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Groton Prairie Mixed

Team Standings: Cheetahs 14, Jackelopes 11, Foxes 11, Coyotes 10, Chipmunks 10, Shih Tzus 4

Men's High Games: Brad Waage 257, 219, Brad Larson 216, 210, Ron Belden 214, Roger Spanier 203

Women's High Games: Vicki Walter 201, Darci Spanier 189, Nicole Kassube 183

Men's High Series: Brad Waage 665, Brad Larson 612, Ron Belden 541

Women's High Series: Vicki Walter 516, Darci Spanier 497, Sue Stanley 489

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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Thursday, March 9

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

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

Senior Menu: Salisbury steak, mashed potatoes and gravy, baby carrots, bar, whole wheat bread. Public meeting regarding proposed MS/HS project, 7 p.m., at the Groton Community Center

Friday, March 10

School Breakfast: Cinnamon roll, yogurt, fruit, juice, milk.

School Lunch: Cheese bread, green beans, fruit, carrots and dip.

Senior Menu: Salmon loaf, creamed peas, orange, peanut butter brownie, whole wheat bread. End of the third quarter

Sunday, March 12

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship at 9 a.m., Sunday School at 10 a.m.

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

St. John's Lutheran: Worship at 9 a.m., Sunday School at 10 a.m.

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

Heaven Bound Ministries in Pierpont: Worship at 10 a.m.

Open Gym for JH-8 from 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., and for grades 6-12 from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Monday, March 13

Senior Menu: Swiss steak with mushroom



Dakota Outdoors

Erik Dean

402 N Main St
Aberdeen, SD 57401
605.229.0123

dakoutdoors@midconetwork.com

Gov. Daugaard Signs Bills Into Law

PIERRE, S.D. – In addition to the buffer strip legislation, Gov. Dennis Daugaard signed the following bills into law yesterday:

HB 1053 – An Act to revise certain provisions concerning the attorney recruitment assistance program.

HB 1065 – An Act to repeal certain provisions regarding the liability of persons for certain business debts.

HB 1071 – An Act to require the approval of the Legislature before any high level nuclear waste may be processed or deposited within state boundaries.

HB 1100 – An Act to allow law enforcement to initiate a mental illness hold in domestic abuse situations.

HB 1107 – An Act to revise certain provisions regarding the approval by the governing board of licenses for alcoholic beverages.

HB 1117 – An Act to revise certain provisions regarding golf carts on state highways.

HB 1144 – An Act to revise certain provisions regarding commercial driver license disqualification for refusing to submit to a chemical analysis.

HB 1211 – An Act to provide for a grace period after the expiration of a permit and a warning ticket for carrying a concealed pistol while in possession of an expired permit.

SB 1 – An Act to revise certain provisions of the prescription drug monitoring program.

SB 6 – An Act to revise the review process to determine the need for additional nursing facilities or nursing facility beds and to require a report to the Legislature.

SB 7 – An Act to revise the criteria for determining if property is classified as agricultural land for property tax purposes.

SB 11 – An Act to revise certain provisions regarding the State Fair Commission and the administration of the fairgrounds and to declare an emergency.

SB 14 – An Act to make an appropriation from the coordinated natural resources conservation fund to the State Conservation Commission and to declare an emergency.

SB 15 – An Act to make an appropriation for costs related to suppression of wildfires in the state and to declare an emergency.

SB 17 – An Act to authorize the Board of Regents to contract for the construction of a natural resources research and support facility at South Dakota State University, to make an appropriation therefor, and to declare an emergency.

SB 18 – An Act to authorize the Board of Regents to contract for the design, renovation of, and addition to, the Stanley J. Marshall Center on the campus of South Dakota State University and to make an appropriation therefor.

SB 19 – An Act to establish for the Board of Regents and its institutions a fund for the receipt and disbursement of federal grants and contracts and a fund for the receipt and disbursement of other grants and contracts and to make an appropriation therefor.

SB 36 – An Act to revise the time to file certain tax returns and remit certain taxes.

SB 49 – An Act to license and regulate freestanding emergency medical care facilities.

SB 59 – An Act to delay the effective date for initiated measures and referred laws.

SB 63 – An Act to eliminate the postage administration fund and deposit fees to the general fund.

SB 68 – An Act to revise certain alcoholic beverage sampling provisions.

SB 69 – An Act to revise the tax required when a new motor vehicle dealer licenses a new motor vehicle.

SB 70 – An Act to make appropriations from the water and environment fund and its revolving fund subfunds for various water and environmental purposes, to increase the transfer from the water and environment fund to the environment and natural resources fee fund, and to declare an emergency.

SB 71 – An Act to revise certain provisions of the reinvestment payment program.

SB 75 – An Act to revise certain provisions regarding the purchase from a municipality of malt beverages by certain alcoholic beverage licensees.

SB 77 – An Act to provide for a fiscal note for any initiated measure, initiated amendment to the Constitution, or referred law that would have a fiscal impact on the state.

SB 118 – An Act to allow for special motor vehicle license plates depicting the Dignity sculpture.

SB 123 – An Act to revise the area where certain nonresident waterfowl licenses may be issued.

2017 Study Looks at Impacts of Diversified Crop Rotation

BROOKINGS, S.D. - Throughout the 2017 and 2018 growing seasons, a team of researchers from South Dakota State University will be assessing the impacts of diversified crop rotation cropping systems compared to traditional corn-soybean rotation. The study will also review the impact cover crops have on soil health and crop yields. The study, Crop Diversification on Soil Health and Farm Profitability in South Dakota, is funded by Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Conservation Innovation Grant in 2016.

"Past studies have shown that diversified crop rotations build soil health and result in insect, weed and disease control as well as many other environmental and economic benefits," said Tong Wang, SDSU Extension Advanced Production Specialist. "However, in recent years, only two crops - corn and soybeans - make it into the rotation of most South Dakota farmland."

Wang is one of two main investigators on the project. She is joined by Sandeep Kumar, Assistant Professor in the SDSU Plant Science Department.

The two-year study will look at two South Dakota farm sites. The sites will include a two-crop, three-crop and four-crop rotation system. Each rotation system will be ranked in terms of total input cost and economic profit with and without subsidy.

"This study will demonstrate the impacts of diversified agroecosystems - corn-soybean-wheat, corn-soybean-wheat-oats, corn-soybean-oats and cover crops and no-till systems - on soil health and economic benefits in South Dakota," Kumar said.

A good time to consider diversified crop rotation

Wang added that the study aims to increase awareness among producers about crop diversification such as corn-soybean-wheat, corn-soybean-wheat-oats, corn-soybean-oats and cover crops and no-till systems impact on soil health and economic benefits.

"Diversity of crop rotations is important to soil health and farm profitability - today and into the future," Wang said.

The corn and soybean-only rotation seen on several South Dakota farms is thought to have been driven by market highs. Around 2012, the price-per-bushel for these two crops peaked with corn at \$7.39 per bushel and soybeans receiving \$16 per bushel.

Just five years later, the markets look much different. According to the Feb. 9, 2017, the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates the projected season-average corn price for 2017 is \$3.20 to \$3.60 per bushel, while the soybean price is between \$9.10 per bushel and \$9.90 per bushel.

Today's market lows give farmers an opportunity to consider re-introducing crop diversity into their farm fields.

"The low corn and soybean market prices together with increasing production costs in recent years have squeezed much of the profit out of the traditional corn-soybean rotation," Wang said. "Producers may consider adding crops like wheat and oats to the rotation."

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DAIRY QUEEN HELP WANTED

Dairy Queen in Groton is now hiring. If you're looking for a fun job with part-time hours, flexible scheduling, please stop in for an application.



Sun Dial Manor in Bristol has openings for an RN or LPN, full time, part time or PRN. Increased wage based on previous experience. May be eligible for \$10,000 recruitment bonus. We also have openings for CNA's, training for certification provided. For more information, please call Connie Brown RN, DON at 605/492-3615. EOE. DFW.

SCHURING CARD OF THANKS

A big thank you to everyone who contributed towards my bridal shower gift registry at Lori's Pharmacy. Your thoughtfulness and generosity is very much appreciated.

Kayla Schuring

EMPLOYMENT

Applications due March 6 for swimming pool lifeguards, baseball/softball coaches, groundskeepers, ticket takers. Visit City of Groton, 209 N Main or call 397-8422. EOE

Full-Time Job Opportunity

This unique full-time position will provide for cross organizational support of accounting, marketing, and loan processing. May be based out of Sisseton, Webster, or Aberdeen. Regular travel to the Sisseton office will be required. Experience beneficial, but will train. Applications taken until Friday, March 17. To request a job application and job description, contact GROW South Dakota, 104 Ash St. E., Sisseton, SD 57262, www.growsd.org, or call (605)-698-7654. EOE



GDI Living Fitness
25 Main St., Downtown Groton

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



Public Meeting set for today for proposed school project

This is a huge school project! Make sure you attend the upcoming special community school board meeting concerning an April 11th bond vote to finance the MS/HS Building Project.

The meeting is scheduled for 7:00 pm, this Thursday, March 9th at the Groton Community Center. Refreshments will be served.

So far, there have been two other community meetings. One at Columbia where 18 patrons attended and one in Bristol where 26 attended.

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Newly released paper examines conservation program in four states

Lyons, Neb. - The Center for Rural Affairs today released "Pathways to Land Access," a report by Anna Johnson with support from Glen Ready. The paper is a study of the Conservation Reserve Program - Transition Incentives Program (CRP-TIP), a program administered by the United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency (USDA-FSA).

In "Pathways to Land Access," Johnson and Ready investigate implementation of CRP-TIP in Iowa, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota. The program was created by the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008, also known as the 2008 Farm Bill.

"The program allows a retired or retiring landowner who has land enrolled in CRP to receive two additional years of payments if land is transitioned back into production through being sold or leased to a beginning, socially-disadvantaged or veteran farmer or rancher," Johnson said. "In effect, CRP-TIP creates a pathway for beginning, socially-disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers to access land."

Johnson and Ready interviewed FSA state officials, surveyed FSA county employees, and talked with program participants to support recommendations for improving enrollment and usage.

They found that several factors affect usage: knowledge of the program; the existence, or lack thereof, of a strong relationship between the prospective farmer or rancher and landowner; and the agricultural economy.

Johnson and Ready outline their findings and recommendations in the report.

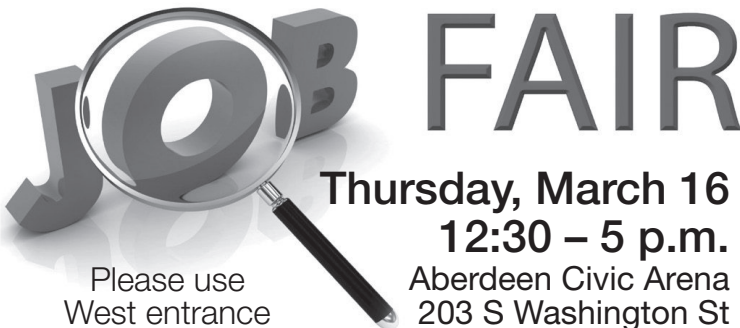
To view a copy of "Pathways to Land Access," visit www.cfra.org/pathways-to-land-access.

