. When speaking to the National Governors Association about his plans to do away with the Affordable Care Act (ACA), or Obamacare, he acknowledged that pulling the plug on this national health program has been more difficult than he imagined.

“Nobody knew that health care could be so complicated,” Trump declared.

Well, maybe that’s not a surprise. Perhaps nobody really did know that the health care issue could be so complicated .

Nobody, that is, except the lawmakers currently in Congress who’ve had to wrestle with ACA, either as proponents or opponents, for years.

Nobody, that is, except those lawmakers who were around before Obamacare came along, and who had to cope with complex health issues, which included skyrocketing rates and ruined lives, long before this century even dawned.

Nobody, that is, except generations of lawmakers who have been coping with health care issues literally for decades. Such concerns brought things like Medicare and Medicaid into our lives. Those were not simple programs created to address simple problems.

Nobody, that is, except everyday people who worry about finding adequate health coverage, and fear what a catastrophic illness could do to their finances. These people have had to confront what their insurance does or doesn’t cover, and sometimes figure out how they’re going to pay for their care. Even with ACA, wading into this matter has been extraordinarily complicated.

Nobody, that is, except for anyone who has had problems with health insurance and tried to resolve the matter. It’s a staggeringly complex business. And the problem that any one person has in coping with health insurance issues is magnified exponentially when you talk in macro terms about risk pools, pre-existing conditions and other health care matters .

So, in fact, most everyone who has been paying attention to the monumental intricacies of the health care issue knew how complex it is, has always been and always will be.

Trump’s comment may reveal a flawed belief that the way to kill Obamacare is to just pull the plug and start over. It all seems so easy when vague campaign rhetoric serves as an IOU for actual policy.

However, the president — and some lawmakers, as well — have discovered that pulling the plug on Obamacare (remember, ACA was one of those things that was going to be scrapped on day one of the Trump presidency) is far easier derided and threatened than done. The same goes with practically any piece of health care-related policy that changes how health providers and health insurers do business and impacts Americans’ lives.

So, while the president claims “nobody knew” about the complexity of the matter, it’s clear that lawmakers, industry officials, providers, patients and others have always realized, to varying degrees, what a complicated monster the health care issue is. And most of them realize there is no easy fix, no matter what course is pursued.

The Daily Republic, Mitchell, Feb. 28

Road work will be worth the headaches

Road construction.

No one likes it, but for the upkeep and safety of our city we all need it.

In April, a major project to rebuild Burr Street in Mitchell gets underway. It’s a three-year project expected to cost about \$15 million. And while that project would be enough of a hassle for most cities our size, we’ll likely have another large-scale renovation kick off in 2018 when Sanborn Boulevard is reconstructed for about \$9 million.

That sounds like headaches for the next two-plus years of driving in Mitchell, but we’re rather optimistic about both projects. And the safety improvements provided by the Burr project, which will eliminate the dangerous intersection of service roads at Burr and Norway Avenue, will bring an added benefit after years of construction.

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Patience will be key while these roads are being torn up and replaced, because they're both worth the investment. By late 2019, two of Mitchell's major roads that hold several businesses will be essentially brand new.

Look at two recent road construction projects, Spruce Street in 2015 and Fifth Avenue in 2016, which both went smooth. Despite the frustrations at the time of construction, those two projects turned out great for Mitchell motorists.

We also appreciate Mitchell City Council members thinking about rerouting tourists to alternative routes while Burr and Sanborn are under work. Since both roads are heavily traveled by tourists, we need to give people visiting our city the best possible picture we can — even during road construction.

While it's not ideal in the summer of 2018 to have both Burr and Sanborn both getting work, we're looking at it like ripping a Band-Aid off quickly.

So, gear up, Mitchell drivers.

The next few years are going to be anything but ideal for driving in our city. But we all need to remember to be patient and know the headaches will be worth the work.

South Dakota Senate panel rejects overdose immunity measure

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A Senate panel has rejected a bill that would have provided protections for people who called in drug overdoses to authorities or medical responders.

The Senate Transportation Committee voted 4-2 Wednesday to defeat the immunity proposal, which would have blocked some arrests and charges for those who reported a drug overdose, remained at the scene and cooperated with officials.

Republican Sen. Larry Tidemann, a supporter, says the bill was about saving lives. He says a dead person can't be sent to drug treatment.

Groups for prosecutors and law enforcement opposed the bill.

South Dakota State's Attorneys Association executive director Paul Bachand questioned whether it would be effective, saying that he doesn't think lawmakers can "legislate good behavior after a night of bad behavior."

The bill had passed through the House.

Winter weather in February challenges South Dakota ranchers

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Winter weather during February presented challenges for South Dakota ranchers.

The Agriculture Department says in its monthly crop report that warm midmonth temperatures melted snow and created muddy feedlots as calving began, and a snowstorm late in the month dropped as much as a foot of snow in southern areas.

Cattle and calf conditions statewide are still rated 76 percent good to excellent. Sheep and lamb conditions are 71 percent in those categories. Death losses are rated mostly average to light.

Calving progress is at 10 percent and lambing progress at 20 percent.

Hay supplies are rated 80 percent adequate to surplus, and stock water supplies are 89 percent in those categories.

The condition of the state's winter wheat crop is rated 97 percent fair to good.

Deputy struck, chase ensues in Sioux Falls

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A sheriff's deputy was struck by a fleeing driver that led to a pursuit and the eventual arrest of two suspects in Sioux Falls.

The Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2mKtBx10>) reports deputies with a warrant task force confronted a man and woman in a vehicle Tuesday afternoon. The driver moved forward and struck one of the depu-

ties, who suffered minor injuries and was taken to a hospital.

Authorities say a nearby Sioux Falls officer tried stopping the vehicle and began a pursuit. The driver eventually stopped at East Side Lutheran Church. The two were arrested.

Police are recommending charges of aggravated assault on law enforcement and other counts against the driver, and aggravated eluding and possession of a stolen vehicle against the passenger.

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

N. Korea: Heart attack, not nerve agent, killed Kim Jong Nam

By EILEEN NG, Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — A North Korean envoy rejected a Malaysian autopsy finding that VX nerve agent killed Kim Jong Nam, saying Thursday the man probably died of a heart attack because he suffered from heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure. Malaysia dismissed the claim.

The death of Kim, the estranged half brother of North Korea's ruler, has unleashed a diplomatic battle between Malaysia and North Korea. The autopsy is especially sensitive because North Korea had asked Malaysia not to perform one, but authorities carried it out anyway, saying they were following the law.

Also Thursday, amid growing fallout from the killing, Malaysia announced it is scrapping visa-free entry for North Koreans.

Malaysian officials say two women smeared VX nerve agent — a banned chemical weapon — on Kim's face as he waited for a flight at Kuala Lumpur's airport on Feb. 13. Kim died within 20 minutes, authorities say. No bystanders reported falling ill.

The women, who were caught on grainy surveillance video, have been charged with murder. Both say they were duped into thinking they were playing a harmless prank.

Malaysia's autopsy finding that VX nerve agent killed Kim boosted speculation that North Korea orchestrated the attack. Experts say the oily poison was almost certainly produced in a sophisticated state weapons laboratory.

North Korea has denied any role and accused Malaysia of bias.

On Thursday, Ri Tong Il, the former North Korean deputy ambassador to the United Nations, told a news conference that it made no sense to say the two women used such a deadly toxin without also killing or sickening themselves and people around them.

Ri said Kim had a history of heart problems and had been hospitalized in the past. He said he understood that Malaysian officials found medication for diabetes, heart problems and high blood pressure in Kim's belongings and concluded he wasn't fit to travel.

"This is a strong indication that the cause of death is a heart attack," Ri said.

North Korea does not acknowledge that it was Kim Jong Nam who died. Instead, it refers to the victim as Kim Chol, the name on the diplomatic passport he was carrying. Malaysia has confirmed that the victim was Kim Jong Nam.

National police chief Khalid Abu Bakar brushed off Ri's claim of a heart attack.

"We have our experts who are qualified to determine the cause of death of Kim Chol. Our investigations, supported by expert reports, confirmed that Kim Chol was murdered. North Korea can say what they like but the facts remain," Khalid was quoted as saying by the national Bernama news agency.

Malaysian police said the attackers knew what they were doing and had been trained to go immediately to the bathroom and wash their hands. Police can't confirm whether the two women may have been given antidotes before the attack. An antidote, atropine, can be injected after exposure and is carried by medics in war zones where weapons of mass destruction are suspected.

The case has badly frayed once-warm ties between Malaysia and North Korea.

While it isn't one of North Korea's key diplomatic partners, Malaysia has been one of the few places in the world where North Koreans could travel without a visa. As a result, for years, it has been a quiet destination for Northerners looking for jobs, schools and business deals.

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That could all change after Kim's death.

Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said the visa-free arrangement with North Korea will be scrapped starting Monday for national security reasons. He also slammed the North Korean ambassador in Kuala Lumpur, who has accused Malaysia of "trying to conceal something" and "colluding with hostile forces."

