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City Council Meeting Postponed

The city council meeting scheduled for last night has been postponed to March 13th due to the lack of a quorum.

BATES TOWNSHIP ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE

Bates Township will hold its annual meeting and election on Tuesday, March 7th, 2017 at the home of the Clerk, 14523 409th Ave, Conde. Election of officers and business meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. We will be receiving bids for road maintenance and gravel. Please mail bids to Betty Geist, Bates Township Clerk, 14523 409th Ave., Conde, SD 57434 prior to meeting date. Betty Geist, Township Clerk

Open: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave.

The cardboard/paper

recycling trailer at the school is **OPEN**

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Tuesday, March 7

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

School Lunch: Chili, corn bread, fruit, broccoli and dip.

Senior Menu: Sweet and sour pork, steamed rice, carrots and broccoli medley, fruit salad, whole wheat bread.

Sweet 16 Boys Playoff

3M Engineering Expo for 8th grade from 8:30 to 10:30

FCCLA Mother-Daughter Banquet from 3:30 to 8:00

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

Wednesday, March 8

School Breakfast: Pancake on stick, fruit, juice, milk.

School Lunch: Quesadilla, mixed vegetable, fruit, romaine salad.

Senior Menu: Oven fried chicken, sweet potatoes, green beans, glorified rice, whole wheat bread.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Lenten meal at 6 p.m. (Nigeria Circle serves), worship at 7 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation at 3:45 p.m., Lenten Service at 7 p.m.

United Methodist: Wednesday Coffee at 9 a.m., Kid Zone at 3:30 p.m., 8th grader mentors join confirmation at 6 p.m., Confirmation at 6 p.m., Lenten Services with coffee and dessert following at 7 p.m.

Thursday, March 9

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

School Lunch: BBQ, sweet potato tot, fruit, broccoli and dip.



Gov. Daugaard Signs Bills Into Law

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

HB 1005 – An Act to require the Government Operations and Audit Committee to provide oversight to the Board of Regents on issues relating to the university centers.

HB 1044 – An Act to revise certain provisions regarding wholesale drug distributors, to provide for licensure and regulation of outsourcing facilities for certain drugs, and to establish a fee for licensure of outsourcing facilities.

HB 1045 – An Act to revise certain provisions regarding credit for reinsurance.

HB 1059 – An Act to provide for the perfection of liens upon application for duplicate certificates of title.

HB 1060 – An Act to provide requirements and standards for insurers' own risk and solvency assessments.

HB 1068 – An Act to revise certain provisions concerning landowner liability for certain injuries suffered.

HB 1080 – An Act to adopt the Uniform Fiduciary Access to Digital Assets.

HB 1084 – An Act to allow chiropractic corporations operated as sole proprietorships to be operated for a certain time after the death of the chiropractor.

HB 1087 – An Act to authorize the recovery of attorney's fees in civil actions relating to highway obstructions.

HB 1091 – An Act to modify certain provisions relating to concealed carry permits.

HB 1095 – An Act to revise certain provisions regarding resident fishing possession limits.

HB 1098 – An Act to revise certain provisions regarding the notice requirements of county commissions in authorizing installation of utility lines along and across highways.

HB 1110 – An Act to revise certain provisions regarding school bus stop violations.

HB 1122 – An Act to clarify certain provisions regarding the process to be excused from public school attendance.

HB 1124 – An Act to exempt a person with a commercial driver license from the requirement to have a hazardous materials endorsement on the license under certain conditions.

HB 1174 – An Act to revise certain provisions concerning how stop lamps shall be mounted and displayed on vehicles and trailers.

SB 51 – An Act to revise certain references regarding loans and investments for insurance companies.

SB 52 – An Act to revise certain provisions regarding federal covered securities.

SB 64 – An Act to define the term of a vacancy appointment for water development district directors.

SB 73 – An Act to provide a special tribal veteran license plate for certain motor vehicles.

SB 83 – An Act to revise certain provisions relating to the criteria for informal adjustment for any apparent child in need of supervision.

SB 137 – An Act to establish certain provisions regarding joint employer liability protection.

SB 146 – An Act to revise the voting authority of an alderman.

Sanford
Underground
Research
Facility



Subscribe at: Sanfordlab.org/newsletters

Deep Thoughts

Notes from the underground by Communications Director Constance Walter

Monday, March 6, 2017

Mentors, students learn from competition

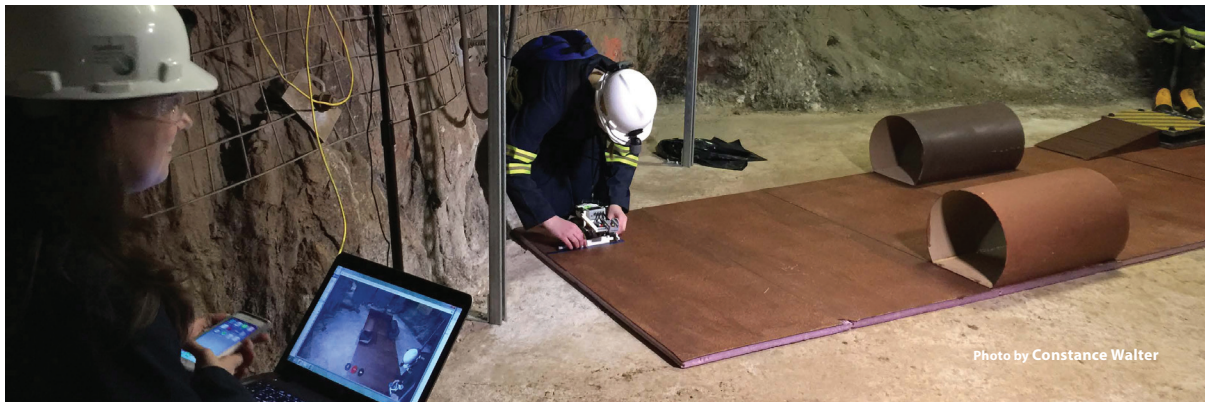


Photo by Constance Walter

Middle school students from Spearfish and Belle Fourche spent weeks designing, building and programming robots using LEGO Mindstorm kits for a robotics competition. They developed, altered and tested the course the robots would travel. On the day of the competition, they waved enthusiastically as their mentors, all students from Black Hills State University, took the robots nearly a mile underground to the 4850 Level where the competition took place.

“The kids do all the work,” said Sam Hintgen, a junior science education major at BHSU. “As their mentors, we give them advice and encourage them to try new things.”

This is the second year Dr. Brianna Mount, research assistant professor of physics at BHSU, has overseen the competition. “Mentorship is an important component of this program and it means a lot to the kids.”

Because the middle school students are too young to go underground, they watched the competition through a live internet connection, giving instructions and advice as their mentors placed the robots on the track. “Angle it this way,” said one child to his mentor; “Move it to the left,” said another.

In the end, only two of the nine robots made it all the way through the track. But the competition was friendly and will serve as a lesson for the next one.

“The best part about the competition is the trial and error,” Hintgen said. “They use real science to build the robots and learn from their mistakes.”

And the mentors learn as well.

“The kids are awesome to work with,” said Taylor Watkins, a sophomore in environmental physical science at BHSU. “They are very appreciative and excited to see us every week. That’s really cool.”

Brianna Mount watches as a BHSU mentor aligns a robot on the obstacle course. Students from Spearfish and Belle Fourche middle schools, designed, built and programmed the robots using LEGO Mindstorm kits.

Top Safety Performance



Photo by Matt Kapust

When water tanks on the 800 and 2600 levels began malfunctioning, Yates crew members Alvin Burns, lead man, and Michael Harvey and Alexis Novotny, infrastructure technicians, took action. Their experience lead them to believe the 4100 Level water drift could be affected, potentially causing problems with the fire suppressions system on the 4850 Level.

They found the problem and took the necessary

steps to correct it. “This is a good crew,” said Jack Stratton, Yates Shaft foreman. “In the Yates we’re constantly moving people and materials, so they have to make sure things are safe at all times. They’re very conscientious and look for everything. I’m proud of them.”

Burns, Harvey and Novotny were recognized for their Top Safety Performance by the Sanford Lab Safety Committee.

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Fraud advisory: Inspector General warns public about calls from OIG "imposters"

The Acting Inspector General of Social Security, Gale Stallworth Stone, is warning citizens about a nationwide telephone "imposter phishing" scheme. The Social Security Administration (SSA) and its Office of the Inspector General (OIG) have received several reports from citizens across the country about persons receiving phone calls from individuals posing as OIG investigators. The caller indicates an issue exists pertaining to the person's Social Security account or Social Security number (SSN) and directs the person call a non-SSA telephone number to address the issue.

The reports indicate the calls include a recording from a caller stating she is "Nancy Jones," an "officer with the Inspector General of Social Security." The recording goes on to say the person's Social Security account, SSN, and/or benefits are suspended, and that he or she should call 806-680-2373 to resolve the issue. Citizens should be aware that the scheme's details may vary; however, citizens should avoid calling the number provided, as the unknown caller might attempt to acquire personal information.

OIG investigators occasionally contact citizens by telephone for investigative purposes, but they will not request sensitive personal information from a citizen over the phone. If a person receives a similar suspicious call from someone alleging to be from the OIG, citizens may report that information to the OIG at 1-800-269-0271 or online via <https://oig.ssa.gov/report>.

Acting Inspector General Stone said, "This phishing scheme is targeting unsuspecting persons for the purpose of Social Security benefit theft or identity theft." She warns citizens to be cautious, and to avoid providing personal information such as your SSN or bank account numbers to unknown persons over the phone or internet unless you are certain of who is receiving it. "You must be very confident that the source is the correct business party, and that your information will be secure after you release it," Stone said.

If a person has questions about any communication—email, letter, text or phone call—that claims to be from SSA or the OIG, please contact your local Social Security office, or call Social Security's toll-free customer service number at 1-800-772-1213, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday, to verify its legitimacy. (Those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can call Social Security's TTY number at 1-800-325-0778.)



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

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Gas Prices Remain Steady despite Increased U.S. Production

March 6, 2017 – South Dakota's retail gasoline price average has fallen a couple of cents over the last few days, standing today at \$2.33 for a gallon of self-serve regular. South Dakota gas prices have danced between \$2.31 and \$2.35 over the last month.

"There is a lot going on globally that is having an impact here in South Dakota," said Marilyn Buskohl, spokeswoman for AAA South Dakota. "The Russian energy ministry has released oil production data showing that their oil output is the same now as it was last month, causing the market to wonder if Russia will try to thwart efforts by OPEC to rebalance global oil supply."

Current Price Averages per Gallon of Regular Gasoline

Sioux Falls – \$2.27, up 3 cents in the past month ... up 49 cents since 3/6/16

Rapid City – \$2.33, unchanged from one month ago ... up 51 cents since 3/6/16

South Dakota – \$2.33, up one cent in the past month ... up 47 cents since 3/6/16

U.S. – \$2.31, up 4 cents in the past month ... up 50 cents since 3/6/16

SOURCE: www.GasPrices.AAA.com

Quick Stats

· The nation's top five most expensive markets are: Hawaii (\$3.08), California (\$2.99), Washington (\$2.79), Alaska (\$2.77) and Nevada (\$2.61).

· The nation's most dramatic weekly price increases include: Michigan (+12 cents), Indiana (+11 cents), Ohio (+9 cents), Illinois (+7 cents) and Kentucky (+6 cents).

Global Market Dynamics

Pump prices nationally slipped fractions of a penny over the weekend, reaching today's national average price for regular gasoline of \$2.31 per gallon. The nationwide average continues to fluctuate but has remained between \$2.27 and \$2.32 for more than a month.