This report was conducted under a cooperative agreement with Farm Service Agency, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, Center for Rural Affairs and Dakota Rural Action.

Come meet with local hiring businesses!

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SD-205788-1

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americanjobcenter



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Today in Weather History

March 9, 1993: High winds gusting more than 50 mph moved east across South Dakota behind a strong cold front. Peak wind gusts reported included 62 mph at Pierre and 49 mph at Aberdeen. Also, high winds flipped over a mobile home on top of a car and a utility shed near The Oahe Reservoir. Also, a semi-tractor trailer was overturned while crossing Ft. Randall Dam. An office trailer was also tipped over at the same location.

1891: From March 9th through the 13th, a blizzard struck southern England and Wales with gale force winds. 220 people were killed; 65 ships foundered in the English Channel, and 6,000 sheep perished. Countless trees were uprooted and trains buried. Up to a foot of snow and snowdrifts of 11.5 feet were reported in Dulwich, London, Torquay, Sidmouth, and Dartmouth. Click [HERE](#) for more information about this storm from the National Maritime Museum.

1956: A whopping 367 inches of snow was measured on the ground at the Rainier Paradise Ranger Station in Washington. The snow depth was a state record and the second highest total on record for the continental U.S.

1957: An earthquake measuring a magnitude 8.6 struck the Aleutian Islands of Alaska. A Pacific-wide tsunami was generated that caused \$5 million dollars of damage in Hawaii, but fortunately, no lives were lost. Hardest hit was the island of Kauai, where houses were destroyed and roads washed away. Waves reached 34.1 feet high at Haena, HI.

1960 - A winter storm produced a narrow band of heavy snow from north central Kentucky into Virginia and the mountains of North Carolina. Snowfall amounts ranged from 12 to 24 inches, with drifts up to eleven feet high in western Virginia. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Gale force winds ushered arctic air into the north central U.S. Some places were 50 degrees colder than the previous day. Northeast winds, gusting to 60 mph, produced 8 to 15 foot waves on Lake Michigan causing more than a million dollars damage along the southeastern shoreline of Wisconsin. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A cold front brought high winds to the southwestern U.S. Winds in the Las Vegas Valley of Nevada gusted to 70 mph, and one person was injured by a falling tree. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Twenty-two cities in the southwestern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date. In New Mexico, afternoon highs of 72 at Los Alamos, 76 at Ruidoso, and 79 at Quemado, were records for March. (The National Weather Summary)



livestream

Upcoming Event

Thursday, March 9, 7 p.m.








School - MS/HS Building Project

Groton Community Center

gdilive.com

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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
 20%			 70%	 50% → 20%		 80%
Slight Chance Snow	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Snow Likely	Chance Snow then Slight Chance Snow	Mostly Cloudy	Snow
High: 26 °F	Low: 1 °F	High: 17 °F	Low: 8 °F	High: 21 °F	Low: 8 °F	High: 21 °F

Winter Weather Through the Weekend

Today:

Cloudy. Areas of light snow, mainly over north central SD

Highs: 20s north of Hwy 212 and 30s south

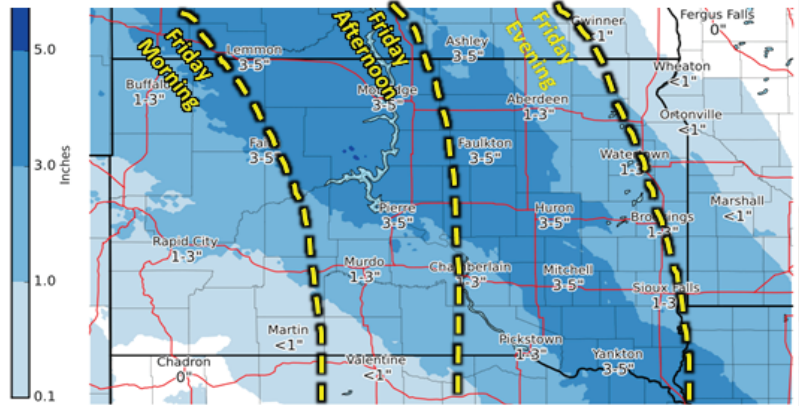
Friday into Saturday Morning:

Impacts:

Travel difficulties are possible

Additional snow expected on Sunday

Snowfall Accumulation and Timing:



National Weather Service – Aberdeen, SD



weather.gov/Aberdeen



National Weather Service Aberdeen



@NWSAberdeen

Updated: 3/9/2017 3:43 AM Central

Published on: 03/09/2017 at 3:47AM

The next several days will be a return to winter, as there will be periods of snow and below normal temperatures. The best opportunities for widespread snowfall will occur on Friday afternoon and night, then again on Sunday.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 31.8 F at 3:47 PM

Low Outside Temp: 19.1 F at 7:32 AM

High Gust: 44.0 Mph at 12:35 AM

Rain: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 65° in 1913

Record Low: -20 in 1951

Average High: 36°F

Average Low: 17°F

Average Precip in March.: 0.27

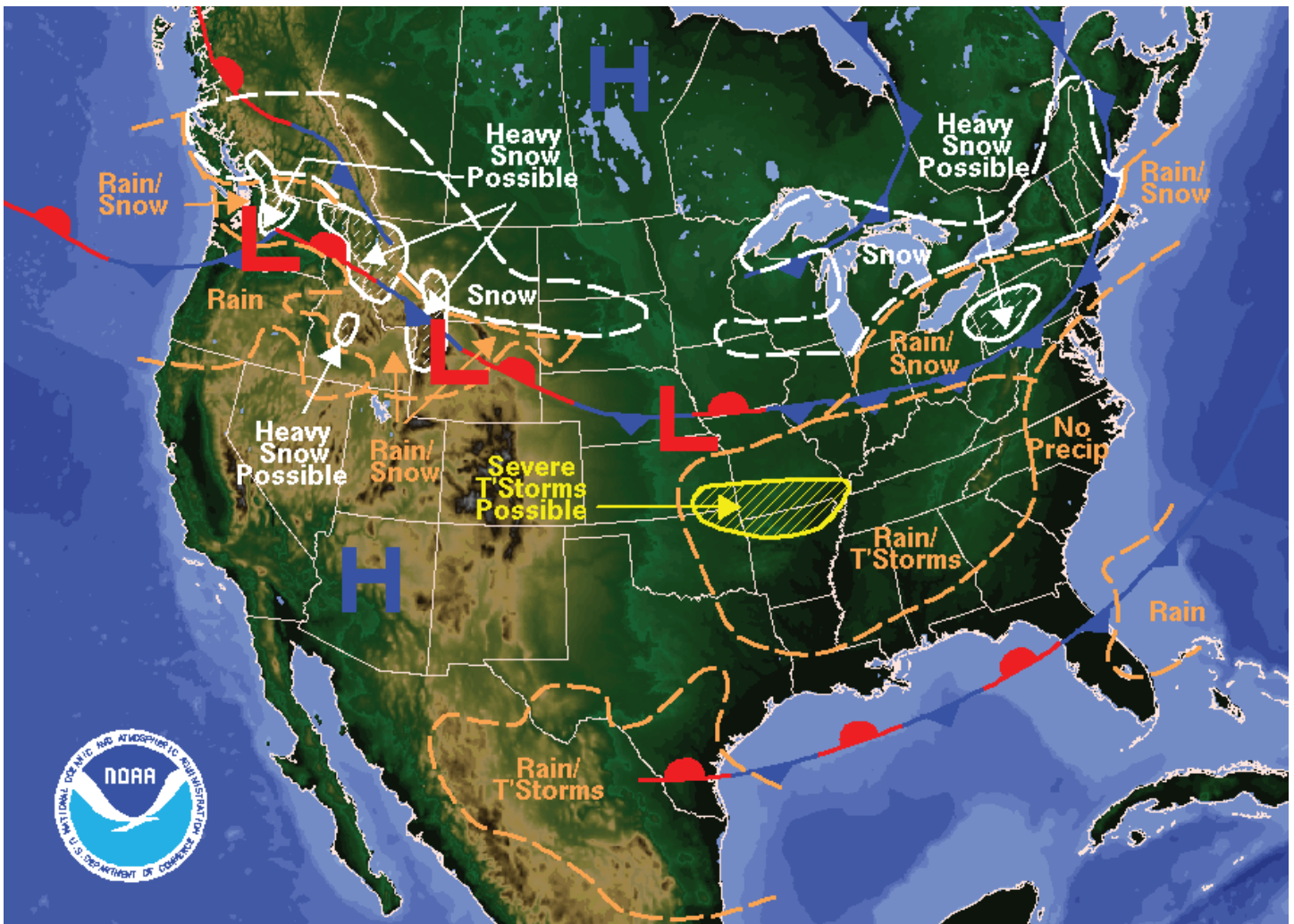
Precip to date in March.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 1.29

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 6:32 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:55 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Thu, Mar 09, 2017, issued 4:50 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

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IT'S ALL ABOUT TODAY

Jesus once said, "Don't worry about everyday life." So, what would He have us do? Live one day at a time.

We can pray about tomorrow and what we may need or want to avoid – such as trusting God for our necessities and enabling us to overcome temptation. We can pray that tomorrow will bring us greater blessings than we have ever experienced. We can pray that God will increase our faith, grow our trust and increase our hope in Him. But it is foolish to live for tomorrow.

It is not the problems of today that destroy us. It is, instead, focusing on the failures of yesterday and the fears of tomorrow that may never materialize.

Worry does not work. It cannot erase our past mistakes or guarantee us a problem-free future. What it can and will do, however, is destroy our confidence in the forgiveness of God and assurance that He will be with us until we are at last with Him in Heaven.

Worry will sap us of our strength, weaken our will, infuse us with fear, paralyze our productivity and inhibit us from helping others. These behaviors reduce or eliminate our ability to trust God to provide for our every need.

Turning our worries into concerns and asking God to forgive us and guide us will bring His peace into our lives.

Prayer: Enable us, Father, to place all of our life in Your hands – our failures and fears, our frustrations and especially our future – knowing that You care for us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Matthew 6:25-34 ...Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

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News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Dakota Cash

13-14-18-26-35

(thirteen, fourteen, eighteen, twenty-six, thirty-five)

Estimated jackpot: \$26,000

Hot Lotto

02-25-29-38-41, Hot Ball: 2

(two, twenty-five, twenty-nine, thirty-eight, forty-one; Hot Ball: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$4.53 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$106 million

Powerball

23-33-42-46-59, Powerball: 4, Power Play: 2

(twenty-three, thirty-three, forty-two, forty-six, fifty-nine; Powerball: four; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$85 million

South Dakota opponents take on Keystone XL pipeline in court

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Opponents of the Keystone XL pipeline argued Wednesday that a South Dakota judge should reverse state regulators' decision last year to authorize again the portion of the project that would go through the state.