"We don't want to make enemies, but if they had used Malaysia for their own agenda, they should not accuse Malaysia and tarnish our image on the international stage," Zahid said. "We will act firmly to guarantee the safety of our people. Don't ever use Malaysia as a base to do anything you like."

Earlier Thursday, Malaysian authorities said they will release a North Korean man, Ri Jong Chol, from custody Friday because of a lack of evidence. Officials never said why they arrested him. But Malaysian Attorney General Mohamad Apandi Ali said he will be deported because he does not have valid travel documents.

Custody of Kim Jong Nam's body has become a point of contention between the two countries.

Malaysia has resisted giving up the body without getting DNA samples and confirmation from next of kin. Kim is believed to have two sons and a daughter with two women living in Beijing and Macau.

North Korea has unsuccessfully demanded that Malaysia hand the body over.

Malaysian authorities are seeking seven other North Korean suspects, four of whom fled the country on the day of Kim's death and are believed to be back in North Korea. Others sought include the second secretary of North Korea's embassy and an employee of North Korea's state-owned airline, Air Koryo.

Kim Jong Nam was estranged from his half brother, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. He reportedly fell out of favor with their father, the late Kim Jong Il, in 2001, when he was caught trying to enter Japan on a false passport to visit Tokyo Disneyland.

Isolated North Korea has a long history of ordering killings of people it views as threats to its regime. Kim Jong Nam was not known to be seeking political power, but his position as eldest son of the family that has ruled North Korea since it was founded could have made him appear to be a danger.

A high-level defector from North Korea, Thae Yong Ho, told reporters from Hong Kong-based Phoenix TV on Thursday that he's certain Kim Jong Un was behind Kim Jong Nam's death.

"North Korea is a society ruled in terror. For a big decision like killing Kim Jong Nam, no one could make a decision like that except Kim Jong Un," he said in a broadcast from Seoul, South Korea.

Thae was the deputy head of the North Korean Embassy in London until last year, when he fled to South Korea, becoming the most senior diplomat to switch sides.

Justice Dept: Sessions spoke with Russian ambassador in 2016

By ERIC TUCKER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Attorney General Jeff Sessions talked twice with Russia's ambassador to the United States during the presidential campaign season, communications that spurred calls in Congress for him to recuse himself from a Justice Department investigation into Russian interference in the U.S. election.

Sessions, an early supporter of President Donald Trump and a policy adviser to the Republican candidate, did not disclose those discussions at his confirmation hearing in January when asked what he would do if "anyone affiliated" with the campaign had been in contact with officials of the Russian government.

Sessions replied that he had not had communication with the Russians.

Justice Department spokeswoman Sarah Isgur Flores said Wednesday night that "there was absolutely nothing misleading about his answer."

That statement did not satisfy Democrats, who even before Wednesday had sought his recusal from the ongoing federal investigation and had raised questions about whether he could properly oversee the probe.

Sessions said in a brief interview with NBC Thursday, "I have said that when it's appropriate, I will recuse myself."

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders earlier called the disclosure of the talks with the ambassador, Sergey Kislyak, "the latest attack against the Trump administration by partisan Democrats."

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She added that Sessions "met with the ambassador in an official capacity as a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, which is entirely consistent with his testimony."

House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi accused Sessions of "lying under oath" and demanded that he resign. Other Democrats called on him to step aside from the investigation.

In a statement late Wednesday, Sessions said, "I never met with any Russian officials to discuss issues of the campaign. I have no idea what this allegation is about. It is false."

House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, appearing Thursday on MSNBC's "Morning Joe" show, "I just think he needs to clarify what these meetings were." The California Republican said it isn't unusual for members of Congress to meet with ambassadors, but added that if a question arose about the integrity of a federal investigation, "I think it'd be easier" for an attorney general to step away from the probe.

Sessions had more than 25 conversations with foreign ambassadors last year in his role as a U.S. senator and senior member of the Armed Services Committee, and had two separate interactions with Kislyak, the department confirmed.

One was a visit in September in his capacity as a senator, similar to meetings with envoys from Britain, China, Germany and other nations, the department said.

The other occurred in a group setting following a Heritage Foundation speech that Sessions gave during the summer, when several ambassadors — including the Russian ambassador — approached Sessions after the talk as he was leaving the stage.

Revelations of the contacts, first reported by The Washington Post, came amid a disclosure by three administration officials that White House lawyers have instructed aides to Trump to preserve materials that could be connected to Russian meddling in the American political process.

The officials who confirmed that staffers were instructed to comply with preservation-of-materials directions did so on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly disclose the memo from White House counsel Don McGahn.

On the Sessions revelation, Rep. Adam Schiff of California, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, said: "If reports are accurate that Attorney General Sessions — a prominent surrogate for Donald Trump — met with Ambassador Kislyak during the campaign, and failed to disclose this fact during his confirmation, it is essential that he recuse himself from any role in the investigation of Trump campaign ties to the Russians."

Asked by reporters Monday about the prospect of a recusal, Sessions had said, "I would recuse myself from anything that I should recuse myself on."

At the confirmation hearing in January, Sen. Al Franken of Minnesota asked Sessions about allegations of contact between Russia and Trump aides during the 2016 election. He asked Sessions what he would do if there were evidence that anyone from the Trump campaign had been in touch with the Russian government during the campaign.

Sessions replied he was "unaware of those activities."

Then he added: "I have been called a surrogate at a time or two in that campaign and I didn't have, did not have communications with the Russians, and I'm unable to comment on it."

Flores, the Justice Department spokeswoman, said that response was not misleading.

"He was asked during the hearing about communications between Russia and the Trump campaign — not about meetings he took as a senator and a member of the Armed Services Committee," she said in a statement.

Franken said in a statement he was troubled that the new attorney general's response to his question was "at best, misleading." He said he planned to press Sessions on his contact with Russia.

"It's clearer than ever now that the attorney general cannot, in good faith, oversee an investigation at the Department of Justice and the FBI of the Trump-Russia connection, and he must recuse himself immediately," Franken said.

Separately in January, Sen. Patrick Leahy, a Judiciary Committee Democrat, asked Sessions in a written questionnaire whether "he had been in contact with anyone connected to any part of the Russian govern-

ment about the 2016 election, either before or after election day.”
Sessions replied simply, “No.”

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

Presidential hopeful Macron aims to clean up French politics

By ANGELA CHARLTON, Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — With just 52 days left before French voters choose their president, the man leading the polls released his campaign platform on Thursday, pledging to boost European unity and fight populism and corruption.

Until now, centrist independent presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron has become popular largely based on what he is not — he’s neither left nor right, he has no party, and he’s the only top contender not facing corruption investigations.

Amid growing French political scandals, Macron said he wants to shrink the size of parliament, introduce term limits and ban officials from hiring their family members.

Two of Macron’s chief rivals for France’s two-round April-May presidential vote — conservative Francois Fillon and far-right leader Marine Le Pen — are both facing corruption investigations.

Macron, a 39-year-old former economy minister who has never held elected office, is presenting himself as a fresh face without the political baggage of France’s long-tarnished political system. He has pledged to “eradicate conflicts of interest” — a not-so-subtle dig at Fillon, who soon may face charges that he arranged taxpayer-funded jobs for his family that they never performed.

Denying wrongdoing, Fillon vowed Wednesday to pursue his candidacy even if he’s charged, but is now struggling to keep his party from falling apart.

Macron, who wants to cut the size of both houses of parliament by a third and ban lawmakers from consulting, is also backing a blanket ban on employing family members.

Polls suggest Macron and Le Pen, the far-right National Front leader, will be the top two vote-getters in the April 23 first round ballot and advance to the May 7 presidential runoff.

Le Pen is embroiled in her own set of corruption allegations. The European Parliament voted Thursday to lift her immunity from prosecution over her tweets of gruesome images of violence by Islamic State extremists. A different probe targeting Le Pen is centered on her aide at the European Parliament, suspected of being paid with EU money without doing any work.

Many voters on left and right increasingly see Macron as their best hope of defeating Le Pen, who’s hoping to follow U.S. President Donald Trump’s footsteps by riding nationalist, anti-immigration sentiment to a presidential win.

While Le Pen wants to pull France out of the EU and Eurozone, Macron said during his speech that the remaining 27 European Union members must vigorously defend their single market in talks with Britain on its exit.

Macron urged efforts to reinvigorate the eurozone and closer European cooperation, insisting the EU cannot survive “without a real European strategy.”

Macron offers his supporters something that other candidates struggle to inspire: hope. Hope that France can embrace startups and create jobs again. Hope that France can reject populism and bridge its ethnic and religious divides. Hope that politics can be different under a 39-year-old.

Critics have struggled to skewer Macron, in part because his platform remained elusive. Instead he’s been targeted for his personal life — he has denied, and joked about, rumors that he is gay, and faced scrutiny over his wife Brigitte, his former high school teacher who is 24 years his senior.

His campaign team has also claimed it’s been the target of hacking attempts stemming from Ukraine.

A former investment banker, Macron countered questions about campaign funding by asking his donors to go public with their names. As former economy minister who championed tech companies and Uber-like car services, he wants to invest in training youth for today’s globalized economy and make it easier

to change jobs.