States in the south and southeast continue to top the list for lowest prices, with eight out of ten of the nation's cheapest retail markets located in the regions: South Carolina (\$2.05), Tennessee (\$2.07), Alabama (\$2.07), Mississippi (\$2.09), Arkansas (\$2.11), Texas (\$2.11), Louisiana (\$2.12) and Oklahoma (\$2.12). The latest U.S. Energy Information Administration report shows that regional gasoline stocks have dropped 100,000 barrels to 81.6 million barrels. The Oil Price Information Service reports that Valero experienced some issues at its refinery in Corpus Christi, Tex., last week when a compressor tripped offline due to an instrumentation failure.

Today, markets opened by posting crude oil losses pressured lower by an increasing U.S. rig count and questions about Russia's ability to comply with OPEC cuts. Oil production in the U.S. continues to rise, and according to oil services company Baker Hughes, U.S. drillers added seven oil rigs last week, bringing the total rig count up to 609, the most since October 2015.

Traders will continue to watch how the market reacts to increased U.S. oil production and look for signs as to whether or not Russia implements production cuts. At the closing of Friday's formal trading session on the NYMEX, West Texas Intermediate crude oil was up 72 cents to settle at \$53.33 per barrel.

Rental Properties Can Make Good Investments, but They Come with Risk

By Nathaniel Sillin

Maybe your financial house is in order. Your debt is manageable or paid off. You have an emergency fund and now you're looking for ways to grow your wealth. Or, perhaps you're planning ahead by learning about different investments options. Have you considered becoming a landlord?

Rent prices tend to rise over time, providing an inflation-protected income into your retirement years. You also might be able to cash in big later if the unit's value increases. It doesn't always work out that way, though. Some landlords wind up with a trashed property after evicting a tenant or lose their savings in a natural disaster.

In between the extremes of easy, hands-off income and total ruin are the everyday concerns, benefits and risks that most landlords face.

A few risks you could face as a landlord. Investment property mortgages tend to be a little more difficult and costly to secure than primary residence mortgages. It can also be harder to take cash out of investment properties – either with a cash-out refinance or a home equity line of credit. In other words, you might not have access to the money during an emergency.

Owning a rental property outright can be risky as well. Especially if you're placing a significant amount of your savings in a single investment, the lack of diversification could put you in a precarious situation.

Those aren't the only risks you could face when owning a rental.

Finding and keeping good tenants. Landlords learn from experience that it's worth leaving their rental empty for a month or two rather than pay for an eviction or expensive repairs later. You can pay for professional tenant screening reports or credit reports and call applicants' references before offering a lease.

Covering your expenses. Between taxes, insurance, repairs, maintenance and mortgage payments the monthly and one-off costs can quickly stack up. Some landlords lose money because their rental income doesn't cover their expenses, but they won't be able to attract tenants if they raise it. If the housing and rental markets drop, you could be stuck losing money each month or selling the property at a loss.

The time or cost of managing a rental property. Becoming a landlord is often far from a hands-off job. When the phone rings in the middle of the night because the roof is leaking, you'll need to figure out how to solve the problem. You may be able to hire a property management company to take on this work for you, but they often charge about 8 to 12 percent of your rental income or a flat monthly fee.

Even with the risk involved, there are countless examples of successful landlords. Many find the experience so rewarding that they purchase additional investment properties.

Set yourself up for financial success. What separates the successful and sorrow-filled landlords? Luck certainly comes into play, but you can also take steps to get started on the right foot.

Try to determine a property's capitalization rate, the estimated annual return, before making an offer. To calculate the capitalization rate, divide the annual net income by the property's purchase price.

Your net income will be your rental income, which you can approximate based on rental prices for similar properties, minus your costs, such as maintenance, upgrades, vacancies and emergencies. You may need to consult an accountant to understand how your new tax situation can affect your costs.

Cap rates tend to change depending on the area and type of property. But regardless of what's considered "good" in your area, you can use this formula to compare different investment opportunities.

Bottom line: Many people focus on the positives of owning investment property. An extra income and potential to build equity with their tenants' money seems too good to be true, and it just might be. If you're going to be successful, you should acknowledge the risks that come with the territory and plan accordingly.

Nathaniel Sillin directs Visa's financial education programs. To follow Practical Money Skills on Twitter: www.twitter.com/PracticalMoney.

Today in Weather History

March 7, 1998: A winter storm tracked across South Dakota resulting in heavy snow of 6 to 8 inches across most of central South Dakota from the evening of the 6th into the afternoon of the 7th. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Fort Pierre and near Stephan, 7 inches at Blunt, Pierre, and Murdo, and 8 inches across far southern Jones and Lyman counties. Many activities were canceled and travel was significantly disrupted, especially on Interstate-90.

1717 - The Great Snow, a composite of four winter storms to hit the eastern U.S. in nine days, finally came to an end. Snow depths averaged 60 inches following the storm. Up to four feet of snow fell around Boston MA, and snow drifts 25 feet high were reported around Dorchester MA. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1932 - A severe coastal storm set barometric pressure records from Virginia to New England. Block Island RI reported a barometric pressure reading of 28.20 inches. (David Ludlum)

1970: Last near total eclipse of the sun in Washington, DC in this century. Sun was 95% eclipsed.

1987 - Forty-five cities in the north central and northeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Huron SD hit 80 degrees, and Pickstown SD reached 81 degrees. Rochester MN and Rockford IL smashed their previous record for the date by sixteen degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - High winds along a sharp cold front ushered snow and arctic cold into the Central Rocky Mountain Region and the Northern Plains. Snowfall totals in Utah ranged up to sixteen inches at Brighton. Winds gusted to 66 mph at Rapid City SD. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Blustery northwest winds ushered arctic cold into eastern U.S. Burlington VT reported a record low of 14 degrees below zero. Snow and ice over the Carolinas replaced the 80 degree weather of the previous day. High winds and heavy surf caused five million dollars damage along the North Carolina coast. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - A major ice storm left much of Iowa under a thick coat of ice. It was the worst ice storm in at least twenty-five years for Iowa, perhaps the worst of the century. Up to two inches of ice coated much of western and central Iowa, with three inches reported in Crawford County and Carroll County. As much as five inches of ice was reported on some electrical lines. The ice downed 78 towers in a 17-mile

stretch of a high voltage feeder near Boone costing three electric utilities fifteen million dollars. Damage to trees was incredible, and clean-up costs alone ran into the millions. Total damage from the storm was more than fifty million dollars. (Storm Data)



livestream

Upcoming Event

Thursday, March 9, 7 p.m.

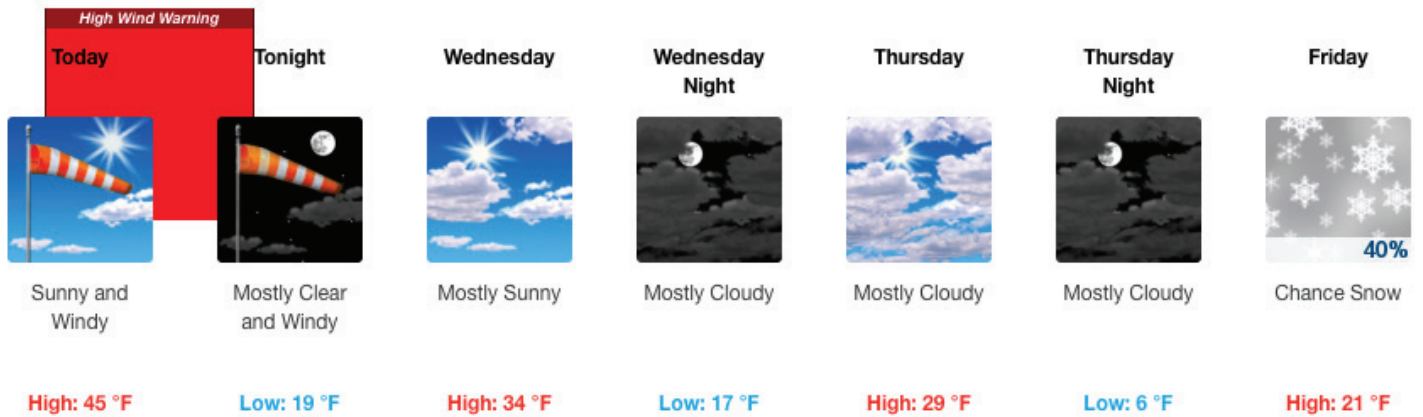
School - MS/HS Building Project

Groton Community Center

gdilive.com

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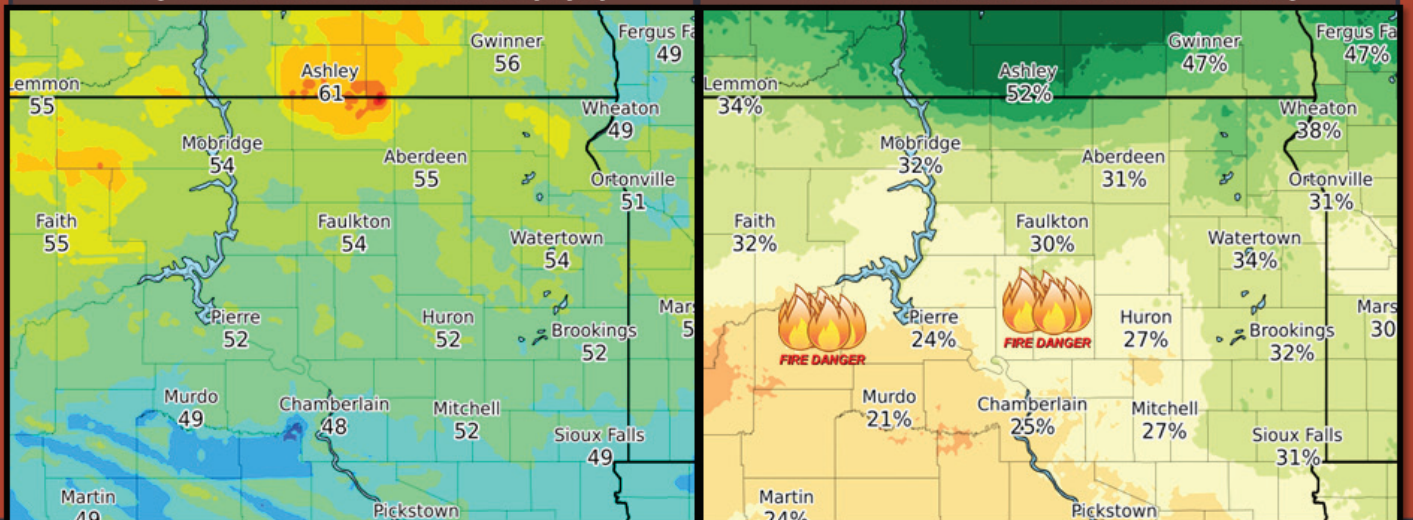
Very High Fire Danger This Afternoon

- Relative humidity dropping to 20 to 35 percent for most areas.
- Strong west winds gusting from 50 to 60 mph.