Here's a look at the pipeline proceedings:

AT ISSUE

The Keystone XL project has prompted opposition from Native American tribes, some landowners and environmental groups concerned the pipeline would contaminate water supplies and contribute to pollution. Opponents appealed the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission's decision to state court, which heard arguments Wednesday in the case. It's not clear when Judge John Brown will rule.

The commission initially authorized TransCanada Corp.'s project in 2010, but the permit had to be revisited since construction didn't start within four years. The commission voted last year to accept the company's guarantee that it can complete the project while meeting the conditions of the 2010 approval.

Former President Barack Obama rejected the pipeline in 2015, but President Donald Trump has said he supports it, and in January moved to make it easier for the project to proceed.

THE PIPELINE

The \$8 billion project would go from Canada through Montana and South Dakota to Nebraska, where it would connect with existing pipelines to crude oil to refineries along the Gulf Coast.

TransCanada said last month that it is once again seeking state approval for a route through Nebraska. It has also submitted a new presidential permit application to the U.S. Department of State for approval.

A company spokesman, Terry Cunha, said in an email that regarding water, the company's "commitment is to ensure we build a state of the art pipeline system that will be monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week using satellite technology along with regular aerial patrols to monitor the pipeline."

IN COURT

Robin Martinez, an attorney for conservation and family agriculture group Dakota Rural Action, a party

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in the South Dakota case, said the commission's decision should be reversed because it appeared to his clients that the regulatory panel was biased toward TransCanada during the proceedings and because the company failed to demonstrate that it could build the pipeline safely.

Tracey Zephier, a lawyer for the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, said the commission abused its discretion by allowing an out-of-state company to "drive the bus" in the pipeline permitting process.

Attorneys for TransCanada and the Public Utilities Commission asked the judge to uphold the order. James Moore, a lawyer for TransCanada, said the commission's proceedings were fair and thorough.

OPPONENTS

More than 50 pipeline opponents gathered outside of the Hughes County Courthouse in Pierre before the hearing. Democratic Sen. Kevin Killer, a member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, said the Dakota Access pipeline opposition was the "preseason" for fighting Keystone XL, adding that people need to work against the project in other states on its route.

Crow Creek Sioux Tribe Chairman Brandon Sazue called on South Dakota to "wake up."

"It's a human thing," Sazue said. "It doesn't matter what color you are. It matters if you drink water or not."

PROTESTS COMING?

Gov. Dennis Daugaard is pushing legislation this year preparing for potential pipeline protests in South Dakota like the demonstrations over the Dakota Access pipeline in North Dakota. Daugaard's bill includes provisions that would make it a Class 1 misdemeanor for someone to stand in the highway to stop traffic or to trespass in a posted emergency area.

South Dakota governor mum on religious adoption protections

By HANNAH WEIKEL, Associated Press

South Dakota's Republican governor isn't saying whether he'll sign a measure aimed at protecting faith-based organizations that refuse to place children with gay couples or other arrangements contrary to their religious beliefs.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard frustrated the more conservative elements of his party last year by vetoing a bill that would have required students to use bathrooms and locker rooms corresponding with their birth gender. Daugaard, who isn't seeking re-election, has also pledged to veto a pair of measures this year expanding gun rights.

"I know it was relatively controversial," Daugaard said last week about the adoptions bill. He said he'd "listen to both sides" and weigh in, but as of Wednesday — the day after the GOP-controlled Legislature passed it — Daugaard's office hadn't signaled whether he had made up his mind.

If Daugaard signs the bill, South Dakota would join Michigan, North Dakota and Virginia to pass so-called religious exemption bills concerning adoption and foster care, and the first since the 2015 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that legalized gay marriage.

Supporters say the measure is necessary to close off the possibility that faith-based agencies might suffer for their religious beliefs if South Dakota eventually bans discrimination based on sexual orientation as several other states have done.

Critics say such exemptions could invite costly federal litigation by cementing in state law the right to discriminate against same-sex couples, single parents and even households that observe a different religion.

"I want to be able to give these organizations and their boards confidence that they have protection so they don't just pre-emptively say we are going to get out of the adoption business," said Sen. Alan Solano, a Republican from Rapid City.

LGBT rights supporters see it differently.

"The freedom of religion is a core American value shared by most and protected in the First Amendment," said Ineke Mushovic, executive director of the LGBT advocacy group Movement Advancement Project.

"But that freedom doesn't give you the right to discriminate. These bills, like the one in South Dakota, are doing exactly that."

Since the U.S. Supreme Court decision on gay marriage, Mushovic said her group has seen a proliferation of state and local religious exemptions designed to let public officials refuse to marry same-sex couples, businesses to deny service to LGBT people and adoption agencies to turn away people based on religious beliefs.

Legislatures in Texas, Alabama and Oklahoma are considering similar bills this year but only South Dakota's has approved it.

Solano had help writing the South Dakota bill from a staff member of Catholic Social Services, an agency that places infants only with adoptive families that meet certain criteria including opposite-sex couples married at least two years who cannot conceive a child on their own.

Jim Kinyon, executive director of the group, said it attempts to ensure the state doesn't discriminate against faith-based organizations for their "sincerely held" beliefs. He said the group has already lost donor support this month due to concern over its vetting practices and its support of the legislation.

"I know that this is somewhat of a contentious bill, but essentially Catholic Social Services has always had priorities in terms of what we do with families we put on our infant adoption list," he said.

Faith-based groups say the religious exemption they want isn't about taxpayer money. South Dakota has five religious agencies that provide adoptions in the state but only one — Lutheran Social Services — gets state and federal funding for child placement.

The groups say they need the legal protections to continue placing children without violating their beliefs. Faith-based adoption agencies in Illinois, Massachusetts, California and Washington, D.C., ended such services after passing non-discrimination laws that include sexual orientation, but such a proposal has gotten little traction in Republican-dominated South Dakota.

Among those testifying against South Dakota's bill was Billy Mawhiney, 38, a Sioux Falls chef and cooking instructor who with his husband is in the process of adopting a child through the state.

Mawhiney said the number of families willing to adopt and foster is decreasing in the state and the measure would make it even harder kids to find loving homes, like the one he and his husband have shared with two foster children.

"I worry about what the future's going to be. If we decide to go for a private adoption next, that limits us tremendously," he said.

Police investigating apparent homicide of Rapid City woman

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Rapid City police say a 30-year-old woman is the victim of an apparent homicide. Police say they discovered the body of Deziree Martinez, of Rapid City, after responding to a report at about 8:30 a.m. Wednesday.

No further details have been released. The investigation is being led by the Rapid City Police Department, with assistance from the Pennington County Sheriff's Office.

2 plead not guilty in death of convenience store clerk

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Two people accused of stabbing a Rapid City convenience store clerk to death during a robbery in January have pleaded not guilty.

The Rapid City Journal reports (<http://bit.ly/2mkpTvd>) that 17-year-old Carlos Quevedo is charged as an adult with first- and second-degree murder and first-degree robbery. Nineteen-year-old Cody Grady is charged with first-degree murder and robbery or theft.

Authorities say 45-year-old Kasie Lord was killed at the Loaf N' Jug in Rapid City as she followed Quevedo and Grady outside while they attempted to steal some beer.

Prosecutors say surveillance video shows Grady running off with items from the store as Quevedo stabbed Lord more than 38 times.

The next court appearance for Quevedo and Grady is scheduled April 25.

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

Governor signs bill to encourage South Dakota buffer strips

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's governor signed a bill that would encourage people to install buffer strips between agricultural land and waterways.

Republican Gov. Dennis Daugaard signed the bill Wednesday. It passed both chambers with bipartisan support last month following a veto of a similar bill in 2016.

Republican Rep. Mary Duvall supported the measure. She says buffer strips are important to help improve water quality throughout South Dakota.

The bill offers property tax breaks for those who turn land into buffer strips of vegetation to help trap fertilizer, pesticide and sediment before they reach water.

It allows for 50- to 120-foot buffers along 575 lakes and roughly 11,000 miles of streams in South Dakota.

Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press

Rapid City Journal, Rapid City, March 5

Vehicle bills should hit the road

Sometimes it seems like our lawmakers have more tricks up their sleeves than Houdini.

After the Legislature and Gov. Daugaard made Initiated Measure 22 disappear in front of our very eyes in the first days of the 2017 session, they pulled Senate Bill 176 out of their hats on Feb. 15 — 12 days after the deadline for new legislation to be filed.

The bill gives the governor broad powers to declare "public safety zones" with penalties that could land protesters — in this case those opposed to the Keystone XL Pipeline — in prison for as long as two years. It is headed for almost certain approval by the Legislature.

The bill's route to the Senate floor, however, is more controversial than the bill itself. SB 176 is one of 16 "vehicle bills" introduced in the 2017 session. The bills are essentially empty vessels when introduced with just the faintest hint of what is yet to come.

Ryan Maher, the Senate assistant majority leader, said vehicle bills "make the process work as smooth as possible." Opponents, like Sens. Stace Nelson and Lance Russell, call it a shortcut that creates a safety zone of sorts for lawmakers who can use them to limit discussion on controversial bills, which is certainly the case with SB 176.

When first introduced by the Senate State Committee on Feb. 3 — the last day that bills could be introduced — it was a mere 32 words that referenced "the protection of the safety of the citizens of South Dakota." It was approved on a 9-0 vote by the same committee.

By Feb. 15, SB 176 had morphed into a 1,500-word bill with seven sections, giving the governor the authority to declare public safety zones and making it a felony for anyone who trespasses in these zones more than twice in two years. The bill also limits to 20 the number of people who can gather near these zones in certain circumstances. It was approved by the same committee on a 6-3 vote. The Senate passed the bill the next day, 21-14.

The bill was born out of the governor's desire to prevent what occurred in North Dakota when thousands of protesters sought to stop the construction of the Dakota Access pipeline project, a spectacle that attracted national attention and cost that state more than \$30 million in law enforcement and cleanup costs. It is prudent for Daugaard to be looking ahead and doing what he can to avert a similar event.

But using the back door to introduce the bill in the second half of a 36-day legislative session has raised the ire of even Republican lawmakers. In fact, a dozen of them — including Sen. Phil Jensen and Reps. Blaine Campbell, Julie Frye-Mueller and Tim Goodwin of Rapid City — sent a letter to Attorney General Marty Jackley complaining that after vehicle bills "are passed out of either chamber they are filled with intended content, effectively bypassing the public committee process on the intended content, which

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deprives the public of their right to an open government provided for in our S.D. Constitution.”

Jackley, a candidate for governor in 2018, replied by ruling that vehicle bills are constitutional but the Legislature has the authority to eliminate them.