Macron would cut 60 billion euros in public spending — and 120,000 public service jobs — but invest 50 billion euros in stimulus programs, notably on cleaner energy to fight global warming.

Series of US airstrikes target al-Qaida positions in Yemen

By AHMED AL-HAJ, Associated Press

SANAA, Yemen (AP) — A series of U.S. airstrikes targeted alleged al-Qaida positions on Thursday in a mountainous area where three Yemeni provinces meet, leaving at least four militants dead, Yemeni officials said.

The officials told The Associated Press that U.S. jets and drones targeted at least six districts and they were all located in a mountainous area where the three provinces of Bayda, Shabwa and Abyan meet. The vast region is known for its rocky mountains, which have been used by al-Qaida as a hideout.

One media official in Bayda said a total of 23 airstrikes were carried out by U.S. jets. Another official said four al-Qaida militants were killed in the airstrikes that targeted Shabwa's Saeed district.

The bombings took place between 2 a.m. and 5 a.m., shaking houses and causing panic among sleeping residents who fled in fear, while smoke billowed into the sky and flashes of light were seen from a distance because of the explosions.

The Yemeni officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak to the media.

U.S. military officials were not immediately available for comment.

Thursday's airstrikes come a month after U.S. special forces carried out a raid in the same province. In that operation, one U.S. Navy Seal was killed, six American soldiers were wounded and a military aircraft suffered a hard landing and had to be destroyed.

The attack was launched just days after President Donald Trump's inauguration.

Survivors and witnesses say at least 25 Yemenis were killed in the attack, including 10 children and nine women, sparking outrage in Yemen and prompting the government to ask Washington for a review of the Jan. 29 assault on the district of Yakla.

A week ago, Human Rights Watch called upon the U.S. to carry out an investigation saying that the U.S. needs to "go a step further and provide a full accounting of possible laws-of-war violations."

Al-Qaida in Yemen, seen as the militant group's most dangerous offshoot, has seized large swaths of land and entire cities starting from 2011, the year the mass uprising started and ended with longtime ruler Ali Abdullah Saleh leaving power.

However, the group grew in weapons and numbers after the start of the 2015 Saudi-led campaign that targeted Houthi rebels who seized control of the capital Sanaa, forcing the internationally recognized government to flee the country. Since then, the war exasperated the state of lawlessness and gave al-Qaida freedom of movement and recruitment.

The group has also emerged as a de facto ally of the US-backed Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi and his backers Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates against the Shiite rebels. The United States has also supported the oil-rich kingdom Saudi Arabia with military advisers, logistics and intelligence in addition to billions of dollars in arms.

Throughout the years, the U.S. has depended on drone strikes in hunting down al-Qaida's top leaders and operatives. In 2015, the group's leader was killed in a drone strike in the southern city of Mukalla, the provincial capital of Yemen's largest province of Hadramawt, and which fell into the hands of the group for a year.

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

Your daily look at late-breaking news, upcoming events and the stories that will be talked about today:

1. CONTACTS WITH RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR PROMPT OUTCRY

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Attorney General Jeff Sessions had two conversations with the ambassador to the U.S. during the presidential campaign. The revelation fuels calls for him to recuse himself from an investigation into Russian interference in the election.

2. US AIRSTRIKES TARGET AL-QAIDA IN CENTRAL YEMEN

The military action comes a month after U.S. special forces carried out a raid in the same province that left one U.S. Navy SEAL dead, along with a number of civilians.

3. PYONGYANG POINTS TO NATURAL CAUSE

A North Korean envoy says a heart attack likely killed Kim Jong Nam, not VX nerve agent as a Malaysia autopsy showed.

4. INVESTORS BET BIG ON US STOCKS

The Dow — a day after Trump outlined several business-friendly proposals in a speech to Congress — rises more than 300 points, closing above 21,000 for the first time.

5. WHO'S PUTTING CHINESE LEGAL SYSTEM TO TEST

A group of lawyers, fed up with what they consider halfhearted efforts to fight air pollution, are suing authorities in and around Beijing.

6. HUNGER SPREADS IN WAR-TORN SOUTH SUDAN

Famine threatens roughly 100,000 people and has the international community on alert.

7. THE ENVELOPE, PLEASE? NOT FROM THESE TWO

The president of the film academy says the two accountants responsible for the best-picture flub at Sunday's Academy Awards will never work the Oscars again.

8. WHY WALL STREET NEWCOMER IS GETTING BUZZ

The company behind the popular messaging app Snapchat is expected to start trading after a better-than-expected stock offering.

9. CLIMACTIC SEA BATTLE UNSPOOLS IN PROPAGANDA PIECE

A new Iranian animated film imagines a devastating response to an American attack on the country's nuclear program — a U.S. naval fleet obliterated by a barrage of rockets.

10. ROMANCE BLOOMS WITHIN POLITICAL CLAN

Ex-Vice President Joe Biden's son is reportedly dating the widow of his other son, the late Beau Biden.

Trump to push Pentagon upgrade aboard US aircraft carrier

By KEN THOMAS, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is planning to meet with sailors and shipbuilders on an aircraft carrier in Virginia as he promotes his plans for a major buildup of the nation's military.

Trump is traveling Thursday to Newport News to deliver a speech aboard the USS Gerald R. Ford, a \$12.9 billion warship that is expected to be commissioned this year after cost overruns and delays. He also is meeting with the carrier's builder.

A draft budget plan released earlier this week by the White House would add \$54 billion to the Pentagon's projected budget, a 10 percent increase.

"To keep America safe, we must provide the men and women of the United States military with the tools they need to prevent war — if they must — they have to fight and they only have to win," Trump said in his address to Congress on Tuesday night.

Trump, in his 2016 campaign, repeatedly pledged to rebuild what he called the nation's "depleted" military and told supporters at Regent University in Virginia Beach in October that the region's naval installations would be "right at the center of the action with the building of new ships."

He often argued that the U.S. military was too small to accomplish its missions and pledged to put the Navy on track to increase its active-duty fleet to 350 ships, compared to the current Navy plan of growing from 272 ships to 308 sometime after 2020.

The USS Gerald R. Ford, located at Newport News Shipbuilding, will be the first of the Navy's next generation of aircraft carriers and is expected to accommodate some 2,600 sailors.

Trump's speech to a joint session of Congress, his first as president, included his past calls for repealing the "defense sequester," or across-the-board budget cuts instituted by Congress. He will need the repeal to achieve the kinds of increased defense spending that he is seeking.

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

Snap stock to debut Thursday after better-than-expected IPO

By **BARBARA ORTUTAY** and **MICHAEL LIEDTKE**, AP Technology Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — The company behind the popular messaging app Snapchat is expected to start trading Thursday after a better-than-expected stock offering.

Snap Inc. passed its first major test on Wall Street on Wednesday as it priced its initial public offering of 200 million shares at \$17 each. That is above the expected range of \$14 to \$16 and values the Los Angeles company at \$24 billion.

Snap's IPO is one of the most anticipated for a technology company since Twitter's stock market debut in 2013. Co-founders Evan Spiegel and Robert Murphy will retain controlling power over all matters at Snap; the Class A stock being sold in the IPO has no voting power. Snap is getting the ticker symbol "SNAP" on the New York Stock Exchange.

PROSPECTS FOR SNAP

For Snap, which started its official bid to go public last Halloween, the looming question now is whether investors are in for a trick or a treat.

Snap's Snapchat app is best known for disappearing messages and quirky facial filters for jazzing up selfies. It's popular with teenagers and younger millennials. While Facebook launched in the era of desktop computers and Twitter in text-based mobile, Snapchat jumped straight to photos and videos. In a sense, it's ahead of the game.

But its user growth has slowed down in recent months.

Blame Facebook. Growth slowed to a crawl since Facebook's Instagram cloned Snapchat's "stories" in August. With the feature, photos and videos shared by users play in a loop for 24 hours, then disappear. The feature helped Snapchat recover from stagnant growth before, but now it's no longer unique to Snapchat. After adding 36 million daily active users during the first half of last year, Snapchat picked up just 15 million in the second half.

The number of people downloading Instagram's app has been accelerating during the past six months, suggesting a gradual shift away from the Snapchat app, based on an analysis financial advice site ValuePenguin did of activity in Apple's app store.

While the higher-than-expected pricing looks good for Snap, its troubles aren't over.

"What that number means for the longer term — very little," said Chi-Hua Chien, managing partner at Goodwater Capital who originated the VC firm Accel Partners' investment in Facebook and later invested in Twitter while at another firm.

Twitter, for example, shot up nearly 73 percent on its first trading day and now trades well below its IPO price. Facebook, meanwhile, saw its stock decline sharply for a few months after going public. Now, it's trading more than three times its IPO price, near a record high.

TIME IS LIMITED

Snapchat started 2017 with 158 million daily active users, most of whom are people in their teens, 20s and early 30s. But many of them are finding Snapchat harder to fit in with daily life.

Evan Rodriguez, a 20-year old student at Abilene Christian University in Texas, used to send snaps of funny stuff he saw throughout the day, just as his friends did. For instance, he might take video of a friend walking across campus and send it via Snapchat — "Hey, I see you!"