Today's Max Wind Gust Forecast (mph)

Minimum Afternoon Relative Humidity



weather.gov/Aberdeen National Weather Service Aberdeen @NWSAberdeen Updated: 3/7/2017 5:50 AM Central

Published on: 03/07/2017 at 5:56AM

Strong west winds will persist across the area today with gusts reaching 50 to 60 mph. Relative humidity will also drop into the 20s and 30s for most areas. The combination of these features, along with the dry fuels, will bring very high fire danger to the entire region today. High temperatures will rise into the 40s for most areas.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 59.2

Low Outside Temp: 26.7

High Gust: 39

Rain: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 70° in 1916

Record Low: -24 in 1955

Average High: 35°F

Average Low: 16°F

Average Precip in March.: 0.20

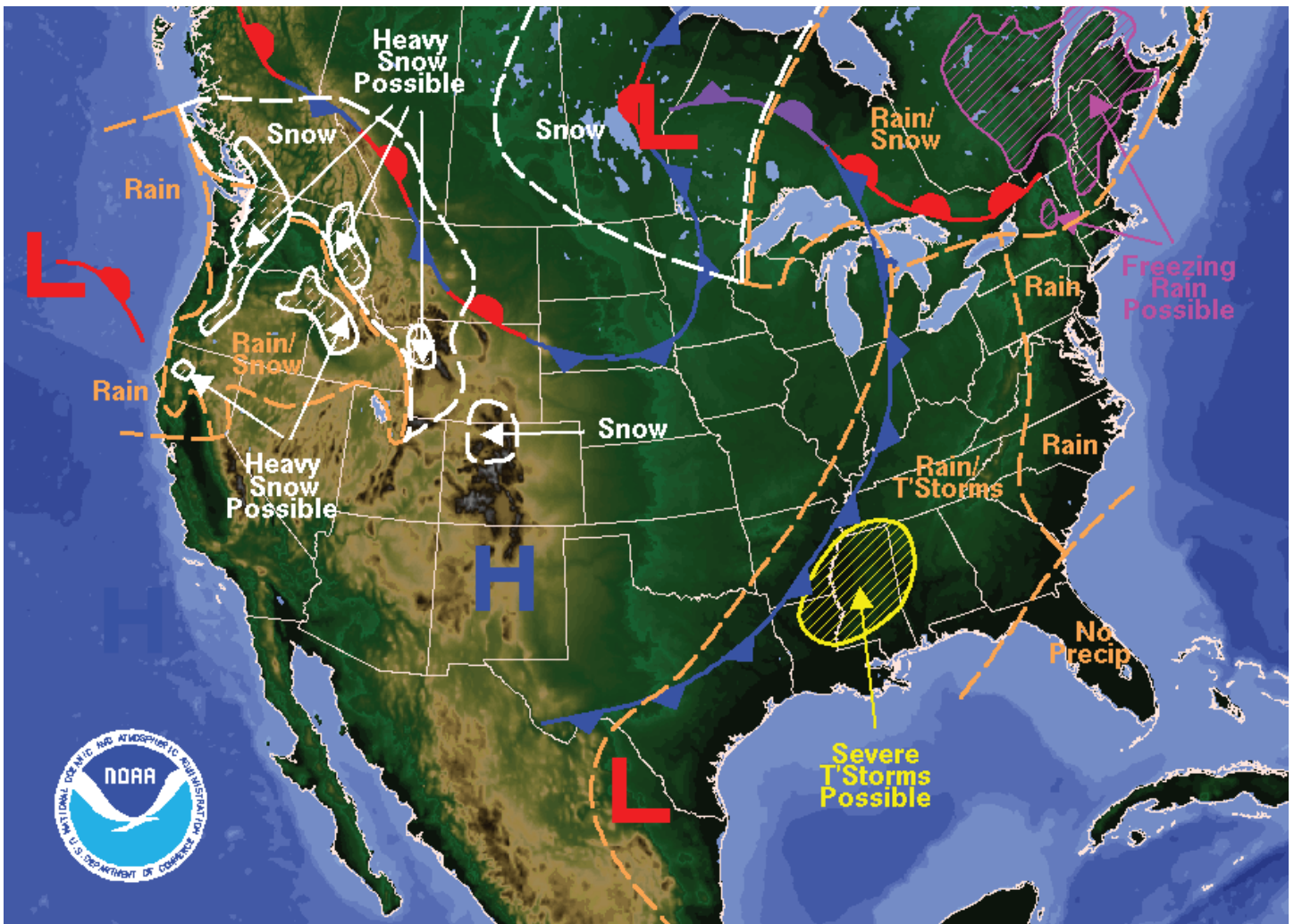
Precip to date in March.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 1.22

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 6:29 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:58 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Tue, Mar 07, 2017, issued 4:06 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

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WINNING THE WORLD

Dr. A.B. Simpson was one of God's greatest missionaries and Biblical scholars. His passion for those who were unsaved was legendary and he devoted his life to winning them to Christ.

Early one morning, a guest who had spent the night in his humble home was quietly walking down the hallway. As he passed the study of Dr. Simpson, he noticed a light coming from the partially opened door. Out of curiosity he peeked into the room and there he saw him praying and heard him sobbing loudly. The arms of Dr. Simpson were wrapped around a globe and the visitor heard him pleading with God to bless every missionary on every continent. He listened as he asked the Lord to provide for the needs of those who were serving Him around the world. He wanted God to bless them and care for them and to work through them to win many for His Kingdom.

The Psalmist encourages us to "plant in tears." He assures us that when we plant in tears and ask the Lord of the harvest to bring the lost into His Kingdom, He will. Then there will be a great "harvest with shouts of joy."

We must also remember what Jesus said: "The harvest is so great, but the workers are so few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask Him to send out more workers for His fields."

Let's pray earnestly for the harvest and the harvesters.

Prayer: We pray, Heavenly Father, that You will bless those who are doing Your work in Your fields today. We also pray for more who are willing to work with You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Matthew 9:37-38 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

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News from the Associated Press

American Indians to protest Trump, pipeline in Washington

By BLAKE NICHOLSON, Associated Press

American Indians from across the country are bringing their frustrations with the Trump administration and its approval of the Dakota Access oil pipeline to the nation's capital Tuesday, kicking off four days of activities that will culminate in a march on the White House.

Tribal members and supporters plan to camp each day on the National Mall, with teepees, a ceremonial fire, cultural workshops and speakers. Native American leaders also plan to lobby lawmakers to protect tribal rights.

"We are calling on all our Native relatives and allies to rise with us," said Dave Archambault, the chairman of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe. "We must march against injustice. Native nations cannot continue to be pushed aside to benefit corporate interests and government whim."

On Friday, the 2-mile "Native Nations March on DC" will lead participants from the Army Corps of Engineers office to a rally near the White House. Organizers have not released an estimate on how many people or tribes planned to take part.

The White House hasn't responded to a request for comment.

The protest comes as a federal judge in Washington weighs a request by the Standing Rock and Cheyenne River Sioux tribes to halt construction of the last section of the Dakota Access pipeline pending the outcomes of their lawsuit to stop the project. The tribes say that section of the pipeline, which will pass under Lake Oahe, a large Missouri River reservoir, will threaten their water supply, sacred sites and religious rights. The judge is expected to rule this week.

The march Friday will begin at the Army Corps of Engineers office because the agency manages the Missouri River and last month gave the pipeline developer, Texas-based Energy Transfer Partners, permission to finish the project. The company expects to wrap up the work and have oil flowing this month.

The two tribes feel they weren't properly consulted about the pipeline route, which the government disputes. They also maintain their treaty rights were violated when the government changed its mind about conducting further environmental studies of the Lake Oahe crossing after President Donald Trump took office in January.

"This fight against the Dakota Access pipeline has been the tip of the spear of a powerful global movement calling for the United States government and Donald Trump to respect indigenous nations and people in our right to water, land, sovereignty, and culture," said Dallas Goldtooth, an organizer with the Indigenous Environmental Network.

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

Monday's Scores **By The Associated Press**

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Region 1AA State Qualifier

Brandon Valley 57, Watertown 37

Sioux Falls Roosevelt 38, Sioux Falls Lincoln 36

Region 2AA State Qualifier

Pierre 91, Douglas 46

Rapid City Central 45, Mitchell 20

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Omaha dominates IUPUI 90-62; heads to Summit championship

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Mitchell Hahn scored 21 points with 10 rebounds and Tre'Shawn Thurman had 15 points and 12 boards and Omaha blitzed IUPUI 90-62 Monday night and advanced to the Summit League Tournament's championship game on Tuesday.

Tra-Deon Hollins added 19 points and Zach Jackson had 11 and the Mavericks posted a 50-34 rebounding advantage.

Thurman's jumper with 16:22 left in the first half gave Omaha (18-13) the lead for good as the Mavericks raced to a 16-7 lead. IUPUI narrowed the deficit to 16-11 with T.J. Henderson's jumper, but Omaha went on a 13-3 run and never looked back, building a 42-18 lead at halftime.

IUPUI shot 8 for 27 (29.6 percent), missed all 11 of its 3-point attempts and committed 11 turnovers, while Omaha shot 17 for 34, before intermission. Hahn's jumper with 12:20 left gave Omaha a 64-34 lead. The Mavericks have won five in a row.

Darrell Combs led IUPUI with 22 points.

S Dakota State in Summit finals with win over S Dakota

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Michael Orris scored 20 points and hit a go-ahead jumper with two seconds left, and fourth-seeded South Dakota State beat top-seeded South Dakota 74-71 in Monday night's Summit League Tournament semifinal.

South Dakota State (17-16) will face either third-seeded Omaha or No. 7 seed IUPUI in Tuesday's championship game.

South Dakota's Tyler Peterson missed a free throw, Mike Daum got the rebound and fed Orris, who hit a jumper to make it 72-71 with two seconds left. South Dakota's inbounds pass went out of bounds on the next possession, Reed Tellinghuisen was fouled, and he iced it with two from the line.

The Jackrabbits closed to 56-50 in the second half on Daum's layup, then tied it at 65 on Tellinghuisen's free throw with 3:58 left. Matt Mooney's 3 put the Coyotes up 71-68 with 34 seconds to go, but Daum made two free throws to close to 71-70.

Daum scored 18 points, Tellinghuisen had 16, and Chris Howell 11 for the Jackrabbits, who made 22 of 28 free throws to the Coyotes' 9 of 15.

Mooney tied his career best with 30 for South Dakota (22-11), which led 44-33 at halftime.

South Dakota lawmakers send gun bills to unfriendly governor

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Senate lawmakers approved bills Monday that would allow guns in the state Capitol and let people carry concealed handguns without a permit despite Gov. Dennis Daugaard's threat to veto both proposals.

Daugaard's opposition is a steep obstacle for lawmakers pushing the bills, neither of which received the two-thirds support required for a potential veto override.

The Senate voted 19-15 to send the Capitol carry bill to the governor's desk. It would allow people who have an enhanced permit to bring concealed handguns into the Capitol if they register beforehand with security.

In 2016, 1,460 new enhanced permits were issued. Republican Sen. Jim Stalzer, the bill's main Senate sponsor, said most active shooter situations occur in gun-free zones such as the state Capitol.

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.

The chamber also voted 23-11 to allow people who can legally carry a concealed handgun in South Dakota to do so without a permit. Right now, it's a misdemeanor for someone to carry a concealed pistol or to have one concealed in a vehicle without a permit.

Daugaard has praised South Dakota's "reasonable" gun laws, saying that some states are much more

restrictive.

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.

North Dakota highway closed by pipeline protests may reopen

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — Officials say a North Dakota highway may reopen soon after being closed by months of protests over the Dakota Access oil pipeline.

Authorities on Monday outlined conditions for a phased reopening of state Highway 1806 north of Cannon Ball. A bridge on the highway has been closed since being damaged by fires in October.

Among the conditions are that the highway is cleaned and debris removed, and that there is no threat from protesters to block the highway. Those conditions must be met by next Monday.

The North Dakota Department of Transportation completed its initial repair work to the Backwater Bridge last month.

Opponents contend the \$3.8 billion, four-state pipeline might pollute water and damage Native American artifacts. Dallas-based developer Energy Transfer Partners says the pipeline will be safe.