At the same time SB 176 was taking its subterranean route to the Senate floor, SB 130 — which addresses vendor fees for businesses that sell hunting and fishing licenses — took a more traditional path. After it was amended three times in committee hearings, a compromise was reached that, according to Rep. Larry Rhoden, was “a good demonstration of good process.”

It’s difficult to understand why a vehicle bill was used for a measure that likely would have passed anyway. Maybe the governor’s office wanted to limit the amount of time SB 176 would be subjected to public and legislative scrutiny, which, if true, casts a shadow over the entire process.

No matter how well-intended legislation is the use of vehicle bills undermines their ultimate purpose and shakes our confidence in the legislative process. It is time for the Legislature to make them vanish.

American News, Aberdeen, March 5

Public’s business should be done in public

South Dakota’s lax executive session law fosters an environment in which the public is kept in the dark about much of government’s business, and boards and commissions are given too much room to make errors.

The law, SDCL 1-25-2, offers overly broad reasons boards and commissions are allowed into executive session. Its soft language also allows for executive session when the procedure is not necessarily required by the law.

The law allowed one public body to call executive session at more than three-quarters of its meetings in 2016.

Executive session is called during public meetings when the body decides that the material is best discussed in closed session. At that point, the board either adjourns to a separate room, or the public is asked to step out of chambers.

There are five reasons given in the law for boards and commissions to call for an executive session, summarized here:

1. To discuss the qualifications, performance, etc. of any public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee.
2. To discuss the discipline, educational program, etc. of a student or the eligibility of a student to participate in interscholastic activities.
3. To consult with legal counsel or to review proposed or pending litigation or contractual matters.
4. To prepare for contract negotiations or to negotiate with employees or employee representatives.
5. To discuss marketing or pricing strategies by a board or commission of a business owned by the state or any of its political subdivisions, when public discussion may be harmful to the competitive position of the business.

In a story in Monday’s American News, reporter Shannon Marvel took a look at how often the Brown County Commission, Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeen Public School Board went into private executive session in 2016:

County commission: Executive session called in 40 of 52 meetings (77 percent).

City Council: Executive session called in four of 53 meetings (8 percent).

School board: Executive session called in 13 of 52 meetings (25 percent).

We understand that the public school board would regularly hear news about students that, barring a crime, should generally be private.

We applaud the Aberdeen City Council for doing so much work in front of the public at council meetings and public work sessions.

We pause at the 77 percent of Brown County Commission meetings that include executive session.

Here’s why.

Of those 40 out of 52 meetings, according to the American News analysis, executive session was called

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48 times: 37 of the closed sessions were to discuss personnel, and 13 were to discuss contracts. (In our findings, there was some overlap in executive sessions called for both personnel and contracts.)

The county employs 150 to 160 people, according to Doug Fjeldheim, commission vice chairman. The county commission is, apparently, involved in the hiring and performance details of many of those employees.

By contrast, the city of Aberdeen employs about 265 full-time workers, but the city council is not involved in personnel matters, likely accounting for the fraction of times that group goes into closed session.

David Bordewyk, general manager of the South Dakota Newspaper Association, told Marvel this is true around South Dakota.

"That's how it gets termed — personnel — which can cover a wide variety of things," Bordewyk said. "If you look at the statute itself, sometimes public boards get rather liberal in their interpretation of a closed session, more so than what they should."

This liberal interpretation allows commissions too quickly to remove the public from listening to the public's business. And, when in executive session, any group of people can veer from the approved topic.

At county commission meetings, Larry Lovrien, Brown County deputy state's attorney, sits in on executive sessions to be sure they stay on target, Fjeldheim said.

"He'll say, 'I don't know if that falls under our executive subjects that we can do that,'" Fjeldheim said.

Here is what we would like to see:

— A reinterpretation by city and county attorneys of South Dakota's law, which says: "Executive or closed meetings may be held ." May is the key word here. May is not a requirement, but a suggestion.

Personnel, contracts, etc. does not automatically trigger executive session. In fact, we believe the law allows that some of this material can be discussed and debated in open meeting.

— A requirement that commissions give more detailed reasons for calling executive session.

For instance, a commission member may now say, "I make a motion we adjourn to executive session to discuss personnel."

In fact, SDCL 1-25-2 breaks down five different topics related to personnel, two different types of employee ("public officer or employee") and two statuses (employed or prospective employee).

How much more focused, accurate and transparent it would be if the commission member were to say, "I make a motion we adjourn to executive session to discuss the performance of a prospective public officer."

— While state law is clear that "any official action concerning such matters shall be made at an open official meeting," we would like to see a requirement that, when an action is taken because of information discussed during executive session, the commission note that during the action, including using names when available.

This allows the public to understand when and how the commission arrived at its decision, and also acts as a bookend to the commission's earlier request for an executive session.

It also respects and protects those who are most affected by those closed-door discussions and subsequent actions.

More light, and fewer closed doors, should be the governing principle.

Capital Journal, Pierre, March 5

Perhaps this time some positive changes can be made for nonresident waterfowl hunting

There is something of a showdown brewing in the arena of wildlife management in South Dakota.

The state Game, Fish and Parks Commission, on March 2, voted to ask the general public to submit their own ideas on how to fix GF&P Department's sometimes controversial system for allocating nonresident waterfowl hunting privileges. It's an old move given the issue's history.

In the late 1940s, nonresident hunters had taken over waterfowl hunting in South Dakota and were freezing out resident hunters, many of whom were veterans of WWII. So, the legislature banned nonresidents from hunting ducks and geese in the state.

In the late 1960s, the legislature was forced to let nonresident waterfowl hunters back in or risk losing

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federal money for some conservation programs. The legislature placed strict limits on nonresident waterfowl hunting licenses and maintained control over them until 2014.

In 2014, the legislature passed a law placing control over nonresident waterfowl hunting licenses back into the hands of the GF&P Commission. The law also called for the creation of a workgroup to study the issue of nonresident waterfowl hunting and recommend changes for the system.

Resident duck hunters stood firmly against the changes that were eventually proposed, saying they would unfairly expand nonresident hunting. In the end, only a few minor changes were made. Within a year there were legislators filing bills aimed at increasing the number of nonresident hunters.

The folks behind these bills said nonresident hunters and the dollars they spend could help struggling small towns. A few of the bills passed. Most of them failed. This year, one bill was filed that would have allowed "waterfowl outfitters" to sell 150 licenses virtually independent of the GF&P department.

The waterfowl outfitter bill failed but it inspired the South Dakota Wildlife Federation and the South Dakota Waterfowl Association, on March 2, to ask the GF&P Commission to tie the number of nonresident waterfowl licenses the state issues to the number of resident duck hunters in the state.

After three years, it seems, there's a chance that maybe, just maybe, a compromise can be reached. It's been clear at least since 2014, that something needs to change with nonresident waterfowl hunting.

We hope that some good ideas come forward and some positive changes can be made.

Dakota Access oil pipeline doesn't faze big rail shippers

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON**, Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — The two biggest railroads shipping oil from North Dakota don't seem particularly concerned that the Dakota Access pipeline may be about to come online, as oil makes up only a small percentage of their business in the state.

The pipeline could begin operating as soon as next week, despite an unresolved legal dispute involving two Native American tribes seeking to shut it down. At capacity, it will be able to transport half of the oil production of North Dakota, the nation's No. 2-producing state behind Texas.

That isn't likely to be a big concern for the state's dominant rail shippers, BNSF Railway and Canadian Pacific Railway, which ship more coal and commodities such as grain than crude.

The pipeline's developer, Texas-based Energy Transfer Partners, said in court documents last year that it has long-term transportation contracts with nine companies that want to ship oil through the pipeline.

"We think it's going to be substantial," said Ron Ness, president of the North Dakota Petroleum Council, a trade group representing nearly 500 energy companies. "It's going to move a lot of barrels from western North Dakota."

The pipeline could move enough oil to fill 500 or more rail cars each day, according to ETP. It is generally cheaper to move oil by pipeline than by rail, though it is still profitable to move it by rail, according to John Duff, operations research analyst with the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

Currently, it costs about \$6 per barrel to ship by pipeline and about \$10 per barrel to ship by rail, according to Justin Kringstad, director of the North Dakota Pipeline Authority.

BNSF Railway shipped more than 426,000 carloads of products from North Dakota last year — about half of which contained coal or grain — and "overall, crude oil never made up more than 5 percent of the total volume on our railroad," spokeswoman Amy McBeth said.

BNSF has invested more than \$1 billion in its network in North Dakota since 2013 and plans to pump another \$80 million into it this year, according to McBeth.

"As this pipeline or any other is completed, we believe rail will always provide a valuable transportation option," she said.

Crude shipments made up only 2 percent of total freight revenue last year for Canadian Pacific Railway, the other major rail shipper in North Dakota. Coal and grain totaled 26 percent. The company supplied the data but declined to comment on the pipeline.

ETP is finishing up construction and says oil could be flowing through the pipeline as early as next week.

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Once that happens, it will take about three weeks for it to reach Illinois, according to company spokeswoman Vicki Granado.

"The line will be considered fully operational once the crude reaches Patoka," she said.

New pipelines typically can operate at full capacity immediately, according to Ness. Dakota Access is expected to carry nearly half a million barrels of crude daily. The most recent data available show that in January, North Dakota produced about double that amount.

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

Spearfish church gets restored 1890s stained glass

By KAIJA SWISHER, Black Hills Pioneer

SPEARFISH, S.D. (AP) — They're back — and sparkling like new, lighting up the inside of the Episcopal Church of All Angels at 1044 N. Fifth St., Spearfish, with a myriad of colors.

"We're just overjoyed to have them back," Father J. Clay Riley said of the 14 stained glass windows that are original to the church, which was put into service in 1898. The windows were removed in the fall to be restored at Classic Glass Ltd., in Fargo, North Dakota.

"People feel like they're home again," Riley added, describing that since the windows were put back in place in February, members of the congregation have commented on how bright and beautiful the windows appear following the work to dismantle, clean in lye, relead, and resolder the historic windows. Stained glass windows should be restored or reled about every 80 to 100 years because at that age, stained glass will begin to bulge and crack, and the lead holding the pieces of glass together deteriorates.

That was true of the windows at All Angels; when removed, some were bowed, with one very precariously in place and missing the exterior stops on the ledge, so that if enough force had been exerted, it would have fallen out. And one of the windows behind the altar had blown out of the church in the past and had to be remade. Otherwise, though, the windows have appeared as they had since the late 1890s, and restoring the windows was discussed by congregants for many years but did not become a reality until recently because of the scope and cost of the project.

The Black Hills Pioneer (<http://bit.ly/2ITg9XG>) reports the overall project cost about \$52,000 to undertake, and the church received \$20,000 through the 2016 Deadwood Historic Preservation Commission's Outside of Deadwood grant program to assist with the project.

"We couldn't have done it without them," Riley said, voicing the church's appreciation to the Deadwood Historic Preservation Commission.