But something about the whole thing "just became cumbersome," Rodriguez said. "It was like one more thing to do."

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Celia Schlekewey, a 20-year-old University of Washington student who also works at a small business, liked the fact that when she first joined, it was "all just about sending pictures to your friends." Over time, the stories feature became a "big deal," and keeping up with friends and famous people became time-consuming.

"It got to the point that if I wanted to keep up with everyone's story, I'd have to sit on my phone and watch it for 25 minutes," she said.

Easing this feeling of pressure will be key for Snapchat, especially if it wants to attract older users. They might not have as much time — or might not feel like spending that time on social media — as their young millennial counterparts.

SNAPCHAT'S IDENTITY

Since Snapchat was never about typing, the phone's camera is already its main focus. In fact, CEO Evan Spiegel has taken to calling it a "camera company," and this is how the company describes itself in its IPO documents.

That doesn't necessarily just mean that Snap wants to make cameras, though last year it launched Spectacles, actual physical sunglasses that snap photos for you.

Snapchat is more about image-based communication, said Chien of Goodwater Capital.

Open the app, and you open a camera. Turn the camera to selfie mode, and you get a bunch of filters to overlay on your face. Because the images you send eventually disappear, there's less pressure to put forward your best self.

Snapchat has often drawn comparisons to both Twitter, which also faces stagnant growth, and Facebook, whose users are highly engaged, just like Snapchat's. Ultimately, Snap doesn't have to be like either to succeed and can forge its own path and identity.

LaVon Murphy, 45, a photographer in Portland, Oregon, uses Facebook to keep up with friends, Instagram to express herself through pictures and Twitter to keep up with the news. She added Snapchat recently to stay in touch with her 17-year-old son.

"I don't really understand why he and his friends use the app so extensively, but I am trying to keep up," she said. "It allows me to be silly and show a silly side of myself to my son and it allows him to be silly with me."

Snap just needs millions more like Murphy willing to make time for yet another social network.

Liedtke reported from San Francisco.

Lawyers sue Chinese authorities for not getting rid of smog

By LOUISE WATT, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Lawyer Cheng Hai has an itemized list of compensation demands from Beijing authorities over the city's smog: 65 yuan (\$9) for having to buy face masks, 100 yuan (\$15) for seeing a doctor for a sore throat and 9,999 yuan (\$1,500) for emotional distress.

Fed up with what they consider halfhearted efforts to fight air pollution, Cheng and like-minded lawyers are putting China's legal system to the test by suing the governments of the capital and its surrounding regions.

"Some people might think that air pollution is inevitable with economic development, but they are wrong," said Cheng, 64. "We have laws to protect air quality, and major pollution can be avoided if they are fully enforced."

The lawsuits demonstrate the mounting frustration of China's middle class at the country's notoriously bad air, a topic that is expected to be discussed at the upcoming annual meeting of the country's parliament three years after Premier Li Keqiang declared a "war on pollution" at the same event.

The dissatisfaction comes even as authorities in the capital are closing factories, getting rid of coal-fired boilers and taking older, heavier-polluting vehicles off the road.

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Official data show those measures are having some effect, with Beijing showing year-on-year improvements since 2013.

Yet the city's average reading of the tiny particulate matter PM2.5 — considered a good gauge of air pollution — is still seven times what the World Health Organization considers safe.

"We are the victims of smog and we are entitled to ask for an apology and compensation from the government," said another of the lawyers, Yu Wensheng, 50, from Beijing.

The suits, which accuse authorities of failing to deal effectively with the smog, are important to show that the government is not above the law, said Yu.

"If the government is not restricted by law, then what else can restrict it?" said Yu, who has spent time in detention accused of supporting Hong Kong pro-democracy protests in 2014 and for speaking up in support of detained rights lawyers.

Along with Beijing, the group has attempted to sue the neighboring province of Hebei and the port city of Tianjin. The region generally suffers the worst pollution in China and forms a front line in the central government's battle against the scourge.

The lawyers say their cases are more about drawing attention to government inaction rather than winning a settlement.

China is grappling with serious pollution resulting from three decades of breakneck growth that vastly improved living standards for many, but took a disastrous toll on the environment.

As people became more aware of the health issues associated with smog, the declaration of a "war on pollution" at the National People's Congress in 2014 resulted in measures to reduce pollutants in the air, including capping coal consumption. However, a particularly heavy bout of smog at the beginning of this year still triggered pollution "red alerts" in more than 20 cities.

Beijing plans to spend \$2.7 billion on fighting air pollution this year, part of which would be used to close or upgrade more than 3,000 polluting factories, replace the use of coal with clean energy on the outskirts of the city and phase out 300,000 high-polluting older vehicles, according to the city's acting mayor, Cai Qi.

Despite efforts to enlist the public in the anti-pollution struggle, China's authoritarian Communist government heavily discourages protests and other forms of independent action, and at least one of the initial five lawyers in the case appears to have withdrawn his lawsuit under pressure from local authorities.

The Beijing press office said the government hadn't received any notices about the lawsuits and was unable to comment. The governments of Hebei and Tianjin didn't respond to requests for comment.

The Ministry of Environmental Protection has been sending out inspection teams to check on how well local governments are implementing smog control measures. On Monday, it announced that the lists of companies that have to halt production during periods of heavy pollution drawn up by three lower-level governments under Beijing and Hebei included companies that were already no longer operating.

A Beijing court has already twice rejected attempts by the lawyers to file cases, while a court in Hebei province's capital, Shijiazhuang, has yet to respond to a case filed more than two months ago. Similar attempts to file suits in previous years have also been derailed, and while a change in the law has allowed some environmental NGOs to bring cases against polluters since 2015, they are discouraged to do so by the high costs of investigating and proving environmental damage, and potential threats and harassment from those they're suing.

Wang Canfa, the director of a center that helps people bring lawsuits relating to pollution, said it would be difficult for the plaintiffs to establish a link between the governments' actions and the harm they have suffered.

"In this circumstance, the governments are not the ones that inflict harm, rather it is the companies that discharge emissions, and individuals who drive cars, who are the polluters," said Wang, who teaches at the China University of Political Science and Law.

Still, the lawyers appear to feel it's worth the risks and frustrations to make their point.

Another of them, Lu Tingge, who filed the Hebei case, said his mother suffers respiratory illnesses and the pollution makes it difficult for her to breathe.

He's asking for 10 yuan (\$1.50) in compensation for masks, 5,000 yuan (\$730) for "spiritual damage"

and an official apology for the harm to his life and work.

"I know my chances of winning are small," said Lu, 47. "But I just want to make people understand that the government bears the main responsibility for dealing with smog and air pollution."

Associated Press researcher Yu Bing contributed to this report.

Justice Dept: Sessions spoke with Russian ambassador in 2016

By ERIC TUCKER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Attorney General Jeff Sessions had two conversations with the Russian ambassador to the United States during the presidential campaign season last year, contact that immediately fueled calls for him to recuse himself from a Justice Department investigation into Russian interference in the election.

Sessions, an early supporter of President Donald Trump and a policy adviser to the Republican candidate, did not disclose those communications at his confirmation hearing in January when asked what he would do if "anyone affiliated" with the campaign had been in contact with the Russian government.

Sessions answered that he had not had communication with the Russians.

Justice Department spokeswoman Sarah Isgur Flores said Wednesday night that "there was absolutely nothing misleading about his answer."

That statement did not satisfy Democrats who even before Wednesday had sought his recusal from the ongoing federal investigation and had raised questions about whether he could properly oversee it.

Democratic House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, a California Democrat, accused Sessions of "lying under oath" and demanded that he resign. Other Democrats called on him to step aside from the investigation.

In a statement Wednesday night, Sessions said, "I never met with any Russian officials to discuss issues of the campaign. I have no idea what this allegation is about. It is false."

Sessions had more than 25 conversations with foreign ambassadors last year in his role as a senior member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and had two separate interactions with the Russian ambassador, Sergey Kislyak, the department said.

One was a visit in September in his capacity as a senator, similar to meetings with envoys from Britain, China, Germany and other nations, the department said.

The other occurred in a group setting following a Heritage Foundation speech that Sessions gave during the summer, when several ambassadors — including the Russian ambassador — approached Sessions after the talk as he was leaving the stage.

Revelations of the contact, first reported by The Washington Post, triggered calls from members of Congress for Sessions to back out of any involvement in the FBI's probe.

"If reports are accurate that Attorney General Sessions — a prominent surrogate for Donald Trump — met with Ambassador Kislyak during the campaign, and failed to disclose this fact during his confirmation, it is essential that he recuse himself from any role in the investigation of Trump campaign ties to the Russians," said Rep. Adam Schiff of California, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee.

"This is not even a close call; it is a must," he said.

Asked by reporters Monday about the prospect of a recusal, Sessions said, "I would recuse myself from anything that I should recuse myself on."

At the confirmation hearing in January, Sen. Al Franken of Minnesota asked Sessions about allegations of contact between Russia and Trump aides during the 2016 election.

He asked Sessions what he would do if there was evidence that anyone from the Trump campaign had been in touch with the Russian government during the campaign.