Senate approves bill to allow concealed carry without permit

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

The chamber voted 23-11 to send the bill to GOP Gov. Dennis Daugaard, who has threatened to veto it. Republican Sen. Brock Greenfield, the bill's main Senate sponsor, says he's trying to improve the process for law-abiding citizens.

It's currently a misdemeanor for someone to carry a concealed pistol or to have one concealed in a vehicle without a permit.

The governor's opposition means trouble for the proposal, which didn't receive the two-thirds support required for a potential veto override. Daugaard says South Dakota's gun laws are reasonable.

At the end of February, there were 92,850 active regular and enhanced permits in South Dakota.

South Dakota deer management plan ready for public comments

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — An official for the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department says the long-awaited deer management plan will soon be opened to public comments.

During a meeting held Friday, Terrestrial Wildlife Chief Tom Kirschenmann told the GF&P Commission that the department staff has been working to create the more than 400 page plan for almost two years.

The management plan will be used to provide GF&P staff with guidelines when making management recommendations.

Kirschenmann said specific recommendations concerning how deer hunting licenses should be allocated aren't included in the drafted management plan.

He said the department leadership came to the conclusion that decisions regarding how licenses are assigned to hunters should be left up to the commission. The plan will call for separate discussions about the hunting license allocation process.

The GF&P Commission will hold a public comment session during its April 6 and 7 meeting, the Pierre Capital Journal (<http://bit.ly/2mb13xU>) reported.

In May, the plan could be ready for final adoption.

Vikings: Longtime LB Chad Greenway to announce retirement

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. (AP) — After 11 seasons, 1,334 tackles, two Pro Bowls and an incalculable amount of work in the community, longtime Minnesota Vikings linebacker Chad Greenway has decided to retire.

Greenway will hold a news conference on Tuesday to make his announcement official, the Vikings announced on Monday. The 34-year-old leaves the Vikings as the fourth-leading tackler in franchise history, no small task for a team that prides itself on defense.

The native of Mount Vernon, South Dakota was a star linebacker at Iowa before becoming the first pick made under the guidance of owners Zygi and Mark Wilf.

Greenway played in 156 games and made 144 starts after the Vikings chose him with the 17th selection in the first round of the 2006 draft. He missed his entire rookie season with a knee injury, but rebounded to become a team leader in the locker room and one of the most dependable players on the defense.

He was voted the team's defensive MVP three times and is tied with middle linebacker Scott Studwell for most consecutive seasons leading the team in tackles with six.

Greenway and his wife Jennifer quickly established themselves as pillars in the community, creating the Lead The Way Foundation to address education and health needs for children. Greenway won the Vikings Community Man of the Year award four times. Only Matt Birk won the honor more often in team history.

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

Panel passes bill on investigations of officials, candidates

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Lawmakers are weighing a plan that would define the process through which South Dakota candidates and officials could be investigated for misconduct.

The House State Affairs Committee voted Monday to approve the bill. It comes after lawmakers recently repealed a voter-imposed government ethics overhaul.

The bill says that the secretary of state could refer campaign finance complaints to state authorities or commence contested case proceedings.

Under the plan, people could make allegations including fraud by officials and bribery in public office to the state Division of Criminal Investigation.

The division could forward the complaint for prosecution. The agency could also bring the matter to a legislative oversight panel for review if it dealt with legislators, to the secretary of state for candidates or a judicial qualifications commission for judicial officers.

House committee advances governor's protest legislation

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A state House panel has approved a scaled-down version of Gov. Dennis Daugaard's public safety bill preparing for potential oil pipeline protests in South Dakota.

The House State Affairs Committee advanced the plan Monday to the chamber's floor. The bill would make it a Class 1 misdemeanor for someone to stand in the highway to stop traffic or to enter a posted emergency area.

Under some circumstances, it would allow the commissioner of school and public lands, at the request of the governor and local sheriff, to block any group larger than 20 people from gathering on land under the office's supervision.

Supporters say the bill is necessary to deter violent protests such as those over the Dakota Access pipeline in North Dakota. Opponents argue that it could target Native Americans.

Man convicted of kidnapping, meth robbery

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — A man convicted of robbery and kidnapping in order to get some methamphetamine will be sentenced in May in Davison County.

Twenty-seven-year-old Ryan Bruguier has been convicted of second-degree kidnapping and first-degree robbery following a two-day jury trial.

Bruguier was accused of trapping a man inside an apartment in Mitchell last July and forcibly stealing meth from him. The Daily Republic (<http://bit.ly/2lOr9oz>) says a second man involved in the incident, Dustin Mauhl, earlier pleaded guilty to first-degree robbery and will be sentenced next month.

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

Avalanche strikes French ski resort of Tignes; no fatalities

By SAMUEL PETREQUIN, Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Skiers caught up in an avalanche that struck a resort in the French Alps on Tuesday are all safe, and rescuers ended a large search and rescue operation without finding any victims.

An official with the regional administration, or prefecture, said a couple of hours after the avalanche at the Tignes resort that the operation was called off. The resort's press service confirmed there were no casualties.

The avalanche struck at 9:50 a.m. (0850 GMT; 3:50 a.m. EST) on the La Carline ski slope, prompting the resort to shut down. French media earlier reported that several skiers were caught in the avalanche.

"Several skiers were knocked around and taken care of by resort employees," the resort's press service later said in a statement. "No casualties were reported."

According to the statement, the avalanche started on the Grande Balme off-piste section, and then swept across La Carline slope.

TV footage of the resort showed bad weather conditions and poor visibility on the slopes. Weather services had warned Monday of a high avalanche risk in mountain ranges because of recent snowfall and strong winds. The risk in Tignes is currently four on a scale of five, but the resort said parts of the ski area would remain open.

Four snowboarders died last month in another avalanche near the same resort. On Jan. 18, a devastating avalanche buried a hotel in central Italy, killing 29 people.

US moves parts of controversial missile defense to SKorea

By KIM TONG-HYUNG, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — U.S. missile launchers and other equipment needed to set up a controversial missile defense system have arrived in South Korea, the U.S. and South Korean militaries said Tuesday, a day after North Korea test-launched four ballistic missiles into the ocean near Japan.

The plans to deploy the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense system, or THAAD, within this year have angered not only North Korea, but also China and Russia, which see the system's powerful radars as a security threat.

China responded quickly, saying it will take "necessary measures" to protect itself and warning that the U.S. and South Korea should be prepared to bear the consequences.

Washington and Seoul say the system is defensive and not meant to be a threat to Beijing or Moscow. The U.S. military said in a statement that THAAD can intercept and destroy short and medium range ballistic missiles during the last part of their flights.

"Continued provocative actions by North Korea, to include yesterday's launch of multiple missiles, only confirm the prudence of our alliance decision last year to deploy THAAD to South Korea," Adm. Harry Harris, head of the U.S. Pacific Command, said in the statement.

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Some South Korean liberal presidential candidates have said that the security benefits of having THAAD would be curtailed by worsened relations with neighbors China and Russia.

"China firmly opposes the deployment of THAAD," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said at a regular briefing Tuesday. "We will definitely be taking necessary measures to safeguard our own security interest. All consequences entailed from that will be borne by the U.S. and (South Korea). We once again strongly urge the relevant sides to stop the process of deployment and refrain from going further down that wrong path."

China's condemnation of South Korea's plans to deploy THAAD has triggered protests against a South Korean retail giant, Lotte, which agreed to provide one of its golf courses in southern South Korea as the site of THAAD. The South Korean government also raised concerns about a reported ban on Chinese tour groups visiting the country.

On Tuesday, China's Global Times, an outspoken nationalist tabloid published by the ruling Communist Party's flagship People's Daily, criticized North Korea over the missiles.

"By firing four missiles at once this time, the military confrontation between Pyongyang, Seoul and Washington escalates a notch," the paper said. "Noticeably, the Chinese public is angry that Pyongyang's nuclear program has provided an excuse for Seoul to deploy THAAD."

An official from South Korea's Defense Ministry, who didn't want to be named, citing office rules, said that the equipment that arrived in South Korea included launchers, but didn't confirm how many.

While South Korea's media speculate that the THAAD deployment could be completed by as early as April, the ministry official couldn't confirm those reports. The official said that the plan was to have the system operational as soon as possible.

On Monday, North Korea fired four ballistic missiles in an apparent protest against ongoing U.S.-South Korean military drills that it views as an invasion rehearsal. The missiles flew about 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) on average, three of them landing in waters that Japan claims as its exclusive economic zone, according to South Korean and Japanese officials.

The North's state media on Tuesday said leader Kim Jong Un supervised a ballistic rocket launching drill, a likely reference to the four launches reported by Seoul and Tokyo. Involved in the drills were artillery units tasked with striking "U.S. imperialist aggressor forces in Japan," according to the Korean Central News Agency.

There was pride and defiance among the elite citizens who live in North Korea's showcase capital, Pyongyang.

"If the U.S. imperialists and their South Korean puppets shoot even just one spark into our sovereign territory, we will completely destroy those aggressors, without any mercy, with our invincible Hwasong artillery, which are loaded with nuclear warheads," Sim Chol Su, echoing the propaganda often found in state media, told The Associated Press.

North Korea uses "Hwasong" to describe a broad range of its ballistic missiles, including Scuds and the mid-range missiles that are referred to as Rodong and Musudan by outside analysts.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said that the missiles fired by the North were believed to be "improved versions" of Scud missiles. South Korean experts say North Korea's extended-range Scuds and mid-range Rodong missiles are capable of hitting Japan, including U.S. military bases in Okinawa.

Kim "ordered the KPA (Korean People's Army) Strategic Force to keep highly alert as required by the grim situation in which an actual war may break out anytime," a KCNA dispatch said.

Associated Press writers Chris Bodeen and Gillian Wong in Beijing contributed to this report.

Iraqi forces storm Mosul government complex, hoist flag

By **SUSANNAH GEORGE** and **SINAN SALAHEDDIN**, Associated Press

MOSUL, Iraq (AP) — U.S.-backed Iraqi forces were fighting their way through a government complex in the heart of western Mosul after storming the buildings in an overnight raid, and were facing fierce counterattacks Tuesday from the Islamic State group.

According to Lt. Gen. Abdul-Amir Rasheed Yar Allah, the troops hoisted an Iraqi flag on the complex of buildings in the Dawasa neighborhood earlier in the morning, hailing the federal police units behind the taking of the area as heroes.

By noon, troops on the ground said the complex has not yet been secured and that they are battling a wave of intense IS counterattacks.

Sgt. Azam Ibrahim of the federal police was one of the first troops to storm the Mosul government complex. His unit then pulled back to a base on the edge of Mosul's Tayran neighborhood, saying the clashes were still underway at the complex later Tuesday.

"We were pulled back because we had killed and wounded," Ibrahim told The Associated Press. "The (Iraqi) forces there are surrounded, the Humvees cannot reach them, nor can the ambulances."

The consistent advance — more than two weeks since the new push started to clear Mosul's western side of IS militants — has been a major blow to the extremists who once controlled nearly a third of Iraq.

Iraqi forces declared eastern Mosul "fully liberated" in January after officially launching the operation to retake the city in October

Yar Allah, who commands the army operations in Ninevah, where Mosul is the provincial capital, said the troops now also control the western side of a second bridge across the Tigris River, known as Hurriyah Bridge.

Last week, the troops reached the first bridge from the south in western Mosul, known locally as the 4th Bridge. U.S.-led airstrikes disabled all of Mosul's five bridges last year in a bid to isolate the militants.

Hours after announcing Tuesday's advance, Iraqi state TV said Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi visited the troops in Mosul. Al-Abadi was shown descending from a military plane at the city's airport and meeting with senior military officers. It was unclear if al-Abadi visited the western part of Mosul.