Once the windows were transported to the Classic Glass Ltd. studio in Fargo, workers made a pattern or rubbing of each of the windows, labeling and making notes of each type and piece of glass before taking them apart and then rebuilding them, piece by piece, like new, just as they were more than a century ago.

Two of the three faces in the church's chancel windows portraying St. Paul, St. John and Christ knocking at the door were cracked and had to be sent to England. New glass faces were hand-painted and returned to the windows, and any other pieces of glass that needed to be replaced were matched to new glass, since Kokomo Opalescent Glass, where the glass from the windows originally came from, is still in existence. The colors of the glass, as well as the Christian symbols referenced throughout the windows and the writing on various windows identifying memorials to past church members, stand out very clearly following the project.

Bob Mayer was All Angel's junior warden when the project started and described that in addition to the appearance of the windows, the project also included the installation of new protective exterior windows that provide higher R-value, the ability of a material to resist heat traveling through it, creating better insulation and efficiency for the church.

"We've been entrusted with the resources to take care of this building," he said, explaining that he is now working on the trim around the windows.

While the stained glass windows were being restored, congregants at All Angels heard from members

of the community asking about where the windows had gone — reinforcing their knowledge that the windows are an important part of the sacred space, as well as the framework of the community, since as Spearfish grows and changes, the historic church at the corner of North Fifth and West Michigan streets remains one of the cornerstones of its history.

The church is on the National Register of Historic Places and is described as one of the best examples of cutstone building in the Black Hills, with its high Victorian Gothic architecture. According to its history, the church's construction took nine years, with the building standing as a memorial to Alexander Hamilton, the founder of the nation's financial system. The National Register describes that "this occurred when one parishioner was visiting New York and met the granddaughter of Hamilton who offered to donate the money for the church's construction ." to provide a place of worship for Episcopalians in Spearfish. The church began services in the summer of 1889, and a formal service of consecration occurred the following spring by Bishop Hare.

"This is our gem of Spearfish," Mayer said of the church, adding that its stained glass windows mean something to each person in the community and that they lend to the identity of the church, as well as creating a sacred and welcoming atmosphere.

"It kind of lends to a worship experience, how we come together as a community and why we're so family-like," Riley said. "It's something we all share, is a reverence for this space, and the windows are really a big part of that."

"And if the windows could talk, boy, would they have a lot of good stories," Mayer added.

Riley thanked everyone who brought the project through to completion, from the All Angels property committee members to the Deadwood Historic Preservation Commission to Classic Glass Ltd. to the congregation and community.

"It's wonderful to have them back in again. It feels like home again," he said, adding of the church, "This is something to appreciate, because they don't build them like this anymore."

All Angels was also awarded \$5,510 to replace its doors as part of round one of the 2017 Outside of Deadwood grant program, and Mayer said the new doors would extend all the way to the bottom of the stained glass window above the front doors.

Information from: Black Hills Pioneer, <http://www.bhpioneer.com>

Former homeless Lead girl in state's top youth

By TOM GRIFFITH, Rapid City Journal

LEAD, S.D. (AP) — Just one year ago, 15-year-old Zoe Frauen was homeless and hungry, living in a modest motel room with her mother and younger brother, and constantly searching for something to eat.

Conditions for the now-sophomore at Lead-Deadwood High School would have led some young women to despair, particularly after Frauen was turned away from a food pantry when she was told her family didn't meet requirements.

But for Frauen, adversity spurred her into action to fight homelessness and hunger in her own community. For her tireless efforts, the bespectacled, sandy-haired girl is proof of one person's power to change lives. For her efforts, she was given the title of the Boys & Girls Clubs' 2017 South Dakota State Youth of the Year.

Life has rarely dealt Frauen a winning hand.

"When I was hungry and homeless, everything turned upside down," she recently wrote. "At school, there were people who wanted to help me cope with drugs and alcohol. It would have been so easy to bury my problems and fall into the wrong crowd. But I know what addiction does to families."

The Rapid City Journal (<http://bit.ly/2lZxn5a>) reports reluctant to discuss her own family's issues, Frauen did say she gained courage from watching her mother walk away from a failed relationship.

"I did the same thing," she said. "I walked to the (Boys & Girls) club, and it changed my life forever."

The young woman, mature well beyond her years, looked her interviewer straight in the eyes and said

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she knows she is not alone. Her research found that 30 percent of the children at her club live in poverty and 80 percent were eligible for free or reduced-priced meals at school.

"There are too many of us going hungry in my community," Frauen said. "So I set out to make a change."

Among the first dozen members to join the Boys & Girls Club of Lead-Deadwood when it opened in June 2014, Frauen found a new home amid a gaggle of youngsters eager to gain a mentor, and a safe place where she could find herself. The club, located in the Handley Center, now serves 386 youths.

"Zoe understands what Boys & Girls Clubs are all about and, most importantly, she understands the impact a club has on the community," said Anne Rogers-Popejoy, the club's unit director. "Zoe is so special because she embodies all of the characteristics that Boys & Girls Clubs strive to impart to youth. She is intelligent, she is resilient, and Zoe is so kind."

Faced with her own dilemmas while helping raise her younger brother, Zefri, an 8-year-old third-grader who has since become a member of the club, Frauen didn't shy away from a challenge.

"Fighting hunger and homelessness became my passion," Frauen told state legislators, agency officials, lobbyists and Lt. Gov. Matt Michels who gathered to judge the state Youth of the Year competition last week in Pierre. "I set out to make a change. I used the club as a resource and hosted a free community dinner to raise awareness about hunger."

She learned valuable lessons along the way.

"We need to change the way we think to help the problem," she added. "If I thought my situation was never going to change, I wouldn't have survived hunger or homelessness. Instead, it changed my life. It moved me to action."

After garnering a \$500 grant from ConAgra's "Make Your Mark on Hunger" program, Frauen formed a committee, recruited volunteers, established a budget, assembled advertising and promotion, and staged the dinner on her birthday last April 24. More than 100 people showed up at a local church to enjoy spaghetti, salad and garlic bread, capped by brownie sundaes.

"It felt really good knowing I could accomplish that," Frauen said last week after taking a break from helping a 9-year-old with homework at the club. "And we served my favorite food — spaghetti."

Frauen's personal efforts to combat homelessness and hunger, and serving as a mentor and tutor at her after-school club, are not the only activities that have captured her attention.

At nearby Lead-Deadwood High School, Frauen competes on the speech and debate teams, plays clarinet in the band, is a Key Club member, and serves as secretary-treasurer of the student council. In her "off hours," she works 12-17 hours per week at a minimum-wage job at a gift shop on Deadwood's Main Street, a pursuit that allows her to pay her own cell phone bill and attempt to keep her 1993 Jeep Grand Cherokee running.

And, from a personal standpoint, her family's life has improved. She, her brother and single mother, Tammie Ded, who works for Black Hills Special Services, now live in a 3-bedroom house near the high school.

"It's easier to look back now knowing it was just temporary," said Frauen. "I mean, I have my own bedroom and I feel more secure."

That growing confidence has led Frauen to declare that she plans to one day attend the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, where she wants to major in communications and counseling.

"She's already my counselor," her best friend and classmate, Zoe Keehn, said with a laugh.

After Frauen won the preliminary Youth of the Year competition among contestants from clubs in Hot Springs, Hill City and Lead-Deadwood, Jessica Noteboom, resource development director for the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Black Hills, was charged with finding a sponsor who could help defray costs for travel, meals, and even clothing the contestant in professional attire.

After being turned down by three prospects, Noteboom said she called Jim Scull of Scull Construction in Rapid City, explained Frauen's situation, and asked for a \$2,500 sponsorship commitment. Scull graciously pledged \$3,500.

When Frauen was announced winner of the 2017 South Dakota Youth of the Year award last Wednesday in Pierre, Rogers-Popejoy said Frauen gasped. Two other club members at her table broke down and cried.

When Frauen's win was announced at the club on Wednesday afternoon, "the kids screamed so loud you couldn't hear anything," Rogers-Popejoy said. "She's their hero. And it's because she's just like them."

After calling her grandmother with the news, Frauen phoned her mother and asked, "Is this the mom of the South Dakota State Youth of the Year?"

"I don't know, am I?" her mother responded. "My mom was really excited," Frauen said.

The award, complete with a \$5,000 college scholarship, made Frauen eligible to represent South Dakota at the Midwest Region Youth of the Year contest, sponsored by the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, in July in Chicago. The winner of the regional contest will receive a \$10,000 annual college scholarship, renewable for up to four years.

Regional winners will then compete in Washington, D.C., in September for the title of the Boys & Girls Clubs of America Youth of the Year.

In the meantime, Frauen will continue working, preparing her presentation and essays, playing in band, competing in speech and debate, toiling at her part-time job, helping raise her little brother, maintaining her 3.6 GPA at the high school, and tutoring underprivileged youngsters at her favorite club.

"Zoe has an amazing story," Rogers-Popejoy concluded. "She works to combat homelessness and hunger, something she's witnessed first-hand. She's definitely a success story. Zoe doesn't just survive, she thrives."

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

Parkston student gets national honor for flag design

By SARA BERTSCH, The Daily Republic

PARKSTON, S.D. (AP) — For four days, Parkston third-grader Hayden Mette meticulously created his drawing of a flag he thought best depicted South Dakota.

The drawing was his submission to the Youth Art Month flag competition, open to all K-12 South Dakota students. A student is chosen from each state, and the winning drawing is selected to be created into a flag and flown in New York City and Washington, D.C. for a brief period.

And all of Hayden's planning and practicing paid off, because last week, the 9-year-old was announced the winner of the state competition through the South Dakota Art Education Association.

The Daily Republic (<http://bit.ly/2nfpSbb>) reports there were four entries from Parkston School District as well as many statewide entries. But it was Hayden's drawing that stood out among the judges.

With a competition theme of Creativity in Culture, Hayden's flag features parts of the sky and tree from famous The Starry Night painting by Vincent van Gogh, as well as a buffalo, the faces of Mount Rushmore and the state of South Dakota seal.

And each piece of his flag has special meaning, Hayden said. As a fan of buffalos and history, he drew the animal along with the faces of Mount Rushmore — a place he has not yet visited.

But he was inspired by his mother, Colleen Mette, to include scenes from The Starry Night painting, which is her favorite, he said.

The artistry runs in the family, as Mette is also the K-12 art teacher at Parkston School, and the one who informed her students of the competition. Hayden's grandfather is also an artist, she said.

And Mette — who said she was determined to let him do the project on his own — was surprised when Hayden won, as there was three other "great drawings" from her students also submitted.

"I know he worked really hard and his was really beautiful and so I was happy for him," she said. "He spent a long time on that."

Hayden's flag will first be sent to New York for the National Art Education Association Convention (NAEA), where it will be presented along with the other state winners. From there, Hayden's flag will travel to Washington, D.C. to be in another presentation at the capital.