Sessions replied he was "unaware of those activities."

Then he added: "I have been called a surrogate at a time or two in that campaign and I didn't have, did not have communications with the Russians, and I'm unable to comment on it."

Flores, the Justice Department spokeswoman, said that response was not misleading.

"He was asked during the hearing about communications between Russia and the Trump campaign — not about meetings he took as a senator and a member of the Armed Services Committee," she said in a statement.

Franken, in a statement Wednesday night, said he was troubled that the new attorney general's response to his question was "at best, misleading." He said he planned to press Sessions on his contact with Russia.

"It's clearer than ever now that the attorney general cannot, in good faith, oversee an investigation at the Department of Justice and the FBI of the Trump-Russia connection, and he must recuse himself immediately," Franken said.

Separately in January, Sen. Patrick Leahy, a Judiciary Committee Democrat, asked Sessions in a written questionnaire whether "he had been in contact with anyone connected to any part of the Russian government about the 2016 election, either before or after election day."

Sessions replied simply, "No."

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

Malaysia to release, deport N. Korean in nerve agent probe

By EILEEN NG, Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — A North Korean man will be released from custody because of lack of evidence connecting him to the fatal nerve agent attack on Kim Jong Nam, the estranged half brother of North Korea's ruler, Malaysian officials said Thursday.

Ri Jong Chol, 45, was arrested on Feb. 17, four days after the attack at Kuala Lumpur's bustling airport. Malaysia officials never said why he had been arrested.

On Thursday, Malaysian Attorney General Mohamad Apandi Ali said Ri will be released and deported because he does not have valid travel documents.

Also Thursday, Malaysia said it was scrapping visa-free travel for North Koreans entering the country, the latest fallout from an attack many believe was orchestrated by Pyongyang.

The attack was caught on grainy security camera footage that showed two women smearing something on Kim's face as he waited for a flight in Kuala Lumpur on Feb. 13. Malaysian officials say the substance was VX nerve agent, a banned chemical weapon.

Kim was dead within an hour as the fast-acting poison coursed through his body, authorities say. No bystanders reported falling ill.

The poisoning has unleashed a serious diplomatic battle between Malaysia and North Korea. While it isn't one of Pyongyang's key diplomatic partners, Malaysia has been one of the few places in the world where North Koreans could travel without a visa. As a result, for years, it's been a quiet destination for Northerners looking for jobs, schools and business deals.

That could all begin to change in the wake of Kim's death. On Thursday, the Bernama news agency said North Koreans will have to apply for visas.

The two female suspects caught in the security footage were charged with murder in a Malaysian court Wednesday. Both say they were duped into thinking they were taking part in a harmless prank.

"I understand but I am not guilty," Vietnamese suspect Doan Thi Huong told the court in English after the murder charge was read.

The other suspect, Indonesian Siti Aisyah, nodded as her translator told her, "You are accused of murdering a North Korean man at the departure hall" of Kuala Lumpur International Airport.

The women did not enter pleas because the magistrate court where they appeared has no jurisdiction over a murder case. Lead prosecutor Iskander Ahmad told the court he will ask for the case to be transferred to a higher court and for the women to be tried together.

Each faces a mandatory death sentence if convicted. Both women were wearing bulletproof vests as they were escorted from the court to Kajang Prison.

In the surveillance video, Huong was seen clearly in a T-shirt with "LOL" emblazoned across the front.

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Both women were originally from modest farming villages and had moved to their countries' capitals seeking a better life.

Also Wednesday, the court approved a gag order to prevent police and potential witnesses from making public statements about the case.

North Korea is widely speculated to be behind the killing, particularly after Malaysia said that VX had killed Kim. Experts say the oily poison was almost certainly produced in a sophisticated state weapons laboratory.

North Korea's official news agency called that finding the "height of absurdity" on Wednesday, saying the two women could not have used such a deadly toxin without killing or sickening themselves and anyone around them.

North Korea opposed Malaysian officials even conducting an autopsy on Kim, while Malaysia has resisted giving up the body without getting DNA samples and confirmation from next of kin.

Kim is believed to have two sons and a daughter with two women living in Beijing and Macau.

Authorities are seeking seven other North Korean suspects, four of whom fled the country the day of Kim's death and are believed to be back in North Korea. Others sought include the second secretary of North Korea's Embassy and an employee of North Korea's state-owned airline, Air Koryo.

Kim Jong Nam was estranged from his half brother, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. He reportedly fell out of favor with their father, the late Kim Jong Il, in 2001, when he was caught trying to enter Japan on a false passport to visit Tokyo Disneyland.

Isolated North Korea has a long history of ordering killings of people it views as threats to its regime. Kim Jong Nam was not known to be seeking political power, but his position as eldest son of the family that has ruled North Korea since it was founded could have made him appear to be a danger.

Was Trump tribute to fallen Navy SEAL fitting or calculated?

By TAMMY WEBBER, Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — The televised moment moved a nation: A grief-stricken widow clasping her hands and looking skyward, tears streaming down her face as the nation's lawmakers and president delivered a deafening standing ovation in honor of her fallen husband.

President Donald Trump's tribute to Navy SEAL William "Ryan" Owens during Tuesday's congressional address was seen by many as touching. But others regarded it as a calculated attempt to deflect criticism of his decision to approve a failed military operation and to turn around his administration's shaky start with a gesture that sought to unify a deeply divided country.

Social media was abuzz with both praise and criticism.

Trump was praised on Twitter as giving "the greatest respect to Carryn Owens" and for moving "viewers to tears with his love for our fallen military."

But others said Trump was responsible for Owens' death and criticized the "exploitation of his widow for last night's dog and pony show."

Perceptions of the gesture likely depended on whether viewers trust Trump, said Matthew Dallek, a political management professor at The George Washington University and speechwriter for former Democratic U.S. Rep. Richard Gephardt.

"Whether he seems to be exploiting (Owens') death or it seems to be heartfelt and genuine very much depends on one's political view and whether or not you trust Trump," Dallek said. "If you voted for him, you think he's honoring a patriot and this is powerful. If ... you don't trust him and don't approve of his presidency so far, I don't think this changes very much."

Trump is following in the footsteps of many presidents who have introduced guests to help make a political point. But Tuesday's tribute was potentially more fraught because Owens' father has refused to meet with Trump and called for an investigation into the Yemen raid that took his son's life.

Owens, a 36-year-old married father of three, was the first known U.S. combat casualty since Trump took office, and his death, as well as the killing of several civilians, raised questions about the effectiveness of the raid. Trump used the tribute to insist again that Owen's death was not in vain, saying he helped gather significant intelligence.

Trump's gesture could have been genuine and calculated at the same time, said Elizabeth Sherman, a political science professor at American University. He likely knew that it would be difficult to criticize the tribute because Carryn Owens accepted his invitation and the chance for the nation to honor her husband's sacrifice.

"I think Trump figured this was a brilliant PR move. How can you lose?" Sherman said.

But Ryan Owens "might have been alive" if there had been a deeper assessment of the raid's risks, she said. "No one wants to say that" amid Carryn Owens' grief.

Dallek said Trump also might have inflamed the politics around Owens' death when he again insisted that valuable information was gathered in the raid, despite reports to the contrary.

"He could have invited Owens' widow, acknowledged her sacrifice and her husband's heroism and really left it at that," Dallek said. "But he's got to justify the raid as incredibly successful and one that is going to help him kill the terrorists."

White House staff told to preserve Russia-related materials

By **JULIE PACE** and **VIVIAN SALAMA**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — White House lawyers have instructed the president's aides to preserve materials that could be connected to Russian interference in the 2016 election and other related investigations, three administration officials said Wednesday.

The instructions, which were sent to White House staff on Tuesday, come after Senate Democrats last week asked the White House and law enforcement agencies to keep all materials involving contacts that Trump's administration, campaign and transition team — or anyone acting on their behalf — have had with Russian government officials or their associates.

The Senate intelligence committee, which is investigating Russia's role in the 2016 election, has also asked more than a dozen organizations, agencies and individuals to preserve relevant records.

The three administration officials who confirmed that White House staffers were instructed to comply did so on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly disclose the memo from White House counsel Don McGahn.

President Donald Trump has been dogged by questions about his advisers' ties to Russia since the campaign. Federal investigators have been looking into possible contacts between Trump advisers and Russia, while congressional committees are investigating Russia's role in political hacking during the campaign.

The intelligence community has assessed that Russia's hacking of Democratic groups and operatives was carried out to help Trump defeat Democrat Hillary Clinton.

One official said McGahn's memo instructs White House staff to preserve material from Trump's time in office, and for those who worked on the campaign, relevant material from the election.

A Trump spokesman said the White House was "simply taking proactive steps" and called the accusations of nefarious ties between the president and Russia "false and politically motivated attacks."

Congressional staffers have said they are not aware of any evidence that materials related to Russia are not being preserved. But Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York said last week: "There is real concern that some in the administration may try to cover up its ties to Russia by deleting emails, texts and other records that could shine a light on those connections. These records are likely to be the subject of executive branch as well as congressional investigations and must be preserved."