Private broadcaster Lebanon-based Al-Mayadeen aired live footage from inside western Mosul, with thick black smokes rising from different areas as gunfire rattled. The TV footage also showed what it said were explosions from two suicide attacks carried out by IS militants against the security forces.

The footage also shows the city's iconic 840-year-old "Crooked Minaret," which leans somewhat like Italy's Tower of Pisa.

Unlike other heritage and archaeological sites in and around Mosul, the Islamic State militants couldn't destroy it as residents formed a human chain around it to protect it when they came to blow it up.

Meanwhile on Tuesday, the United Nations said that by Sunday, it had registered that about 42,000 people fled their homes in western Mosul since the start of the operation last month. The U.N. Office for Humanitarian Coordination, OCHA, said in a statement that 13,350 people fled to government-run areas in one day alone.

The troops expect to encounter far more fleeing civilians once they enter deeper into the more densely populated part of the city. The U.N. estimates that about 750,000 civilians are still trapped in their houses in Mosul's western side.

Mosul is Iraq's second-largest city, and its western half — the Tigris divides the city into an eastern and a western sections — is the last significant urban area held by IS in the country. Mosul fell to IS in the summer of 2014, along with large swaths of northern and western Iraq.

Salaheddin reported from Baghdad

Top Trump security adviser faces questions in rare hearing

By RICHARD LARDNER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The senior Army officer tapped by President Donald Trump to be his national security adviser faces questions from senators during a rare closed-door meeting amid intense scrutiny of the White House for alleged Trump campaign contacts with Russian officials.

Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster's appearance before the Armed Services Committee, slated for Tuesday, is unusual because national security advisers aren't subject to Senate confirmation and typically don't testify on Capitol Hill. But McMaster's situation is different. He elected to stay on active duty rather than retire from the military and generals of his grade need the chamber's approval when they're promoted or get new assignments.

Sen. John McCain of Arizona, the committee's Republican chairman, said members will vote at the end of session on whether to recommend to the full Senate that McMaster retain his three-star rank.

McCain said Democrats on the committee and even a few Republican members wanted McMaster to appear before the panel. But McCain, who called McMaster an outstanding choice, sought to cast the session as more collegial than a normal committee hearing.

"It's not like testimony," McCain said. "It's more of a meeting than a hearing."

Independent-minded and outspoken, McMaster is highly regarded by Democrats and Republicans. Yet he'll meet with the committee at an especially sensitive time for the embattled Trump White House. The House and Senate intelligence committees, and separately the FBI, are investigating contacts between Trump's campaign and Russian officials, as well as allegations that Moscow meddled in the 2016 election.

Over the weekend, Trump ignited a firestorm by alleging, without evidence, that former President Barack Obama tapped the Trump campaign's telephones during the presidential election campaign. The president and his aides want Congress to expand the scope of their Russia inquiries to include Obama's potential abuse of his executive powers. Obama has denied Trump's allegation.

Trump selected McMaster last month after he fired the general's predecessor, Michael Flynn, for misleading Vice President Mike Pence about whether he and Moscow's top diplomat in Washington had discussed U.S. sanctions against Russia in a telephone call.

In the wake of Flynn's departure, McMaster may be asked by senators about the inner workings of the National Security Council staff, which he will oversee. Sean Spicer, the White House press secretary, said Trump promised McMaster "100 percent control." That pledge could lead to tension with Stephen Bannon, the president's chief strategist, who operates a shadowy "strategic initiatives group" that runs parallel to the NSC.

Bannon also has a seat on the NSC's principals committee in a restructuring that puts him on equal footing with Trump Cabinet members such as Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson. The shift also downgraded the role of Marine Corps Gen. Joseph Dunford, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, according to Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island, the top Democrat on the Armed Services Committee.

"It's not just Bannon's presence," said Reed, who's referred to Trump's strategist as a political operative. "I think there will be a whole range of questions."

McMaster is the first active-duty officer to serve as national security adviser since Colin Powell, then a three-star Army general, assumed the job during President Ronald Reagan's final two years in office.

The Armed Services Committee did not insist that Powell appear before the panel, but members openly discussed the pros and cons of naming an active-duty officer to serve in the job, according to the record of a Dec. 15, 1987 meeting.

Former Sen. Sam Nunn, the Georgia Democrat who chaired the committee, backed Powell but cautioned that installing a general or admiral in the post could lead to an "inherent conflict." The officer reports directly to the president, Nunn said, but is dependent upon one single, powerful federal agency — the Defense Department — for his pay and professional future.

But McCain, then a member of the Armed Services Committee, noted that the Constitution allows the

president to appoint "whomsoever he wishes from whatever walk of life."

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

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. GOP BILL UNLIKELY TO SETTLE HEALTH CARE DEBATE

With Republicans now controlling the White House and Congress, the bill would drive government policy down routes long advocated by conservatives.

2. 'I UNDERSTAND WHY PEOPLE HAVE THE OPINIONS THAT THEY DO'

In a series of exclusive interviews with the AP, Casey Anthony — the Florida woman acquitted in 2011 of killing her toddler — says the last time she saw 2-year-old Caylee she "believed that she was alive and that she was going to be OK."

3. US MOVES PARTS OF MISSILE DEFENSE TO SOUTH KOREA

The plans to deploy the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense system, or THAAD, anger not only North Korea, but also China and Russia, which see the system's powerful radars as a security threat.

4. TRUMP'S NEW TRAVEL BAN NOT AS CHAOTIC

The new order bars new visas for people from Iran, Syria, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen and Libya, and temporarily shuts down America's refugee program.

5. WHAT NATIONAL FACE OF TRANSGENDER FIGHT IS SAYING

Gavin Grimm, 17, says the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to back out of a lawsuit over transgender students' bathroom access is a disappointment that will keep transgender children in limbo.

6. TOP TRUMP SECURITY ADVISER SLATED FOR RARE HEARING

Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster will face questions from senators during a closed-door meeting amid scrutiny of the White House for alleged contacts with Russian officials.

7. WHO IS HOLDING A SURPRISE MEETING

Turkish, U.S. and Russian chiefs of military staff are meeting in southern Turkey to discuss developments in northern Syria and Iraq.

8. REPORT: EXONERATIONS IN US UP AGAIN IN 2016

More than half of those wrongfully convicted were involved in cases in which it was later determined no crime occurred, the National Registry of Exonerations found.

9. WHERE BEING CHEESY IS PROFITABLE

The publicity for winning this year's U.S. Championship Cheese Contest in Wisconsin is sure to lead to a spike in sales for cheesemakers.

10. CAVS STAR REVEALS SENSITIVE SIDE

LeBron James says he cries during some movies and apologizes to his wife for sometimes losing sight of his family's role in his quest for NBA greatness.

Transgender Virginia student: Ruling leaves kids in limbo

By SARAH RANKIN and MARK SHERMAN, Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — The U.S. Supreme Court's decision to back out of a lawsuit over transgender students' bathroom access is a disappointment that will keep transgender children in limbo, said 17-year-old plaintiff Gavin Grimm, who's become a national face of the issue.

But Grimm, who sued his eastern Virginia school district to be able to use the boys' bathroom, said Monday that he's ready to keep up his fight.

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"I am still as passionate and as happy to be doing this as ever," he said. "I think everyone is just as empowered and ready for it as we've always been. And if it took 10 years, I'd stick with it."

Grimm spoke to reporters hours after the justices issued a one-sentence order handing his case back to a Richmond appeals court without reaching a decision. That means attention now will turn to the Richmond court and other appellate panels around the country that are grappling with rights of transgender students to use school bathrooms that correspond to their chosen gender, not the one assigned at birth.

A high school senior, Grimm likely won't see the issue settled before he graduates, but he said he accepted that long ago.

"I already knew that the decision wouldn't be handed down until after my senior year anyway. ... For me it's more about the impact it could have on trans kids who come after me," he said.

Grimm said the order will "drag this conversation out," leaving school-age kids "in limbo for an extended period of time."

"It's not just about bathrooms but the rights for trans people to exist in public spaces. . If you had to plan your day around not having a bathroom in public, what kind of nightmare would that be?" he said, adding it's "not feasible to keep trans people out of restrooms."

Grimm's case had been scheduled for argument in late March. Now, the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals will be tasked with evaluating the federal law known as Title IX and the extent to which it applies to transgender students. Lawsuits involving transgender students are making their way through the courts in at least five other states: Illinois, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Joshua Block, an American Civil Liberties Union attorney who represents Grimm, said he remains convinced that courts ultimately will side with transgender students.

"Title IX means the same thing today as it meant yesterday. Lower courts already have held that it protects trans kids," he said.

In a statement relayed by school board lawyer Kyle Duncan, the board said it "looks forward to explaining why its commonsense restroom and locker room policy is legal under the Constitution and federal law."

The Supreme Court's action follows the Trump administration's recent decision to withdraw a directive issued during Barack Obama's presidency that said which bathroom to use should be based on students' gender identity.

The administration action triggered legal wrangling that ended with Monday's order. In essence, the federal appeals court in Richmond, Virginia, had relied on the Obama administration's interpretation of Title IX to side with Grimm. The appeals court accepted the administration's reading of the law without deciding for itself what the law and a related regulation on same-sex bathrooms and locker rooms mean.

No appeals court has yet undertaken that more independent analysis, and the Supreme Court typically is reluctant to do so without at least one appellate opinion to review, and usually more than one.

Another possible explanation for Monday's order is that the court might want more of a societal consensus to develop before it issues a ruling in favor of transgender rights, said John Neiman, an Alabama lawyer who served as a law clerk to Justice Anthony Kennedy.

The court's reluctance to take on transgender rights now may have been underscored by the high court vacancy caused by the death of Justice Antonin Scalia nearly 13 months ago and the refusal of Senate Republicans to consider Obama's nomination of Judge Merrick Garland to fill the seat. Eleven days after taking office, President Donald Trump nominated Judge Neil Gorsuch for the court.

Ahead of the scheduled Supreme Court arguments, Grimm's case drew attention from all over the world. Apple, IBM and Microsoft were among the 53 companies that signed onto a brief filed last week urging the court to rule in his favor. He's been profiled in national media and made an appearance on "The View." At the Grammy Awards last month, actress and transgender rights advocate Laverne Cox told the audience to "please google 'Gavin Grimm.'"

He said Monday that he'd been overwhelmed by the "incredible" support, especially from the technology companies. "You know, I'm a teenager, I like my tech," he joked.

Being in the spotlight has been stressful, he said.

"But it's been worth it," Grimm said. "I think that it's absolutely all worth it."

Associated Press writer Ben Finley in Norfolk, Virginia, contributed to this report. Sherman reported from Washington.

North Korea, Malaysia ban each other's citizens from leaving

By EILEEN NG, Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — North Korea barred Malaysians from exiting its borders and Malaysia followed suit Tuesday, turning ordinary citizens into pawns in the diplomatic battle surrounding the investigation into the bizarre death of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's half brother.

The tit-for-tat directives come as relations between the two countries disintegrate over the poisoning of Kim Jong Nam in a crowded airport terminal in Kuala Lumpur on Feb. 13.

"This is way out of normal diplomatic practice," Lalit Mansingh, a New Delhi-based scholar and longtime top Indian diplomat, said of North Korea's decision. He could not recall anything similar in recent years, where so many everyday citizens were pulled into a diplomatic standoff.

Although there is growing speculation that North Korea orchestrated the attack, Malaysia has never directly accused Pyongyang. Still, North Korea has slammed the investigation as flawed and called into question Malaysia's autopsy report that found VX nerve agent — a banned chemical weapon — killed Kim.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency said Tuesday that Pyongyang was banning Malaysians from leaving the country "until the safety of the diplomats and citizens of (North Korea) in Malaysia is fully guaranteed through the fair settlement of the case that occurred in Malaysia."