The winning students are invited to attend the convention and see their flag during a presentation, but unfortunately Hayden will be unable to attend.

The flag will then be shipped back to South Dakota, and on April 1 the flag will be on display at the Dakota Discovery Museum in Mitchell for the Youth Art Show, and Hayden will be able to keep it.

Hayden is the second student from Parkston to win this honor, after another student won five years ago.

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"We're a small school and we've won twice," Mette said. "That's really nice."

And the student's flag now is hung in the school's gym. And Hayden has the same plans for his flag. After receiving it in April, Hayden said he wants it to hang in the gym alongside the other student's flag. This way it can be enjoyed by all the students of Parkston School.

Hayden loves to draw "weird creatures" in his spare time — a recent creation is a half praying mantis and half rat — and he will receive free art supplies for winning the competition.

"I just think of things, and I draw it," Hayden said.

And Hayden, whose favorite subject in school is art, hopes someday to become an artist, or maybe even an architect.

The flag program is a production of the Council for Art Education, which coordinates the Youth Art Month activities at a national level. It's through each state flag program that a winning design is chosen for display in the Youth Art Month Museum at the NAEA Convention.

For Mette, she has students actively involved throughout Youth Art Month. This year, she had several student submissions to the Youth Art Show at the Dakota Discovery Museum on Dakota Wesleyan University's campus. The show, which began Monday, will end April 1 with a closing reception. It's this event in which Hayden will receive his flag.

The show coincides with Youth Art Month on purpose, promoting the value of art in all children, according to a press release from DWU. And at the show, prizes will be awarded for elementary, middle and high school levels.

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

Sioux Falls braces for immigration enforcement

By JONATHAN ELLIS, Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — To Sister Janet Horstman, they were the bad days.

Immigration agents descending on meat packing plants in the Midwest and loading hundreds of undocumented immigrants onto buses, destined for detention centers and deportation. Sometimes they left behind children in schools with nobody to pick them up or pregnant wives about to deliver babies.

"The reality behind it is horrific," she said. "I would never want to live through that again."

For Horstman, an immigration legal specialist with the Presentation Sisters in Sioux Falls, the question she has is whether she'll be living through those days again — or worse.

President Trump is making good on a campaign promise to crack down on illegal immigration, releasing a plan this month that calls for greater border security, streamlined deportation proceedings and an additional 10,000 Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents for interior enforcement operations — a 50 percent increase in manpower for the agency. Though officials cautioned following the release of Trump's plan that ICE would focus on criminals, Horstman views the 10,000 new ICE agents with alarm.

"I look at that and say he's putting a deportation force together," she said.

The Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2mmt3QR>) reports that supporters of Trump's plan hope the new agents are a deportation force. Mark Krikorian, the executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, which advocates for reduced immigration, said the additional agents would be useful to process undocumented immigrants in county jails and to staff fugitive operations teams focused on finding nearly one million people who have already been ordered deported but slipped away instead.

"There's almost a million people like that," Krikorian said. "Most of them are not gangbangers or rapists, but they are literally spitting on the legal process. There is plenty of work for ICE to do."

How much of that work will occur in Sioux Falls and the surrounding region? It's a question asked on both sides of the issue.

"I really haven't heard of much activity here since (Trump) took office," Horstman said. "I keep expecting that will change, but I don't know."

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"He certainly has people scared," she added. "I've had numerous calls and people coming in frightened about getting picked up."

Data on immigration enforcement within specific communities is difficult to come by. ICE, an agency of the Department of Homeland Security, is notorious for its lack of transparency. An ICE spokesman in St. Paul, Minnesota, did not return a message.

Outside of the federal government, the most comprehensive data on immigration enforcement exists with the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse at Syracuse University. TRAC uses requests under the Freedom of Information Act to obtain government data on a variety of issues, including immigration enforcement.

During fiscal year 2016, ICE removed an average of 1,250 people a week nationally, according to TRAC's analysis. But only a small number — less than 300 a week — were deported as a result of being picked up at work or in their homes.

The majority of deportations occurred when ICE took people in custody who had been arrested by another law enforcement agency. ICE issues detainers to local law enforcement agencies on immigrants — both documented and undocumented — who are identified by ICE as having broken laws eligible for deportation.

But since 2011, the number of detainers issued by ICE has fallen dramatically, from a high of under 310,000 to 13,253, according to TRAC's analysis. That period of time saw the Obama administration focus deportations on undocumented immigrants who committed serious crimes.

But even after ICE issued a detainer, the agency failed to take custody of a person less than 40 percent of the time by the end of 2015. An even smaller number of those taken into custody were deported. The data, said Susan Long, a co-director at TRAC, show that it's "pretty rare" for a detainer to result in a deportation.

"It raises all sorts of questions about the efficacy of the program," Long said.

In South Dakota, there were about 2,700 detainers issued by ICE to local jails between 2005 and 2015, according to TRAC. The majority were in Minnehaha County.

Jeff Gromer, the warden at the Minnehaha County Jail, said ICE, which has a local office in Sioux Falls, typically responds quickly when an inmate with a detainer is ready to be released. ICE picks up the inmate and transports the person to another detention facility.

"We don't have a contract with ICE, so we're not an ICE holding facility," he said. "I don't know where they take them."

It's unclear how many people picked up in South Dakota end up being deported. That data is not public.

"ICE contends they can't tell," Long said. "That's nonsense. They have an integrated database that tracks all events."

Without historic data, it's unclear how much of a departure Trump's policies will be compared to the previous administration. Sioux Falls immigration lawyer Henry Evans said he has not seen any changes. Even though ICE focused on criminals over the last few years, the reality is that anyone living here illegally is at risk.

"Anyone who is undocumented, you're fair game," Evans said. "Always have been."

"I'm expecting basically the same status quo until it's here," he added.

The sooner the new policies are in place, the better for supporters like Krikorian. He worries that hiring 10,000 new ICE agents will take a long time, but he also wants to make sure it's done right.

Ultimately, he added, it's about rolling back the Obama-era policy of ignoring large numbers of undocumented immigrants and restoring the approaches to immigration enforcement used by the Clinton and Bush administrations.

"The Clinton and Bush administrations, for all their faults, did not say ICE agents were not allowed to arrest whole categories of illegal immigrants," Krikorian said.

But to Horstman, who lived in Omaha during the Clinton years and saw the fallout from immigration raids, she doesn't want those years to return when it comes to immigration enforcement. The majority of

people in the country illegally have been here longer than 10 years. They have U.S. born children. They have established lives.

"My hope is we'll remain under the radar screen and not get the attention," she said.

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

Rapid City police investigate motel homicide

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Police are investigating a homicide at a motel in Rapid City.

The Rapid City Journal (<http://bit.ly/2neRbSQ>) reports Assistant Police Chief Don Hedrick said officers were called to the Price Motel Wednesday morning on a report of an "unconscious subject."

Hedrick says there were clear signs the woman, about 30 years old, had been assaulted. He says potential suspects have been identified.

It's the city's fourth homicide this year.

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

University to research veterans at Black Hills cemetery

STURGIS, S.D. (AP) — A nearly \$74,000 contract has been awarded to a South Dakota university to research stories of veterans buried at the Black Hills National Cemetery.

Staff and students at Black Hills State University will research the veterans' history and the circumstances of their service, the Black Hills Pioneer (<http://bit.ly/2mYqaHw>) reported. Thousands of people are buried at the sprawling cemetery near Sturgis that opened in 1948.

The contract from the Department of Veterans Affairs' National Cemetery Administration is part of the Veterans Legacy Program. The program has awarded similar research contracts to San Francisco State University and the University of Central Florida.

At Black Hills State, professor Cody Lawson said he hopes the 15 education students he's supervising will help develop a history curriculum for elementary school students based on the research.

"Some have family members interred at the cemetery," he said. "One of the objectives of the research is to find living relatives."

Cemetery director Adrienne Benton said more than 27,500 people are buried at the Black Hills National Cemetery, including veterans and their spouses and dependents. She said the research at the cemetery, which covers about 106 acres, is part of an effort to "get the community involved with the nation's cemeteries."

Ronald Walters, the VA's interim undersecretary for Memorial Affairs, said the contract will enhance memorialization of veterans at the national cemeteries.

"We want to empower communities of young learners to see themselves as agents of their own history, researching, writing and sharing their local history through the lens of veterans."

Information from: Black Hills Pioneer, <http://www.bhpioneer.com>

House panel OKs health bill, industry groups say 'no'

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR and ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Republicans scored a pre-dawn triumph Thursday in their effort to scuttle former President Barack Obama's health care overhaul, but it masked deeper problems as hospitals, doctors and consumer groups mounted intensifying opposition to the GOP health care drive.

After nearly 18 hours of debate and over two dozen party-line votes, Republicans pushed legislation through the Ways and Means Committee abolishing the tax penalty Obama's statute imposes on people who don't purchase insurance and reshaping how millions of Americans buy medical care.

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It was a victory of high symbolism because Obama's so-called individual mandate is perhaps the part of the statute that Republicans most detest.

Even so, the White House and Republican leaders confront a GOP and outside groups badly divided over the party's high-stakes overhaul crusade.

The American Medical Association, the American Hospital Association and AARP, the nation's largest advocacy group for older people, were arrayed against the measure. Seven years ago their backing was instrumental in enacting Obama's health care statute, which President Donald Trump and Republicans are intent on erasing.

The hospitals — major employers in many districts — wrote lawmakers complaining about the bill's cuts in Medicaid and other programs and said more uninsured Americans seem likely, adding, "We ask Congress to protect our patients." Groups representing public, children's, Catholic and other hospitals also expressed opposition.

America's Health Insurance Plans, representing insurers, praised the legislation's elimination of health industry taxes but warned that proposed Medicaid changes "could result in unnecessary disruptions in the coverage and care beneficiaries depend on."

Ways and Means worked till nearly 4:30 a.m. EST before approving the final batch of tax provisions in a party-line 23-16 vote. The Energy and Commerce Committee panel continued working, tackling a reshaping of Medicaid.

Conservative lawmakers and allied outside groups claimed the bill took too timid a whack at Obama's law. Numerous GOP centrists and governors were antagonistic, worried their states could lose Medicaid payments and face higher costs for hospitals having to treat growing numbers of uninsured people.

Top Republicans knew if the upheaval should snowball and crush the legislation it would be a shattering defeat for Trump and the GOP, so leaders hoped approval by both House committees would fuel momentum.

In words aimed at recalcitrant colleagues, House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., told reporters: "This is what good, conservative health care reform looks like. It is bold and it is long overdue, and it is us fulfilling our promises." The last was a nod to campaign pledges by Trump and many GOP congressional candidates.

Outnumbered Democrats used the panels' meetings for political messaging, futilely offering amendments aimed at preventing the bill from raising deficits, kicking people off coverage or boosting consumers' out-of-pocket costs. They tried unsuccessfully to insert language pressuring Trump to release his income tax returns, and failed to prevent Republicans from restoring insurance companies' tax deductions for executive salaries above \$500,000 — a break Obama's law killed.