Trump has denied having any knowledge that aides were in touch with Russian intelligence agents during the election, as reported by The New York Times. The White House has launched an aggressive effort to discredit the report, including enlisting GOP chairmen of the congressional intelligence committees to push back against it.

The involvement of North Carolina Sen. Richard Burr and California Rep. Devin Nunes has sparked calls — mostly from Democrats — for a special prosecutor to investigate Russia's role in the election and possible ties to Trump.

The White House has acknowledged that Michael Flynn, Trump's former national security adviser, misled

top officials about the nature of his contacts with Russia's ambassador to the U.S. Flynn initially told Vice President Mike Pence and other Trump advisers that he did not discuss sanctions with the envoy during the transition, though it was later revealed that he did.

The FBI interviewed Flynn about the contacts days after the inauguration. Trump fired Flynn after the discrepancies in his account were publicly revealed.

AP writer Deb Riechmann contributed to this report.

Follow Julie Pace at <http://twitter.com/jpaceDC> and Vivian Salama at <http://twitter.com/vmsalama>

Yahoo punishes CEO in latest fallout from security breakdown

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE, AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Yahoo is punishing CEO Marissa Mayer and parting ways with its top lawyer for the mishandling of two security breaches that exposed the personal information of more than 1 billion users and already have cost the company \$350 million.

Mayer won't be paid her annual bonus nor receive a potentially lucrative stock award because a Yahoo investigation concluded her management team reacted too slowly to one breach discovered in 2014.

Yahoo's general counsel, Ronald Bell, resigned without severance pay for his department's lackadaisical response to the security lapses.

Alex Stamos, Yahoo's top security officer at the time of the 2014 breach, left the company in 2015.

Although Yahoo's security team uncovered evidence that a hacker backed by an unnamed foreign government had pried into user accounts in 2014, executives "failed to act sufficiently" on that knowledge, according to the results of an internal investigation disclosed Wednesday. At that time, Yahoo only notified 26 people that their accounts had been breached.

The report didn't identify the negligent executives, but it chastised the company's legal department for not looking more deeply into the 2014 breach. Because of that, the incident "was not properly investigated and analyzed at the time," the report concluded.

Bell declined to comment through his spokeswoman, Marcy Simon.

Yahoo didn't disclose the 2014 breach until last September when it began notifying at least 500 million users that their email addresses, birth dates, answers to security questions, and other personal information may have been stolen. Three months later, Yahoo revealed it had uncovered a separate hack in 2013 affecting about 1 billion accounts, including some that were also hit in 2014.

The breaches, the two biggest in internet history, have already exacted a major toll.

Yahoo already lowered the sales price of its email and other digital services to Verizon Communications from \$4.83 billion to \$4.48 billion to account for the potential backlash from the breaches. That deal was reached last July, two months before Verizon and the rest of the world learned about Yahoo's lax security.

More than 40 lawsuits also have been filed seeking damages for the breaches. If Yahoo's sale to Verizon is completed as expected later this year, a successor company called Altaba Inc. will be responsible for paying those legal claims.

Yahoo's handling and disclosure of the breaches is also under investigation by the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Federal Trade Commission. The Sunnyvale, California, company says it has spent \$16 million investigating the breaches and covering the legal expenses so far.

In a blog post on Yahoo's Tumblr service, Mayer said she didn't learn about the scope of the breaches until September and then tried to set things right. "However, I am the CEO of the company and since this incident happened during my tenure, I have agreed to forgo my annual bonus and my annual equity grant," Mayer wrote.

In its report, Yahoo's board said it decided to withhold a cash bonus that otherwise would have been paid to her. Mayer is eligible to receive a bonus of up to \$2 million annually. The board said it accepted Mayer's offer to relinquish her annual stock award, which is typically worth millions of dollars.

Mayer said she wants the board to distribute her bonus to Yahoo's entire workforce of 8,500 employees.

The board didn't say if it would do so.

Losing her bonus and annual stock award probably won't be too painful for Mayer, who is already rich after working for more than a decade as a top executive at Google and then as Yahoo's CEO for the past 4 1/2 years. She is also in line for a \$44 million severance package if she doesn't go to work for Verizon after the sale closes.

Deadly storm in Midwest sounded like 'explosion of glass'

By JIM SALTER, Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — A deadly spring-like storm that one Illinois resident described as sounding like "an explosion of glass" damaged or destroyed hundreds of homes in that state and others, blew cars off a major Missouri highway and forced people in an Arkansas town to huddle for safety in a high school.

Tornadoes were blamed in three deaths amid a large swath of destruction through the central U.S. before rumbling eastward. Forecasters said up to 95 million people are potentially in the storm's path as it moves toward the mid-Atlantic states and southern New England. Forecasters said cities including New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Atlanta and Washington, D.C., could be at risk.

Officials in Arkansas, Iowa, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Missouri were assessing damage after storms Tuesday night and early Wednesday.

In northern Illinois, an uprooted tree killed 76-year-old Wayne Tuntland of Ottawa. More than a dozen others were injured. In the small community of Naplate, next to Ottawa, about a quarter of the roughly 200 homes were damaged, Fire Chief John Nevins said.

Debbie Loughridge, 61, and her son were inside their Naplate home, riding out the storm in the bathtub. Firefighters rescued them after the roof was torn off.

"All I heard was the wind and the breaking glass. Like an explosion of glass," Loughridge said.

In southern Illinois, an apparent tornado near the town of Crossville killed a 71-year-old man and injured his wife, White County Coroner Chris Marsh said.

In Missouri, a twister touched down Tuesday night, blowing several vehicles off of Interstate 55 near Perryville, 65 miles southeast of St. Louis. A 24-year-old man from Perryville was thrown from one of the vehicles and died, Missouri State Highway Patrol Cpl. Juston Wheatley said. The wind was so strong that it lifted crumpled cars from a nearby salvage yard and tossed them along the highway.

Nearly 110 homes in the Perryville area were damaged or destroyed and 12 people suffered minor injuries, Perryville Fire Chief Jeremy Triller said.

"I feel we're very blessed and fortunate we didn't have a higher fatality number with this terrible disaster," Triller said.

Meteorologist Rick Shanklin of the National Weather Service said the Missouri twister was a "strong tornado," but the actual wind speed has not been estimated. Officials believe it was on the ground for 13 to 15 miles, crossing the Mississippi River into Illinois.

National Weather Service Storm Prediction Center meteorologist Patrick Marsh said crews are still determining how many twisters touched down across the central U.S.

Marsh said a strong storm system moved from the Mountain West and collided with warm and humid air in the Midwest, which has enjoyed an unusually warm winter and where temperatures Tuesday were well into the 70s in many places.

"That's why we saw storms more representative of late March and April," Marsh said. "The atmosphere doesn't care what the calendar says."

Northeast of Little Rock, Arkansas, emergency managers said about 40 homes were damaged and 10 to 15 people were injured near Higginson, while additional minor injuries were reported at a state prison near Newport. Hundreds of people, including schoolchildren, had to take shelter at Bald Knob High School, which was hosting a state basketball tournament. Games were delayed until the storm passed.

Tornadoes may have touched down Wednesday in and near Nashville, Tennessee. Weather service meteorologist Sam Herron cited numerous reports of scattered damage across central Tennessee and a possible

tornado near the Cool Springs mall south of Nashville. The city's Emergency Operations Center tweeted that damage to power lines and trees indicated that another tornado may have touched down in the city.

A tornado is suspected of damaging several homes and a church building in Ireland, Indiana. No injuries were reported but one woman had to be rescued from a partially collapsed home.

White House spokesman Sean Spicer said President Donald Trump is monitoring the severe weather. He said the White House will stay in touch with state and local officials to provide federal support as needed.

Strong winds elsewhere in the Plains spread wildfires in Texas. Four homes were destroyed near Tulia, about 50 miles south of Amarillo, before firefighters beat back the flames. Texas A&M Forest Service spokesman Phillip Truitt said the fire prompted the evacuation of almost 1,200 homes.

Associated Press reporters Bob Eller, Herb McCann and Sophia Tareen in Chicago; Teresa Crawford in Naplate, Illinois; Kelly Kissel, Tafi Mukunyadzi and Jill Bleed in Little Rock, Arkansas; and David Runk in Detroit contributed to this report.

Trump idea to expand health care competition faces hurdles

By JONATHAN J. COOPER and RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR, Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Allowing insurers to market health care policies across state lines is one of President Donald Trump's main ideas for bringing down costs.

While supporters of the idea cast it as a way to make insurance policies more competitive, critics say it's unlikely to result in more affordable plans and could undermine stronger consumer protections in states such as California and Hawaii. Such a "race to the bottom" could leave some older consumers with health problems unable to afford coverage.

And there's another complication: Trump's proposal appears unlikely to pass Congress unless Democrats cooperate. Congressional aides involved with health care legislation say the proposal to allow cross-state insurance sales would need 60 votes in the Senate.

In his speech to Congress on Tuesday night, Trump said the nation must turn to new ideas to help control costs.

"The time has come to give Americans the freedom to purchase health insurance across state lines," the president said.

The estimated 20 million Americans who buy coverage directly from an insurer would be affected. Their health plans are regulated by state governments, which decide the minimum benefits that must be covered and mediate disputes between insurers and their customers, among other consumer protections.