Malaysia is looking for seven North Korean suspects. Three of them, including an official at the North Korean Embassy, are believed to still be in Malaysia. Khalid Abu Bakar, Malaysia's national police chief, said the three are probably holed up inside the embassy.

"We will not raid the embassy," Khalid said. "... We will wait. We will wait, and if it takes five years we will wait outside. Definitely somebody will come out."

Soon after North Korea announced its travel ban, Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak issued a strong condemnation and said he was barring North Koreans from leaving.

"This abhorrent act, effectively holding our citizens hostage, is in total disregard of all international law and diplomatic norms," Najib said in a statement.

"I have also instructed the Inspector General of Police to prevent all North Korean citizens in Malaysia from leaving the country until we are assured of the safety and security of all Malaysians in North Korea," he said.

Malaysian officials had initially said the ban would affect only North Korean Embassy staff and officials, but later expanded it to include all North Koreans. Police briefly cordoned off access to the embassy.

About 1,000 North Koreans are believed to be working in Malaysia. Before diplomatic ties broke down, Malaysia had 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 North Koreans looking for jobs, schools and business deals.

Malaysian Deputy Foreign Minister Reezal Marican told reporters at parliament that there were 11 Malaysians in North Korea: three working at the Malaysian Embassy, two United Nations workers and six family members.

North Korea said Malaysian diplomats and citizens "may work and live normally under the same conditions and circumstances as before" during the period of the temporary exit ban.

It also said that the Malaysian ambassador would be expelled, although he has already been recalled to Malaysia.

Malaysia's finding that the nerve agent VX killed Kim boosted speculation that North Korea was behind the attack. Experts say the oily poison was almost certainly produced in a sophisticated state weapons laboratory, and North Korea is widely believed to possess large quantities of chemical weapons, including VX.

The attack was caught on grainy surveillance camera footage that showed two women going up behind Kim as he waited for a flight and wiping something across his face. According to Malaysian investigators,

the substance was VX and Kim was dead within 20 minutes.

The women, one from Vietnam and the other from Indonesia, have been charged with murder. Both say they were duped into thinking they were playing a harmless prank.

North Korea has not acknowledged that the victim is Kim Jong Nam or a relative of Kim Jong Un. Instead, it refers to him as Kim Chol, the name on the diplomatic passport he was carrying when he died.

Custody of the body has become a flashpoint. Malaysia says it needs to conduct DNA tests to formally identify the body, but North Korea says it has no right to keep the body of a North Korean citizen.

Kim, who was in his mid-40s, had lived abroad for years and was estranged from his younger half brother, the North Korean ruler.

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

GOP bill unlikely to settle passionate health care debate

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR and ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The nation's passionate debate about the role of government in providing health care for citizens and paying the costs is unlikely to be settled by the legislation newly revealed by House Republicans.

With Republicans now controlling the White House and both chambers of Congress, the bill would drive government policy down routes long advocated by conservatives. The course correction would take at least two years to get rolling, and probably longer to show definitive results. If it falls short, it would give rise to a fresh set of health care grievances.

The Republican legislation would limit future federal funding for Medicaid, which covers low-income people, about 1 in 5 Americans. And it would loosen rules that former President Barack Obama's law imposed for health plans directly purchased by individuals, while also scaling back insurance subsidies.

Republicans say their solutions would make Medicaid more cost-efficient without punishing the poor and disabled, while spurring private insurers to offer attractive products for the estimated 20 million consumers in the market for individual policies.

But Democrats say the bill would make many people uninsured, shifting costs to states and hospital systems that act as providers of last resort. Individual policy holders might be able to find low-premium plans, only to be exposed to higher deductibles and copayments.

There are no easy answers, said Dan Mendelson, CEO of the consulting firm Avalere Health. "Health care is expensive and it becomes more expensive every year," he said. "Under the GOP plan, it will be more expensive every year just like it was under the Democratic plan."

Nonetheless, he called the Republican proposal a feasible alternative.

Over the next few days, stakeholders will be dissecting the GOP proposal, which may become the second major shift on health care policy in less than a decade. Democratic and Republican governors, hospital executives, physician groups, insurers, drug makers and consumer groups will have their say. The bill will be measured against expansive promises that President Donald Trump made during the campaign.

Trump "made a lot of promises about making sure that people would not lose coverage and that costs would be lower," said Ron Pollack, head of the liberal advocacy group Families USA. "This does the exact opposite of what he has promised."

House committees planned to begin voting on the legislation Wednesday, launching what could be the year's defining battle in Congress and capping seven years of GOP vows to repeal the 2010 Affordable Care Act. It's unclear if Republicans can manage to overcome divisions within their own party and deliver a final product.

The plan would repeal the unpopular "Obamacare" fines on people who don't carry health insurance. It would replace income-based subsidies the law provides to help millions of Americans pay premiums with

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age-based tax credits that may be skimpier for people with low incomes. Those payments would phase out for higher-earning people.

The bill would continue Obama's expansion of Medicaid to additional low-earning Americans until 2020. Beginning then, states adding Medicaid recipients would no longer receive the additional federal funds the statute has provided. Of even greater consequence, total federal Medicaid funding would be limited according to a formula taking into account enrollment and costs in each state.

Republicans said they don't have official coverage estimates yet, but aides from both parties and non-partisan analysts have said they expect those numbers to be lower.

House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., said the bill would "drive down costs, encourage competition, and give every American access to quality, affordable health insurance."

Solid opposition from Democrats is a given. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said, "Republicans have decided that affordable health care should be the privilege of the wealthy, not the right of every family in America."

Senate Finance Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, wouldn't rule out changes by his chamber, where significant numbers of moderate Republicans have expressed concerns that the measure could leave too many voters without coverage.

Thirty-one states and the District of Columbia opted to expand Medicaid coverage under the Obama-era law to an estimated 11 million people. Around half those states have GOP governors, who are largely reluctant to see that spending curtailed.

In another feature that could alienate moderate Republicans, the measure would block for one year federal payments to Planned Parenthood, the women's health organization long opposed by many in the party because it provides abortions.

A series of tax increases used to finance the Obama overhaul's coverage expansion would be repealed as of 2018.

In a last-minute change to satisfy conservative lawmakers, business and unions, Republicans dropped a plan pushed by Ryan to impose a first-ever tax on the most generous employer-provided health plans. Instead, a similar tax imposed by Obama's law on expensive plans set to take effect in 2020 would now begin in 2025.

Popular consumer protections in the Obama law would be retained, such as insurance safeguards for people with pre-existing medical problems, and parents' ability to keep young adult children on their insurance until age 26.

To prod healthier people to buy policies, insurers would boost premiums by 30 percent for consumers who let insurance lapse.

Associated Press writers Mary Clare Jalonick and Andrew Taylor contributed to this report.

Trump's new travel ban comes without the chaos of first one

By ALICIA A. CALDWELL and JILL COLVIN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When President Donald Trump signed his first travel ban with scant warning and little planning seven days into his presidency, he meant to signal he was a man of action. After the lawsuits, chaos at airports and international criticism, Trump's rewritten travel ban sent a different message: The White House has learned some lessons.

The Trump administration's unveiling of its revised restrictions on travel and refugees was deliberate and cautious, an implicit acknowledgement of some of the unforced errors from the first rollout. The executive order was announced by Trump's Cabinet officials, some of whom felt cut out of consultations on the earlier version. It does not go into effect immediately, giving the world time to assess its impact.

The White House took weeks of consultation with agency heads about how best to withstand expected legal challenges.

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The scaled-back order will still face fire from critics. It bars new visas for people from six Muslim-majority countries and temporarily shuts down America's refugee program, affecting would-be visitors and immigrants from Iran, Syria, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen and Libya.

Department of Homeland Security intelligence analysts have questioned the rationale behind it, concluding that citizenship is an "unlikely indicator" of terrorism threats to the United States.

But the new ban does eliminate many of the original order's most contentious elements. It removes Iraq from the list of banned countries — at the urging of U.S. military and diplomatic leaders — and it makes clear that current visa holders will not be impacted. It also removes language that would give priority to religious minorities — a provision some interpreted as a way to help Christians get into the U.S. while excluding Muslims.

Trump signed the order without fanfare in a closed-press ceremony in the Oval Office.

Legal experts say the new order addresses some of the constitutional concerns raised by a federal appeals court about the initial ban but leaves room for more legal challenges.

"It's much clearer about how it doesn't apply to groups of immigrants with more clearly established constitutional rights," said University of Texas law professor Stephen Vladeck. "That's a really important step."

Trump officials say the goal hasn't changed: keeping would-be terrorists out of the United States while the government reviews vetting systems for refugees and visa applicants from certain parts of the world.

"It is the president's solemn duty to protect the American people, and with this order President Trump is exercising his rightful authority to keep our people safe," said Secretary of State Rex Tillerson at a brief press announcement, where he, Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly and Attorney General Jeff Sessions served as the public faces of the rollout.

The original travel ban led to instant chaos at airports as Homeland Security officials scrambled to interpret how it was to be implemented and some travelers were detained before being sent back overseas or blocked from getting on airplanes abroad. The order quickly became the subject of several legal challenges and was put on hold last month by a federal judge in Washington state.

This time, there was none of that chaos. The new order won't take effect until March 16, despite repeated warnings from Trump and his aides that any delay would put national security at risk by allowing the entry of "bad dudes" who want to cause harm to the country.

Press secretary Sean Spicer told reporters at the White House that Trump approved the final details of the revised executive order on Saturday night after meeting with Kelly, Sessions and members of his legal staff and policy team.

Trump's new order reinstates his four-month ban on all refugees from around the world and keeps in place his plan to reduce the number of refugees to be allowed into the United States this budget year to 50,000. Syrians are also no longer subjected to an indefinite ban, despite Trump's insistence as a candidate that they pose a serious security threat.

Lee Gelernt, deputy director of the American Civil Liberties Union's Immigrants' Rights Project, said the group will try to block the new order from taking effect, either by amending the existing lawsuits that blocked Trump's original ban or seeking a new injunction.

"The only way to actually fix the Muslim ban is not to have a Muslim ban," said Omar Jadwat, director of the project.

Washington Attorney General Bob Ferguson, whose state won a court order blocking the travel ban, said the new travel ban is more legally palatable than the old one but that it still poses concerns and could prompt further court challenges from the state.

"Bottom line is the president has capitulated on numerous key provisions that we contested in court about a month ago," Ferguson said at a news conference in his Seattle office. "This is a very significant victory for the people of the state of Washington."

Follow Alicia A. Caldwell on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/acaldwellap> and Jill Colvin at <http://twitter.com/colvinj>

House GOP releases bill replacing Obama health care overhaul

By ALAN FRAM and RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Republicans on Monday released their long-awaited plan for unraveling former President Barack Obama's health care law, a package that would scale back the government's role in helping people afford coverage and likely leave more Americans uninsured.

House committees planned to begin voting on the 123-page legislation Wednesday, launching what could be the year's defining battle in Congress and capping seven years of Republican vows to repeal the 2010 law. Though GOP leaders expect a boost from the backing of the Trump administration, divisions remain and GOP success is not ensured.

The plan would repeal the statute's unpopular fines on people who don't carry health insurance. It would replace income-based subsidies the law provides to help millions of Americans pay premiums with age-based tax credits that may be skimpier for people with low incomes. Those payments would phase out for higher-earning people.

The bill would continue Obama's expansion of Medicaid to additional low-earning Americans until 2020. Beginning then, states adding Medicaid recipients would no longer receive the additional federal funds the statute has provided.

More significantly, Republicans would overhaul the entire federal-state Medicaid program, changing its open-ended federal financing to a limit based on enrollment and costs in each state, a move likely to cause funding cuts.