There were signs of growing White House engagement, and perhaps progress.

Trump met at the White House late Wednesday with leaders of six conservative groups that have opposed the GOP legislation, and several voiced optimism afterward.

"I'm encouraged that the president indicated they're pushing to make changes in the bill," said David McIntosh, head of the Club for Growth, though he provided no specifics.

The legislation would defang Obama's requirement that everyone buy insurance by repealing the tax fines imposed on those who don't. That penalty has been a stick aimed at pressing healthy people to purchase policies. The bill would replace income-based subsidies Obama provided with tax credits based more on age, and insurers would charge higher premiums for customers who drop coverage for over two months.

"That's what this whole bill was about, kicking people who weren't politically popular," Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady, R-Texas, said of Obama's overhaul.

The extra billions Washington has sent states to expand the federal-state Medicaid program would begin ending in 2020, and spending on the entire program would be capped at per-patient limits. Around \$600 billion in 10-year tax boosts that Obama's statute imposed on wealthy Americans and others to finance his overhaul would be repealed. Insurers could charge older customers five times more than younger ones instead of the current 3-1 limit, but would still be required to include children up to age 26 in family policies, and they would be barred from imposing annual or lifetime benefit caps.

The measure would also repeal taxes Obama's law imposed on segments of the medical industry to help

pay for his statute's expanded coverage.

Democrats said the Republicans would yank health coverage from many of the 20 million Americans who gained it under Obama's statute, and drive up costs for others because the GOP tax breaks would be skimpier than existing subsidies. And they accused Republicans of hiding bad news by moving ahead without official estimates from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office on the bill's cost to taxpayers and anticipated coverage.

"You can expect more town hall meetings you won't want to go to," said Rep. Sander Levin, D-Mich., a reference to liberal activists who hounded Republicans during last month's recess.

AP Congressional Correspondent Erica Werner and reporters Andrew Taylor, Kevin Freking, Mary Clare Jalonick and Ken Thomas contributed to this report.

China says it followed law in approving 38 Trump trademarks

By ERIKA KINETZ, Associated Press

SHANGHAI (AP) — China on Thursday defended its handling of 38 trademarks it recently approved provisionally for President Donald Trump, saying it followed the law in processing the applications at a pace that some experts view as unusually quick.

Democrats in Congress were critical of Trump after The Associated Press reported Wednesday that the potentially valuable trademarks had been granted, raising questions of conflict of interest and political favoritism. One senator said the issue "merits investigation."

Trump has sometimes struggled to win trademarks from China; he secured one recently after a 10-year fight that turned his way only after he declared his candidacy for the presidency. But he had applied for the 38 trademarks that were granted preliminary approval Feb. 27 and March 6 less than a year ago.

Critics fear foreign governments might gain leverage from Trump's global portfolio of brands, particularly in countries such as China, where the courts and bureaucracy are designed to reflect the will of the ruling Communist Party.

China's foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said in a regular briefing with reporters that Chinese authorities handle all trademark applications "in accordance with the law and regulation." He declined to comment on speculation about political influence on Trump's trademark approvals.

Public records show that even as Trump railed against China on the campaign trail in 2016, his lawyers applied for dozens of new trademarks in China. On Feb. 22, seven of those marks were rejected, though public records do not indicate why.

If no one objects, they will be registered after 90 days, laying the groundwork for a range of branded businesses including hotels, financial and real estate services, golf clubs, educational institutions, restaurants, and bars. That would bring the number of Trump-related registered marks in China to 115.

Trump Organization chief legal officer Alan Garten said the latest registrations were the result of "long-standing, diligent" efforts to protect the Trump brand in China, which predate his presidential run. "Any suggestion to the contrary demonstrates a complete disregard of the facts as well as a lack of understanding of international trademark law," he said in an email.

After AP reported Wednesday about the sweep of new approvals, Senators Debbie Stabenow and Ben Cardin called a press conference to lambaste President Trump for his growing Chinese entanglements. Also citing AP's report, Senator Richard Blumenthal said on the Senate floor that Trump's foreign intellectual property "merits investigation."

"This President's conflicts of interest are creeping into every corner of the world," he said in an email to the AP. "The consequence is that he has done nothing to counter Chinese currency manipulation, trade rules violations, military buildup, and other aggressive Chinese actions. Standing up for a great America means putting our nation before personal profit."

Democrats have also written to Trump and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson urging scrutiny of Trump's intellectual property interests in China.

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"It's time for Republicans in Congress to join our efforts to hold President Trump accountable," Senator Dianne Feinstein said in a statement Wednesday. "The Constitution demands it and the American people deserve it."

Associated Press researcher Fu Ting contributed from Shanghai.

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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. HOUSE PANEL SCORES INITIAL TRIUMPH ON HEALTH BILL

Republicans on a House committee use a pre-dawn vote to abolish the tax penalty "Obamacare" imposes on people who don't purchase insurance.

2. CIA SILENT ABOUT WIKILEAKS DUMP

The anti-secrecy group, meanwhile, raises the prospect of providing technology companies additional sensitive details it says it has about the agency's hacking tools.

3. HAWAII FIRST STATE TO SUE OVER TRUMP'S NEW TRAVEL BAN

It says the order will harm its Muslim population, tourism and foreign students.

4. 'NOT A PASS TO GET AWAY WITH MURDER'

Dr. Erin Kimmerle, considered one of the top forensic anthropologists in the U.S., is reviewing 50 cold cases, most in Florida, AP learns.

5. HOW DEADLY FIRE STARTED AT GUATEMALA SHELTER

After a failed mass escape by teens, someone set fire to mattresses in the girls' section and a blaze quickly spread, killing at least 22 girls.

6. DEADLY BUS-TRAIN WRECK LEADS TO REFORMS

The mayor of Biloxi, Mississippi, says that he will use recommendations from CSX Transportation to close some crossings and make others safer.

7. UN PEACEKEEPER PULLOUT LOOMS IN HAITI

The global body is preparing to pull the military force out of the impoverished Caribbean nation after nearly 13 years at a cost of \$346 million a year.

8. IRS STRIKES BACK

The tax agency reports that the number of identity theft victims plummeted last year by 46 percent to 376,000, saving the government billions.

9. BIEBER IMPOSTOR NABBED IN AUSTRALIA

A 42-year-old college professor who allegedly posed as the pop singer online to solicit explicit images from children is charged with hundreds of child sex offenses, police say.

10. AP: ROMO'S STAR-CROSSED CAREER OVER IN DALLAS

The quarterback will leave the Cowboys as the franchise leader in yards passing and touchdowns, but he could never match the postseason success of Roger Staubach and Troy Aikman.

Hawaii becomes 1st state to sue over Trump's new travel ban

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER and CALEB JONES, Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — Hawaii has become the first state to file a lawsuit against President Donald Trump's revised travel ban, saying the order will harm its Muslim population, tourism and foreign students.

Attorneys for the state filed the lawsuit against the U.S. government Wednesday in federal court in Honolulu. The state had previously sued over Trump's initial travel ban, but that lawsuit was put on hold while other cases played out across the country.

The revised executive order, which goes into effect March 16, bars new visas for people from six predominantly Muslim countries and temporarily shuts down the U.S. refugee program. It doesn't apply to

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travelers who already have visas.

"Hawaii is special in that it has always been non-discriminatory in both its history and constitution," Attorney General Douglas Chin said. "Twenty percent of the people are foreign-born, 100,000 are non-citizens and 20 percent of the labor force is foreign-born."

Chin, who noted the state has budgeted about \$150,000 for an outside law firm to help with the lawsuit, said people in Hawaii find the idea of a travel ban based on nationality distasteful because they remember when Japanese Americans were sent to internment camps during World War II. Hawaii was the site of one of the camps.

People in Hawaii know that the fear of newcomers can lead to bad policy, Chin said.

The move came after a federal judge in Honolulu said earlier Wednesday that Hawaii can move forward with the lawsuit.

U.S. District Judge Derrick Watson granted the state's request to continue with the case and set a hearing for March 15 — the day before Trump's order is due to go into effect.

The U.S. Department of Justice declined to comment on the pending litigation.

The state will argue at the March 15 hearing that the judge should impose a temporary restraining order preventing the ban from taking effect until the lawsuit has been resolved.

Hawaii's complaint says it is suing to protect its residents, businesses and schools, as well as its "sovereignty against illegal actions of President Donald J. Trump and the federal government."

The order affects people from Iran, Syria, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen and Libya.

Imam Ismail Elshikh of the Muslim Association of Hawaii, a plaintiff in the state's challenge, says the ban will keep his Syrian mother-in-law from visiting.

Trump's "executive order inflicts a grave injury on Muslims in Hawaii, including Dr. Elshikh, his family, and members of his mosque," Hawaii's complaint says.

A federal judge in Seattle issued a temporary restraining order halting the initial ban after Washington state and Minnesota sued. The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals refused to reinstate the order.

While Hawaii is the first to sue to stop the revised ban, the restraining order is still in place and could apply to the new one, too, said Peter Lavalee, a spokesman for the Washington attorney general's office.

University of Richmond Law School professor Carl Tobias said Hawaii's complaint seemed in many ways similar to Washington's successful lawsuit, but whether it would prompt a similar result was tough to say.

He said he expects the judge, an appointee of President Barack Obama who was a longtime prosecutor, to be receptive to "at least some of it."

Given that the new executive order spells out more of a national security rationale than the old one and allows for some travelers from the six nations to be admitted on a case-by-case basis, it will be harder to show that the new order is intended to discriminate against Muslims, Tobias said.

"The administration's cleaned it up, but whether they have cleaned it up enough I don't know," he said. "It may be harder to convince a judge there's religious animus here."

Tobias also said it is good that Hawaii's lawsuit includes an individual plaintiff, considering that some legal scholars have questioned whether the states themselves have standing to challenge the ban.

Associated Press writers Tarek Hamada in Phoenix and Gene Johnson and Martha Bellisle in Seattle contributed to this report.

A look at S. Korea looming presidential impeachment verdict

By KIM TONG-HYUNG, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korean President Park Geun-hye finds out Friday whether a court will remove her from office over a corruption scandal or allow her to complete her term.

A look at the consequences of both possible decisions ahead of the Constitutional Court's ruling:

IF PARK IS BOOTED

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Following weeks of protests that saw millions take to the streets, South Korea's opposition-controlled parliament voted to impeach Park in December amid suspicions that she colluded with a confidante to filch from companies and allowed the friend to secretly manipulate state affairs.

For Park to be formally removed, at least six of the court's eight justices will have to support the impeachment motion filed by lawmakers, which accuses the president of extortion, bribery, abuse of power and leaking government secrets. Park has apologized for putting trust in her friend, Choi (pronounced CHWEY) Soon-sil, but denies any legal wrongdoing.