Variation between the states was extreme until former President Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act, which raised the minimum standards for legal coverage nationwide.

One of the sharpest differences was coverage for maternity care. Mandy Burke of San Leandro, California, who is pregnant with a girl due in May, doesn't want to go back to a time when it might be more difficult or more expensive to find coverage for pregnancy care.

The costs for repeated prenatal visits, ultrasounds, blood tests and a hospitalization for delivery are insane, said Burke, a 39-year-old musician and music teacher who has subsidized health coverage through California's insurance exchange. "That was something we had to check out — can we even afford to be pregnant," she said.

Trump and congressional leaders have vowed to repeal the law and replace it, although the details of their plans remain in flux.

The Trump proposal on cross-state sales would "eviscerate the ability of state legislatures and state governors to decide what the appropriate consumer protections are for their state's consumers and businesses," said Dave Jones, a Democrat who regulates some of California's health plans as the elected insurance commissioner.

The concept of cross-state sales has been around for at least 10 years, but experts say there is a good reason why it hasn't advanced: It might not deliver as promised.

"Premiums really reflect the cost of care where an individual lives," said Barbara Klever of the American

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Academy of Actuaries, a professional group that represents experts who advise on health care and pension programs.

Health insurance is a little bit like real estate, in that costs reflect local conditions. If an insurance company based in a low-cost state such as Utah is allowed to sell policies in a high-cost state such as New York, its premiums for New Yorkers would reflect medical costs in their own state, not Utah.

Economist Joe Antos of the business-oriented American Enterprise Institute, said the idea of cross-state health insurance has an instinctive appeal because Americans have seen competition drive down costs in other areas, from credit cards to air travel.

But Antos said it's a "faulty analogy" when it comes to health insurance because where the competition really needs to happen is among hospitals and doctors. And they are increasingly consolidating into bigger units, partly to fend off insurer demands to cut fees.

"You have to have competition at the service-delivery level, as well," Antos said. "The most expensive part of health care is hospitalization, and that is pretty much going to drive the price of insurance."

Out-of-state insurers also face the challenge of building local networks of hospitals and doctors that would make their product appealing to consumers. And then there's a conundrum over who would regulate the out-of-state carrier.

"A consumer who had a concern about their claim being denied couldn't go to their local insurance regulator," said Trish Riley, executive director of the National Academy for State Health Policy, a nonpartisan group that advises states.

Concerned that repealing the Affordable Care Act would eliminate consumer protections, Democratic lawmakers in some states, including Washington, Hawaii and Nevada, have introduced legislation to preserve some of the act's consumer protections in state law. Allowing cross-state insurance sales could undermine those efforts.

"We have a small market ... and it would take a lot for some company from the mainland to try to come out here and get a foothold," said Hawaii state Sen. Rosalyn Baker, a Democrat who heads that state's committee overseeing health care.

Cross-state insurance is popular with conservative lawmakers who believe extensive state-level regulations require people to buy coverage they don't want or need and drive up costs for consumers, particularly those who are young and healthy.

"If you live in the state of California or New York and you wanted a policy that had fewer state mandates and might be cheaper, I don't see why you shouldn't be able to go to the state and find a plan that supports your needs," said Sally Pipes, president of the Pacific Research Institute, which advocates free-market ideas.

In his speech to Congress, Trump projected a sense of confidence about his health care proposals as he challenged Republicans and Democrats to work together. Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, said there's a "strong consensus" for cross-state sales.

But behind the scenes on Capitol Hill, there's lots of uncertainty about whether the proposal will get very far.

There's doubt it can meet the test for inclusion among budget-related items that Republicans can push through the Senate with just 51 votes under special procedures.

Normally 60 votes are needed to pass contested legislation, and there are 52 Republican senators. That's why Republicans are planning to use special budget-related procedures to pass most of their "repeal and replace" legislation.

A House GOP leadership document prepared for lawmakers refers to cross state sales as an idea that Republicans will pursue through "regular order."

The translation: 60 votes would be needed in the Senate.

A legislative referee called the Senate "parliamentarian" will make the final ruling on whether cross-state insurance can be considered under the special procedures that require only 51 votes to pass legislation.

Alonso-Zaldivar reported from Washington, D.C., Associated Press writer Cathy Bussewitz in Honolulu contributed to this report.

Taliban suicide attacks, shootout kill 16 in Afghan capital

By RAHIM FAIEZ, Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Near-simultaneous Taliban suicide bombings and an hours-long shootout with Afghan security forces left at least 16 people dead and over 100 wounded in Kabul on Wednesday — a stark reminder of the militants' ability to stage large-scale and complex attacks in the country's capital.

The brazen noon-time attacks also underscored the challenges the government continues to face as it grapples with the 15-year-long insurgency and struggles to improve security for ordinary Afghans.

In one of the twin attacks, a suicide car bomber rammed his vehicle into the gates of a sprawling police compound in western Kabul. The explosion was followed by a gunbattle between security forces and several gunmen who stormed into the complex, said Najib Danish, deputy spokesman for the Interior Ministry.

Thick black smoke rose above the grounds, and several rounds of small-arms fire and subsequent explosions were heard from inside, according the Mohammad Naser, a shopkeeper who has a store nearby. Dozens of windows were shattered on surrounding houses and shops, he added.

The compound includes Kabul's so-called Sixth Police Station and is located next to the country's military school, which might have been the original target, along with cadets attending classes there.

Hours later, the gunbattle ended with all the attackers killed, said Sadiq Muradi of the Kabul police chief's office. Security forces were carrying out a clean-up operation following the attack, he added.

Wahid Mujro, the public health ministry spokesman, said 15 people were killed in the police compound.

The second attack took place in eastern Kabul where a suicide bomber on foot detonated his explosives outside the offices of the country's intelligence service, killing one person. A total of 104 people were wounded in both attacks, Mujro said.

In a message to media, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid claimed responsibility for both attacks. It was not immediately clear how many gunmen were involved in the attack on the Kabul police complex.

"We were in the dining room, eating lunch when a loud explosion happened. I couldn't see anything for a while," said Manizha, a policewoman who like many women in Afghanistan uses only one name.

She said she managed to escape from the compound as the gunbattle continued inside.

President Ashraf Ghani issued a statement condemning the attacks, saying that "terrorists and their alien masters once again tried to create an atmosphere of terror and fear in Kabul."

Ghani linked the attacks to the recent death of a senior Taliban commander, known as Mullah Salaam, in northeastern Kunduz province and said the insurgents are trying to attack urban centers to boost morale among their followers.

The U.N. Security Council condemned "the heinous and cowardly terrorist attacks" and underlined the need to bring the perpetrators to justice. Council members reiterated their "serious concern" at the threat posed by the Taliban, al-Qaida and Islamic State extremist group to the local population, security forces and the international presence in Afghanistan.

But, the council's statement said, "no violent or terrorist acts can reverse the Afghan-led process along the path towards peace, democracy and stability in Afghanistan, which is supported by the people and the government of Afghanistan, and by the international community."

Meanwhile, the Taliban gained control Wednesday of local government headquarters in a district in northern Baghlan province, after almost three days of intense battles with Afghan security forces, according to local officials.

Abdul Satar Barez, the provincial governor, said he could not confirm that the whole district of Tala Wa Barfak has fallen to the Taliban but said a number of checkpoints have fallen to the insurgents amid clashes Wednesday.

A provincial security official said the security forces left their checkpoints and withdrew from the entire district, which is now in Taliban hands. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media.

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Mujahid, the Taliban spokesman, tweeted that their fighters have overrun the Tala Wa Barfak headquarters. Afghanistan has been wracked by violence as the Taliban continue to press their offensive into the winter months, targeting mainly government forces and the Afghan military but with scores of civilians getting caught up in the deadly violence.

The government is also facing an Islamic State affiliate, which is seeking to expand its footprint in the country beyond the eastern Nangarhar province.

Since the withdrawal of NATO combat forces from Afghanistan at the end of 2014 that left a smaller, mainly training and support mission of U.S. and other Western troops, the Taliban have tried to take their war into urban centers as well.

In September 2015, insurgents overran and briefly held Kunduz, the capital of the strategically important Kunduz province, a breadbasket region that borders Tajikistan to the north and sits on a major crossroad in the country. It was the first time the militant group had taken a major city.

Kunduz came under threat again last April, when Afghan forces aided by U.S. troops and air power pushed the Taliban back into the surrounding districts.

In southern Helmand province, where most of Afghanistan's opium comes from Taliban-controlled poppy fields, the insurgents have gained full control of five of the province's 14 districts and effectively control eight others where just small pockets government-held territory remain.

The militants are also now closing in on Helmand's capital of Lashkar Gah, where a wave of assaults and suicide attacks killed dozens in recent months.

Associated Press writers Amir Shah and Karim Sharifi in Kabul, Afghanistan, contributed to this report.

Fast learner: Trump gains skill in using trappings of office

By KEN THOMAS and JULIE PACE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Most mornings, President Donald Trump gathers business leaders, union executives or others at the White House for made-for-television meetings meant to project the image of a can-do chief executive.