In perhaps their riskiest political gamble, the plan is expected to cover fewer than the 20 million people insured under Obama's overhaul, including many residents of states carried by President Donald Trump in November's election. Republicans said they were chiefly focused on reducing costs and increasing choice for consumers.

Republicans said they don't have official coverage estimates yet, but aides from both parties and non-partisan analysts have said they expect those numbers to be lower. Trump has said his goal is "insurance for everybody," and numerous GOP governors and members of Congress have demanded that people not lose coverage.

House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., said the bill would "drive down costs, encourage competition, and give every American access to quality, affordable health insurance."

Spokeswoman Caitlin Oakley said Health Secretary Tom Price "welcomes action by the House to end this nightmare for the American people."

Solid Democratic opposition is a given.

"Republicans have decided that affordable health care should be the privilege of the wealthy, not the right of every family in America," said House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif.

More ominously for Republican leaders, there were signals galore that they faced problems within their own party, including from conservatives complaining that the measure is too timid in repealing Obama's law.

"It still looks like Obamacare-lite to me," said Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., one of three Senate conservatives who have criticized the GOP bill. "It's going to have to be better."

The Republican tax credits, ranging from \$2,000 to \$14,000 for families, would be refundable, meaning even people with no tax liability would receive payments. Conservatives say that feature creates a new entitlement program the government cannot afford.

Senate Finance Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, wouldn't rule out changes by his chamber, where moderate Republicans have grumbled that the measure could leave too many voters uncovered.

"We have a right to look it over and see if we like it or don't," Hatch told reporters.

Underscoring those worries, four GOP senators released a letter to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky.

They complained that an earlier, similar draft "does not provide stability and certainty for individuals and families in Medicaid expansion programs." Signing were Sens. Rob Portman of Ohio, Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia, Cory Gardner of Colorado and Alaska's Lisa Murkowski.

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Thirty-one states and the District of Columbia expanded Medicaid coverage to 11 million people and accepted beefed-up federal spending for the program. Around half those states have GOP governors, who are largely reluctant to see that spending curtailed.

In another feature that could alienate moderate Republicans, the measure would block for one year federal payments to Planned Parenthood, long opposed by many in the party because it provides abortions. The bill also bars people from receiving tax credits to help pay premiums for plans that provide abortions.

Republicans said they'd not received official estimates on the bill from the Congressional Budget Office. That nonpartisan office's projections on price tag and coverage could help win over recalcitrant Republicans or make them even harder to persuade.

To prod healthier people to stay covered, insurers would be required to boost premiums by 30 percent for consumers who let insurance lapse.

Tax increases on higher-earning people, the insurance industry and others used to finance the Obama overhaul's coverage expansion would be repealed.

In a last-minute change to satisfy conservatives, business and unions, Republicans dropped a plan pushed by Ryan to impose a first-ever tax on the most generous employer-provided health plans. Instead, a similar tax imposed by Obama's law on expensive plans, set to take effect in 2020, would begin in 2025.

Popular consumer protections in Obama's law would be retained, including insurance safeguards for people with pre-existing medical problems and parents' ability to keep adult children on their insurance until age 26.

Associated Press writers Mary Clare Jalonick and Andrew Taylor contributed to this report.

US moves parts of controversial missile defense to SKorea

By KIM TONG-HYUNG, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — U.S. missile launchers and other equipment needed to set up a controversial missile defense system have arrived in South Korea, the U.S. and South Korean militaries said Tuesday, a day after North Korea test-launched four ballistic missiles into the ocean near Japan.

The plans to deploy the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense system, or THAAD, within this year have angered not only North Korea, but also China and Russia, which see the system's powerful radars as a security threat.

Washington and Seoul say the system is defensive and not meant to be a threat to Beijing or Moscow.

The U.S. military said in a statement that THAAD is meant to intercept and destroy short and medium range ballistic missiles during the last part of their flights.

"Continued provocative actions by North Korea, to include yesterday's launch of multiple missiles, only confirm the prudence of our alliance decision last year to deploy THAAD to South Korea," Adm. Harry Harris, head of the U.S. Pacific Command, said in the statement.

Some South Korean liberal presidential candidates have said that the security benefits of having THAAD would be curtailed by worsened relations with neighbors China and Russia.

China's condemnation of South Korean plans to deploy THAAD has triggered protests against South Korean retail giant, Lotte, which agreed to provide one of its golf courses in southern South Korea as the site of THAAD. The South Korean government also raised worries about a reported ban on Chinese tour groups visiting the country.

An official from South Korea's Defense Ministry, who didn't want to be named, citing office rules, said that the equipment that arrived in South Korea included launchers, but didn't confirm how many.

While South Korea's media speculates that the THAAD deployment could be completed by as early as April, the ministry official couldn't confirm such reports but said the plan was to have the system operational as soon as possible.

On Monday, North Korea fired four ballistic missiles in an apparent protest against ongoing U.S.-South

Korean military drills that it views as an invasion rehearsal. The missiles flew about 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) on average, three of them landing in waters that Japan claims as its exclusive economic zone, according to South Korean and Japanese officials.

The North's state media on Tuesday said leader Kim Jong Un supervised a ballistic rocket launching drill, a likely reference to the four launches reported by Seoul and Tokyo. Involved in the drills were artillery units tasked with striking "U.S. imperialist aggressor forces in Japan," according to the Korean Central News Agency.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said that the missiles fired by the North were believed to be "improved versions" of Scud missiles. South Korean experts say North Korea's extended-range Scuds and mid-range Rodong missiles are capable of hitting Japan, including U.S. military bases in Okinawa.

Kim "ordered the KPA (Korean People's Army) Strategic Force to keep highly alert as required by the grim situation in which an actual war may break out anytime," a KCNA dispatch said.

As president, Trump seeks answers on his own wiretap mystery

By ERIC TUCKER and EILEEN SULLIVAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — If Donald Trump wants to know whether he was the subject of surveillance by the U.S. government, he may be uniquely positioned to get an answer.

In a series of weekend tweets, the president accused his predecessor, Barack Obama, of ordering wiretaps on his phones but offered no proof to back the claim. The White House then called on Congress to investigate the allegations.

But former government lawyers say Trump hardly needs Congress to answer this question.

"The intelligence community works for the president, so if a president wanted to know whether surveillance had been conducted on a particular target, all he'd have to do is ask," said Todd Hinnen, head of the Justice Department's National Security Division during the Obama administration and a National Security Council staff member under George W. Bush.

The latest storm began Saturday when Trump tweeted: "Is it legal for a sitting President to be 'wire tapping' a race for president prior to an election? Turned down by court earlier. A NEW LOW!" He followed up with: "How low has President Obama gone to tapp my phones during the very sacred election process. This is Nixon/Watergate. Bad (or sick) guy!"

The Justice Department, not the president, would have the authority to conduct such surveillance, and officials have not confirmed any such action. Through a spokesman, Obama said neither he nor any White House official had ever ordered surveillance on any U.S. citizen. Obama's top intelligence official, James Clapper, also said Trump's claims were false, and a U.S. official said the FBI asked the Justice Department to rebut Trump's assertions.

Why turn to Congress, Trump spokesman Sean Spicer was asked Monday.

"My understanding is that the president directing the Department of Justice to do something with respect to an investigation that may or may not occur with evidence may be seen as trying to interfere," Spicer said. "And I think that we're trying to do this in the proper way."

He indicated that Trump was responding to media reports rather than any word from the intelligence community. Other officials have suggested the president was acting on other information.

Sen. John McCain, chairman of the Armed Services Committee, said Monday that Trump needs to give more information to the American people and Congress about his wiretapping accusations. "The dimensions of this are huge," McCain said. "It's accusing a former president of the United States of violating the law. That's never happened before."

As for the genesis of a possible wiretap, it is possible the president was referring to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, a 1978 law that permits investigators, with a warrant, to collect the communications of someone they suspect of being an agent of a foreign power. That can include foreign ambassadors or other foreign officials who operate in the U.S. whose communications are monitored as a matter of routine for counterintelligence purposes.

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The warrant application process is done in secret in a classified process. But, as president, Trump has the authority to declassify anything. And were such a warrant to exist, he could theoretically move to make it public as well.

If the president demands to know what happened, "the Justice Department can decide what's appropriate to share and what's not," said Amy Jeffress, another former Obama administration national security lawyer.

The Justice Department applies for the warrants in a one-sided process before judges of the secretive Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court. Permission is granted if a judge agrees that there's probable cause that the target is an agent of a foreign power. Though the standard is a high bar to meet, applications are hardly ever denied.

Targets of wiretaps are not alerted that their communications are being recorded. Defendants later charged in the criminal justice system may ultimately learn the government intends to use at trial evidence collected through a FISA warrant, but they are not presented with the actual application for a warrant.

"Unfortunately, the public has never seen an actual FISA application over nearly 40 years, so we don't know exactly how the FISA Court has applied or interpreted the probable cause standard in this context," Patrick Toomey, an American Civil Liberties Union staff attorney specializing in national security, said in an email.

Trump also could have been referring to wiretapping authorized under the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968. The Justice Department can obtain a warrant for that surveillance by convincing a judge that there's probable cause to believe the target has committed or is committing a crime.

The White House turned Sunday to Congress — which is already investigating ties between Trump associates and Russians — for help finding evidence to support his assertions. Some Republicans seemed inclined to try to help Trump get answers.

For Congress, getting to the bottom of this should not be difficult, said Dan Jones, a former Senate investigator and currently president of the Penn Quarter Research and Investigations Group.

"It's a knowable, 'yes or no,'" Jones said. If the answer is there was no such warrant, he said, the next step would be to ask the president why he made the claim. "That information would then be investigated to find out if it's right or wrong."

Associated Press Writer Jill Colvin contributed to this story.

Missile tests add pressure on Trump over North Korea

By MATTHEW PENNINGTON, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — North Korea's latest volley of missile tests put new pressure on a preoccupied Trump administration Monday to identify how it will counter leader Kim Jong Un's weapons development.

North Korea's march toward having a nuclear-tipped missile that could reach the U.S. mainland is among the pressing national security priorities President Donald Trump faces. He has vowed it "won't happen" but has yet to articulate a strategy to stop it.

Trump spoke Monday with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and South Korean Acting President Hwang Kyo-Ahn. The White House said the three leaders agreed "to continue close bilateral and trilateral cooperation to demonstrate to North Korea that there are very dire consequences for its provocative and threatening actions."

A wide array of options are on the table, but aggressive behavior by Pyongyang in response to U.S.-South Korean military drills that began last week could further shrink chances for diplomatic engagement.

Upheaval in the administration has added to uncertainty in foreign capitals about how Trump's "America First" mantra will translate into foreign policy, and how a new president with no prior experience in government might handle a security crisis.

An administration official told The Associated Press Monday that tougher sanctions, military action and resumption of long-stalled negotiations with North Korea are all under consideration as part of a policy

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review to provide options for the president within weeks.

The official, who demanded anonymity to discuss the private deliberations, did not anticipate an immediate U.S. response to the North's test-firing of four banned ballistic missiles Monday that South Korean and Japanese officials said flew about 1,000 kilometers (620 miles). Three of the missiles landed in waters that Japan, a close U.S. ally, claims as its exclusive economic zone.

North Korea typically reacts during the annual military drills that it considers an invasion rehearsal, although Washington and Seoul say they are routine.

This year's response could be more heated than usual. Victor Cha, a former White House adviser on Asia, said North Korea tends to up the tempo of missile tests during the drills when relations with the U.S. are bad. And next week, the drills shift from table-top exercises to military maneuvers.

"I think there are more tests coming," Cha said.

The U.S. and Japan have requested an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council to discuss the latest missile launches. The meeting is likely to take place Wednesday, a U.N. diplomat said, demanding anonymity to speak before the official announcement.

North Korea, meanwhile, urged the council to discuss the U.S.-South Korea exercises, asserting the drills are driving the region toward "nuclear disaster."

Ri Song Chol, counsellor at North Korea's U.N. mission, told AP that supreme leader Kim Jong Un has said as long as there are "military exercises in front of the gate of my country," the North will continue to strengthen its military forces and "pre-emptive attack capabilities."

Over the seven weeks of last year's exercises, North Korea conducted nine missile tests, including of submarine-based and intermediate range missiles, but never more than two missiles at once. Five of the tests failed.

Cha said that Trump's hand could be forced by North Korea's provocative actions. The Obama administration relied heavily on sanctions, but the moves failed to stop Pyongyang.

"Right now they don't have any choice. I mean they've already had two sets of missile tests and then the use of a chemical weapon in an airport," Cha said.

North Korea is the prime suspect in the assassination last month of Kim Jong Un's estranged half-brother in Malaysia, using what authorities say was VX nerve agent.

David Wright at the Union of Concern Scientists said the missiles launched Monday were likely either extended-range Scuds or medium-range Nodong ballistic missiles that have been tested numerous times before — not an intercontinental missile that threatens America.

"But the tests naturally will increase political pressure on Trump to take a tough stand," said Mark Fitzpatrick at the International Institute for Strategic Studies think tank. "He has a political imperative to show attention to the North Korean security threat, so as to counter the impression of a White House in disarray."

Trump's new national security adviser, H.R. McMaster, spoke by phone Monday with his South Korean counterpart Kim Kwan-jin, and they agreed to boost cooperation to get the North to face more effective sanctions and pressure, according to South Korea's presidential office.

"The United States stands with our allies in the face of this very serious threat," White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer said in Washington.

He said the Trump administration is taking steps to enhance its ability to defend against North Korea's ballistic missiles, such as through the deployment of a missile defense system. Seoul agreed with the Obama administration to place that system on its soil against the objections of China, which is concerned the system's radar will range inside its territory.

The New York Times reported over the weekend that the Obama administration also tried to conduct cyber and electronic strikes against North Korea's missile program.

Republican Sen. Cory Gardner, who chairs a Foreign Affairs subcommittee on Asia, told AP he has called for the administration to provide a closed briefing to senators. He said he wants clarity on what has been done and under what authorities, and what the U.S. posture toward North Korea will be in the months ahead.

He also stressed a need to clamp down on Kim's sources of foreign revenue and for China to follow through on its promise to suspend imports of North Korean coal.

Associated Press writers Catherine Lucey in Washington and Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to correct misplaced attribution in 10th paragraph, now attributing to U.N. diplomat that Security Council meeting likely to take place on Wednesday.

French conservatives in crisis as candidate Fillon flounders

By SAMUEL PETREQUIN and ANGELA CHARLTON, Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — For France's conservatives, this year's presidential election should have been effortless. Instead, the Republicans party — once all but certain to take back the Elysee Palace in 2017 — is in disarray over the corruption-tainted campaign of its candidate Francois Fillon. Riven by dissent as Fillon tenaciously clings to his bid, the conservatives are watching their presidential hopes sink by the day.

Far-right nationalists, meanwhile, are gearing up for what they hope is their Donald Trump moment, in which National Front leader Marine Le Pen proves the pollsters wrong and harnesses the anti-immigration, anti-establishment sentiment percolating around Europe to capture a presidential victory.

In this prediction-defying French presidential campaign, anything could still happen between now and April 23, when the voting begins.

One thing is clear: The conservatives are in trouble. And no one is eager to take Fillon's place with less than seven weeks left to campaign.

Many conservatives had pinned their hopes on former Prime Minister Alain Juppe to step in and save their party's chances — but on Monday he definitively rejected that poisoned chalice.

"It's too late," he told reporters, accusing Fillon, who beat him in the conservative primary, of leading the French right into a political "dead end."

"What a waste," Juppe said. "Last week I received many calls asking me to take over. They made me hesitate, I thought about it. Today, uniting everyone has become even more difficult. ... I confirm, once and for all, that I will not bid to be the French president."

It's a remarkable about-face for him and his party.

A year ago, Juppe was considered a shoo-in for the 2017 presidential race. Socialist President Francois Hollande's record-setting unpopularity all but guaranteed that France's other main political force, the conservative Republicans, would take back power.

Then Fillon, promising tougher security and pro-business economic reforms, shot up and wrested the conservative primary from the more moderate Juppe in November.

That made Fillon the front-runner in polls - until January, when he was accused of arranging taxpayer-funded jobs for his wife and two of his children that they never performed. He insists the jobs were not fake, but Fillon now faces possible charges on March 15.

Top allies have fled his campaign and the situation has created a deep chasm among French right-wingers.

Some party leaders tightened ranks around Fillon at an urgent committee meeting Monday, apparently giving up on finding an alternative hopeful.

Bernard Accoyer, the party's secretary general, said The Republicans are behind their candidate "with a new impulse" and that they "are ready again to go into battle and have relaunched the campaign." It may however be too late.

And now France's entire two-party system may be upended.

Current polls suggest that for the first time in modern French history, neither the Socialists nor the Republicans may make it past the first-round vote on April 23. The top two vote-getters there then advance

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to the May 7 presidential runoff.

Instead, the far-right Le Pen and the centrist independent candidate Emmanuel Macron are favored to lead the first round of voting, and Macron is favored to win the presidency.

While unlikely, a Le Pen win would send shockwaves across Europe. It could rattle markets around the world and spell the end of decades of post-war European unity, as she is keen to extract France from the 28-nation EU, its shared euro currency and its free-travel zone.

Fearing that prospect, French voters have turned their attention to Macron, a telegenic 39-year-old former investment banker and economy minister with no party backing who champions startups. A big plus is that Macron lacks his rivals' heavy baggage of decades in a political system tainted by corruption.

In hopes of saving the conservatives, former President Nicolas Sarkozy is trying to play kingmaker - even though he lost the presidency in 2012, came in an embarrassing third in the party primary for this year's race, and has faced his own campaign financing scandals.

Sarkozy said Monday he wants to gather Fillon and Juppe together for a meeting, but no one knows if that will make things better or worse.

"Our divisions will pave the way for the far-right," Sarkozy warned.

Hollande, in an interview with Le Monde newspaper, said, "The far-right has never been so high in more than 30 years. But France won't cave in."

Le Pen is facing her own legal investigations, but they don't appear to be denting her popularity. Instead, they feed into her arguments that she is being unfairly targeted by a rotten political establishment that is determined to cling to power.

The conservatives' troubles are even drowning out the cacophony on the French left, which has been unable to unite behind one candidate.

Hollande enjoys so little respect that he declined to seek a second term - a first in modern French history.

His party's candidate, Socialist Benoit Hamon, probably won't even make it past the first round either. He's facing a raft of other left-wing candidates who don't want to give up their own presidential ambitions and rally around his cause.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Saturday, March 18, the 77th day of 2017. There are 288 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 18, 1937, in America's worst school disaster, nearly 300 people, most of them children, were killed in a natural gas explosion at the New London Consolidated School in Rusk County, Texas.

On this date:

In 1766, Britain repealed the Stamp Act of 1765.

In 1837, the 22nd and 24th president of the United States, Grover Cleveland, was born in Caldwell, New Jersey.

In 1917, the Mexican newspaper Excelsior published its first edition.

In 1925, the Tri-State Tornado struck southeastern Missouri, southern Illinois and southwestern Indiana, resulting in some 700 deaths.

In 1940, Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini met at the Brenner Pass, where the Italian dictator agreed to join Germany's war against France and Britain.

In 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed an executive order authorizing the War Relocation Authority, which was put in charge of evacuating "persons whose removal is necessary in the interests of national security," with Milton S. Eisenhower (the youngest brother of Dwight D. Eisenhower) as its director.

In 1959, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the Hawaii statehood bill. (Hawaii became a state on Aug. 21, 1959.)

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In 1962, France and Algerian rebels signed the Evian Accords, a cease-fire agreement which took effect the next day, ending the Algerian War.

In 1965, the first spacewalk took place as Soviet cosmonaut Alexei Leonov went outside his Voskhod 2 capsule, secured by a tether. Farouk I, the former king of Egypt, died in exile in Rome.

In 1974, most of the Arab oil-producing nations ended their 5-month-old embargo against the United States that had been sparked by American support for Israel in the Yom Kippur War.

In 1980, Frank Gotti, the 12-year-old youngest son of mobster John Gotti, was struck and killed by a car driven by John Favara, a neighbor in Queens, New York. (The following July, Favara vanished, the apparent victim of a gang hit.)

In 1990, thieves made off with 13 works of art from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston (the crime remains unsolved).

Ten years ago: Pakistan's national cricket team coach, Bob Woolmer, 58, was found dead in his hotel room in Kingston, Jamaica, during cricket's World Cup tournament. (An inquest into Woolmer's death ended with the Jamaican jury unable to reach a ruling on the cause.)

Five years ago: Mitt Romney scored an overwhelming win in Puerto Rico's Republican presidential primary, trouncing chief rival Rick Santorum.

One year ago: A jury in St. Petersburg, Florida, sided with ex-pro wrestler Hulk Hogan, awarding him \$115 million in compensatory damages in his sex tape lawsuit against Gawker Media. (Three days later, the jury awarded \$25 million in punitive damages; Gawker, which ended up going bankrupt, finally settled with Hogan for \$31 million.) Police in Brussels captured Europe's most wanted fugitive, Salah Abdeslam, who was the prime suspect in the deadly 2015 Paris attacks. North Korea ignored U.N. resolutions by firing a medium-range ballistic missile into the sea.

Today's Birthdays: Composer John Kander is 90. Country singer Charley Pride is 83. Nobel peace laureate and former South African president F.W. de Klerk is 81. Country singer Margie Bowes is 76. Actor Kevin Dobson is 74. Actor Brad Dourif is 67. Jazz musician Bill Frisell is 66. Singer Irene Cara is 58. Alt-country musician Karen Grotberg (The Jayhawks) is 58. Movie writer-director Luc Besson is 58. Actor Geoffrey Owens is 56. Actor Thomas Ian Griffith is 55. Singer-songwriter James McMurtry is 55. TV personality Mike Rowe is 55. Singer-actress Vanessa L. Williams is 54. Olympic gold medal speedskater Bonnie Blair is 53. Country musician Scott Saunders (Sons of the Desert) is 53. Actor David Cubitt is 52. Rock musician Jerry Cantrell (Alice in Chains) is 51. Rock singer-musician Miki Berenyi (ber-EN'-ee) is 50. Actor Michael Bergin is 48. Rapper-actress-talk show host Queen Latifah is 47. White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus (ryns PREE'-bus) is 45. Actor-comedian Dane Cook is 45. Country singer Philip Sweet (Little Big Town) is 43. Rock musician Stuart Zender is 43. Singers Jaron and Evan Lowenstein are 43. Actress-singer-dancer Sutton Foster is 42. Singer Devin Lima (LFO) is 40. Rock singer Adam Levine (Maroon 5) is 38. Rock musician Daren Taylor (Airborne Toxic Event) is 37. Olympic gold medal figure skater Alexei Yagudin is 37. Actor Adam Pally is 35. Actor Cornelius Smith Jr. is 35. Actress Lily Collins is 28. Actress-dancer Julia Goldani Telles is 22. Actress Ciara Bravo is 20. Actor Blake Garrett Rosenthal is 13.

Thought for Today: "To start is easy, to persist is an art." — German proverb.