Trump sits at the center of one of the White House's ornate meeting rooms, offers brief remarks and invites assembled journalists to stick around to hear his guests praise his plans. Few tangible policy decisions emerge from the listening sessions. But the public parts of the meeting are carried in full on cable television, underscoring the ways in which an unconventional new president is using the traditional trappings of the office to his advantage.

Playing the role of president is a crucial skill that doesn't always come easily to Oval Office occupants. The theater of the presidency can't fully mask policy fumbles or awkward disputes, but it can shape the way in which a commander in chief is perceived by the public and can help keep anxious political allies in line.

That was particularly evident Tuesday night, when Trump delivered his first address to a joint session of Congress.

The new president stepped into the House chamber with historically low public approval ratings after a turbulent start to his administration. Some Republicans are growing weary of his refusal — or inability — to stop hurling personal insults and his seeming unwillingness to focus on the GOP's ambitious domestic policy agenda.

Trump responded by embracing both the traditional pomp and decorum of a presidential address. He delivered a restrained and largely optimistic speech, rarely veering off script. In an emotional high point, he singled out the widow of a fallen Navy SEAL who was sitting in the guest box and joined lawmakers in sustained applause for her husband's sacrifice.

Republicans swooned.

"You saw an outsider last night sort of hit his stride," declared Sen. David Perdue of Georgia.

Former Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty called the address "less Mad Max and more Ronald Reagan."

"It buys him some good will and some time to fill out more positions and the roadmap of where they

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want to go," Pawlenty said.

To the president's critics, it was a frustrating reminder that Trump is often judged by a different standard and praised for stylistic shifts that rarely stick.

"For all the past talk of pivots that never happened, the reality is he's going to benefit like last night from the trappings of the presidency," said Brian Fallon, a former top communications aide to Hillary Clinton's campaign.

After celebrating the speech with the president over hot dogs and popcorn in the White House residence late Tuesday night, White House aides moved swiftly to keep a good moment going.

Plans to follow Trump's speech with the signing of a revamped, yet still controversial, travel ban executive order on Wednesday were delayed, so the administration avoided trampling on the looping highlight reel of Trump's speech on cable television. Press secretary Sean Spicer's daily briefing, which has become a must-watch television event, was switched to an off-camera gaggle.

One of the surprising paradoxes of Trump's stunning political rise is that the former reality television star hasn't always succeeded on the biggest stages. He promised a high-wattage show at the Republican National Convention, but the four-day gathering was often disjointed and lacked star power. Trump gave uneven performances in his three debates against Clinton and he stepped on his own inaugural message by complaining that the crowd size wasn't being accurately covered.

Some White House officials have privately acknowledged that Trump's tiffs with inauguration-crowd photographers, reporters and intelligence officers have overshadowed their policy focuses for the first 100 days. In an interview with Fox News before Tuesday night's address, Trump gave himself a grade of "C" or "C+" for his messaging — even while awarding himself an "A" for his effort so far.

The White House has tried to cast Trump as a president in perpetual motion, filling his days with back-to-back meetings and showcasing relatively minor bill signings and executive actions.

Hours before he took the Speaker's rostrum in the House chamber, Trump signed executive actions requiring the review of a rule related to protecting small streams and wetlands and bills aimed at recruiting more women for the fields of science, technology, engineering and math. Neither was the stuff of legislative legacy, but they allowed him to appear with smiling onlookers in the Oval Office as he affixed his distinctively rigid signature and then showed off the paperwork to cameras.

The steady, camera-friendly imagery calls to mind some of the same tactics used by past New York City mayors like Ed Koch and Rudy Giuliani, who were a constant presence on local television in Trump's hometown. And like boardroom scenes in "The Apprentice," the photo ops put Trump in a favorable light, showing him as an alpha male in command.

"He's playing who he is, being the guy who is calling the CEOs together or the insurance executives together," said Curt Anderson, a GOP strategist who advises Florida Gov. Rick Scott and multiple Republican lawmakers. "The suit-and-tie guy behind the desk — that's who he is."

AP Congressional Correspondent Erica Werner contributed to this report.

Follow Julie Pace at <http://twitter.com/jpaceDC> and Ken Thomas at <http://twitter.com/KThomasDC>

Today in History

By The Associated Press Today in History

Today is Thursday, March 2, the 61st day of 2017. There are 304 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History:

On March 2, 1867, Howard University, a historically black school of higher learning in Washington, D.C., was founded as it received a congressional charter. Congress passed, over President Andrew Johnson's veto, the first of four Reconstruction Acts, providing for "the more efficient Government of the Rebel States" by dividing the South into five military-run districts.

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In 1793, the first president of the Republic of Texas, Sam Houston, was born near Lexington, Virginia.

In 1836, the Republic of Texas formally declared its independence from Mexico.

In 1877, Republican Rutherford B. Hayes was declared the winner of the 1876 presidential election over Democrat Samuel J. Tilden, even though Tilden had won the popular vote.

In 1917, Puerto Ricans were granted U.S. citizenship as President Woodrow Wilson signed the Jones-Shafroth Act. Actor, producer, director and bandleader Desi Arnaz was born in Santiago de Cuba.

In 1939, Roman Catholic Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli (puh-CHEL-ee) was elected pope on his 63rd birthday; he took the name Pius XII. The Massachusetts legislature voted to ratify the Bill of Rights, 147 years after the first 10 amendments to the U.S. Constitution had gone into effect. (Georgia and Connecticut soon followed.)

In 1942, the original Stage Door Canteen, a wartime club for U.S. servicemen, officially opened its doors in New York's theater district.

In 1955, nine months before Rosa Parks' famous act of defiance, Claudette Colvin, a black high school student in Montgomery, Alabama, was arrested after refusing to give up her seat on a public bus to a white passenger.

In 1965, the movie version of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical "The Sound of Music," starring Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer, had its world premiere in New York.

In 1977, the U.S. House of Representatives adopted a strict code of ethics.

In 1989, representatives from the 12 European Community nations agreed to ban all production of CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons), the synthetic compounds blamed for destroying the Earth's ozone layer, by the end of the 20th century.

In 1992, actress Sandy Dennis died in Westport, Connecticut, at age 54.

In 2005, the number of U.S. military deaths in the Iraq war reached at least 1,500, according to an Associated Press count. The woman who'd accused NBA star Kobe Bryant of rape settled her lawsuit against him, ending the case.

Ten years ago: A charter bus carrying a college baseball team from Bluffton University in Ohio plunged off an Atlanta highway ramp and slammed into the pavement below, killing seven people, including the driver. Army Secretary Francis J. Harvey resigned following a scandal over substandard conditions for wounded Iraq soldiers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Anna Nicole Smith was buried in the Bahamas following a lavish memorial service.

Five years ago: Some 40 people were killed by tornadoes that struck Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky and Ohio. President Barack Obama made a supportive phone call to law student Sandra Fluke, who testified before Congress about the need for birth control coverage, only to be called a "slut" on the air by talk show host Rush Limbaugh, who ended up apologizing to Fluke. The NFL said it had found that between 22 and 27 New Orleans Saints players had participated in a bounty program targeting opponents over the previous three seasons. Major League Baseball expanded its playoff format to 10 teams, adding a second wild-card in each league.

One year ago: The U.N. Security Council unanimously approved the toughest sanctions against North Korea in two decades, reflecting growing anger at Pyongyang's latest nuclear test and rocket launch in defiance of a ban on all nuclear-related activity. After nearly a year aboard the international space station, NASA astronaut Scott Kelly and Russia's Mikhail Kornienko returned to earth aboard a Soyuz capsule. A convicted rapist pleaded guilty in Charlottesville, Virginia, to killing two college students in a deal that called for him to spend the rest of his life in prison.

Today's Birthdays: Actor John Cullum is 87. Author Tom Wolfe is 87. Former Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev is 86. Actress Barbara Luna is 78. Author John Irving is 75. Actress Cassie Yates is 66. Actress Laraine Newman is 65. Former Sen. Russ Feingold, D-Wis., is 64. Former Interior Secretary Ken Salazar is 62. Singer Jay Osmond is 62. Pop musician John Cowsill (The Cowsills) is 61. Tennis player Kevin Curren is 59. Country singer Larry Stewart (Restless Heart) is 58. Rock singer Jon Bon Jovi is 55. Blues singer-musician Alvin Youngblood Hart is 54. Actor Daniel Craig is 49. Actor Richard Ruccolo is 45. Rock musician

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Casey (Jimmie's Chicken Shack) is 41. Rock singer Chris Martin (Coldplay) is 40. Actress Heather McComb is 40. Actress Bryce Dallas Howard is 36. NFL quarterback Ben Roethlisberger is 35. Musician Mike "McDuck" Olson (Lake Street Dive) is 34. Actor Robert Iler (EYE'lur) is 32. Actress Nathalie Emmanuel is 28. Singer-rapper-actress Becky G is 20.

Thought for Today: "Just as we are often moved to merriment for no other reason than that the occasion calls for seriousness, so we are correspondingly serious when invited too freely to be amused." — Agnes Repplier, American essayist (1858-1950).