If the court unseats Park, the country's election law requires a presidential vote within 60 days, which likely means May 9.

The ruling would instantly strip Park of her powers and also her immunity against prosecution. She could be interrogated by prosecutors seeking to indict her on criminal charges. Park has repeatedly refused to be interviewed by prosecutors over the scandal in past months, but that will be harder to do if prosecutors have an arrest warrant.

If a presidential election is triggered, opinion polls favor liberal opposition politician Moon Jae-in, who lost the 2012 race to Park, to succeed her.

A Moon presidency could bring significant changes after a decade of conservative rule. He stresses the need for dialogue with belligerent, nuclear-armed North Korea, which would be a dramatic departure from Park's hard line.

Moon also vows to "reconsider" the South's plans to deploy this year an advanced U.S. anti-missile system; China says the system's powerful radar is a security threat.

IF PARK IS REINSTATED

The court restoring Park's powers would be a huge victory for tens of thousands of her conservative supporters who rallied passionately near the court in recent weeks. It would also vindicate party loyalists who stuck with her even as dozens of their colleagues defected to create a new party in anticipation of an early presidential election. Such a decision will likely take the air out of the investigation into the scandal.

But some experts believe Park's reinstatement would only delay for a few months what seems to be an inevitable liberal presidential victory.

Park's single five-year term was originally due to end in February 2018, and regardless of the court's ruling, her credibility may be hopelessly compromised, the experts say. That's not ideal when she must navigate the country amid growing North Korean threats, a bad economy that could get worse with the diplomatic dispute with China, and a public sharply divided over the nation's future.

Some experts worry that Park's reinstatement could trigger a violent reaction from the millions of protesters who have been occupying the streets of major cities nationwide in the past several months.

The anti-Park rallies have been mostly peaceful, but some protesters said their "candles will turn into torches" if the court refuses to uphold Park's impeachment. The Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency on Thursday put its forces on high alert and deployed thousands of officers and hundreds of buses in the streets surrounding the court.

If Park returns to office, the country's next presidential election will be held on Dec. 20 as originally scheduled.

A look at the opposing sides on the GOP health care bill

WASHINGTON (AP) — A look at opposing sides as Congress considers proposed Republican changes to the Obama administration health law.

SUPPORTING THE BILL:

President Donald Trump: "We're going to do something that's great and I'm proud to support the replacement plan released by the House of Representatives."

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Vice President Mike Pence: "I really do believe this is an extraordinarily important moment in the life of our nation, and every American who longs to see us start over on health care reform that will respect the doctor-patient relationship, that will harness the power of the free marketplace to lower the cost of insurance, that will give states freedom and flexibility to improve Medicaid for our most vulnerable citizens can let their voice be heard."

House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis.: "It repeals Obamacare's taxes, it repeals Obamacare's spending, it repeals Obamacare's mandates. It creates a vibrant market where insurance companies compete for your business, where you have lower costs, more choices, and greater control over your health care. And it returns power — this is most important — this returns power from Washington back to doctors and patients, back to states. This is what good, conservative health care reform looks like."

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky.: "This isn't a law that can be fixed. This isn't a law that can be saved. It has to be repealed and replaced. We promised the American people we would. We're keeping our promise."

Neil Bradley, U.S. Chamber of Commerce: "Critically important provisions in the recommendations repeal a substantial number of the most harmful provisions in the Affordable Care Act: the health insurance tax, the medical device tax, and the tax on prescription medications; restrictions on the use and limitations on contributions to health savings accounts and flexible spending accounts; and the penalties associated with the employer mandate."

OPPOSED TO THE BILL:

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y.: "This is a tax cut for the wealthy with some health insurance provisions tacked alongside of it."

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif.: "If Republicans have their way, working families, older Americans, and people with disabilities will face huge new health costs."

Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah: "We promised the American people we would drain the swamp and end business as usual in Washington. This bill does not do that. We don't know how many people would use this new tax credit, we don't know how much it will cost, and we don't know if this bill will make health care more affordable for Americans. This is exactly the type of backroom dealing and rushed process that we criticized Democrats for, and it is not what we promised the American people."

Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky.: "It still looks like Obamacare Lite to me. It's going to have to be better."

Conservative advocacy groups Americans for Prosperity and FreedomWorks, backed by the billionaire Koch Brothers: "As the bill stands today, it is Obamacare 2.0. Millions of Americans would never see the improvements in care they were promised, just as Obamacare failed to deliver on its promises."

David McIntosh, president of the conservative advocacy group Club for Growth: "Republicans should be offering a full and immediate repeal of Obamacare's taxes, regulations, and mandates, an end to the Medicaid expansion, and inclusion of free-market reforms, like interstate competition."

Andrew W. Gurman, president of the American Medical Association: "The AMA supported health system reform legislation in 2010 because it was a significant improvement on the status quo at the time; and although it was imperfect, we continue to embrace its primary goal - making high-quality, affordable

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health coverage accessible to all Americans. As drafted, the AHCA would result in millions of Americans losing coverage and benefits. By replacing income-based premium subsidies with age-based tax credits, the AHCA will also make coverage more expensive - if not out of reach - for poor and sick Americans. For these reasons, the AMA cannot support the AHCA as it is currently written."

Joyce A. Rogers, AARP: "This bill would weaken Medicare's fiscal sustainability, dramatically increase health care costs for Americans aged 50-64, and put at risk the health care of millions of children and adults with disabilities, and poor seniors who depend on the Medicaid program for long-term services and supports and other benefits."

Richard Pollack, president and CEO of the American Hospital Association: "It appears that the effort to restructure the Medicaid program will have the effect of making significant reductions in a program that provides services to our most vulnerable populations, and already pays providers significantly less than the cost of providing care."

CIA won't discuss breach; Will WikiLeaks help tech firms?

By DEB RIECHMANN, RAPHAEL SATTER and JACK GILLUM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The CIA has gone dark about the WikiLeaks dump of nearly 9,000 pages of purported U.S. intelligence files, even as the anti-secrecy group raised the prospect of providing technology companies additional sensitive details it says it has about the agency's hacking tools.

The CIA wouldn't confirm Wednesday that the material came from its files, although no one is doubting they did. The CIA wouldn't talk about whether there was any investigation underway to figure out how the material ended up on the internet for all to see. And the agency wouldn't say whether it suspects that a mole lurking inside the CIA secretly spirited the material to WikiLeaks, or whether the CIA could have been the victim of a hack.

Still, without acknowledging any breach, the CIA warned: "The American public should be deeply troubled by any WikiLeaks disclosure designed to damage the intelligence community's ability to protect America against terrorists and other adversaries. Such disclosures not only jeopardize U.S. personnel and operations, but also equip our adversaries with tools and information to do us harm."

It was the same message at the White House. "It is our policy as a government not to confirm the authenticity of any kind of disclosure or hack," said press secretary Sean Spicer.

Outside political circles, the fallout and damage to U.S. intelligence operations was still being assessed, but causing alarm nonetheless.

The WikiLeaks disclosures were an extraordinary coup for a group that has already rocked American diplomacy with the release of 250,000 State Department cables and embarrassed the Democratic Party with political back channel chatter and the U.S. military with hundreds of thousands of logs from Iraq and Afghanistan.

The intelligence-related documents describe clandestine methods for bypassing or defeating encryption, antivirus tools and other protective security features for computers, mobile phones and even smart TVs. They include the world's most popular technology platforms, including Apple's iPhones and iPads, Google's Android phones and the Microsoft Windows operating system for desktop computers and laptops.

WikiLeaks has not released the actual hacking tools themselves, some of which were developed by government hackers while others were purchased from outsiders.

The group indicated it was still considering its options but said in a statement Wednesday: "Tech companies are saying they need more details of CIA attack techniques to fix them faster. Should WikiLeaks work directly with them?" It wasn't clear whether WikiLeaks — a strident critic of Google and Facebook, among others — was serious about such action.

If that sharing should take place, the unusual cooperation would give companies like Apple, Google, Microsoft, Samsung and others an opportunity to identify and repair any flaws in their software and de-

VICES that were being exploited by U.S. spy agencies and some foreign allies, as described in the material.

A message seeking additional details from WikiLeaks was not immediately returned, and an attempt to speak to founder Julian Assange at the Ecuadorean Embassy in London on Tuesday was rebuffed.

Security experts said WikiLeaks was obligated to work privately with technology companies to disclose previously unknown software flaws, known as zero-day vulnerabilities because consumers would have no time to discover how to defend themselves against their use, and with companies that design protection software. WikiLeaks has said the latest files apparently have been circulating among former U.S. government hackers and contractors.

"The clear move is to notify vendors," said Chris Wysopal, co-founder and chief technology officer of Veracode Inc. "If WikiLeaks has this data then it's likely others have this data, too. The binaries and source code that contain zero days should be shared with people who build detection and signatures for a living."

One clear risk is that WikiLeaks revealed enough details to give foreign governments better opportunities to trace any of the sophisticated hacking tools they might discover back to the CIA, damaging the ability to disguise a U.S. government hacker's involvement. "That's a huge problem," said Adriel T. Desautels, the chief executive at Netragard LLC, which formerly sold zero-day exploits to governments and companies. "Our capabilities are now diminished."

Apple said many of its security vulnerabilities disclosed by WikiLeaks were already fixed. In a statement late Tuesday, it said its initial analysis showed that the latest version of the iOS system software for iPhones and iPads fixed many of those flaws. Apple said it will "continue work to rapidly address any identified vulnerabilities."

Satter reported from Paris. Associated Press writers Ken Thomas and Deb Riechmann in Washington and Michael Liedtke in San Francisco contributed.

IRS strikes back as agents make big dent in identity theft

By STEPHEN OHLEMACHER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The IRS strikes back: The tax agency reports that the number of identity theft victims plummeted last year after agents struggled for years to combat what has become a multibillion-dollar industry.

The number of victims dropped by 46 percent, to 376,000, the IRS said. These taxpayers had their identities stolen by criminals who used their Social Security numbers and birthdates to obtain fraudulent tax refunds.

The IRS stopped nearly 1 million fraudulent refunds from being issued last year. They totaled almost \$6.6 billion, the agency said.

"It's a much more challenging time for the cybercrooks," said Mark Ciaramitaro, vice president for retail tax products and services at H&R Block. "All of the easy paths have been closed."

Identity theft exploded from 2010 to 2012, and "for a time overwhelmed law enforcement and the IRS," said John Dalrymple, deputy IRS commissioner for services and enforcement.

At the IRS, it peaked in 2014, when the agency identified more than 766,000 victims. That same year, the IRS blocked 1.8 million in fraudulent refunds from being issued. They totaled \$10.8 billion.

"We've driven a lot of the fraud out of the system," Dalrymple said.

The IRS is a popular target for sophisticated identity thieves because the agency issues more than \$300 billion in tax refunds each year.

Several years ago, it was as simple as using another person's Social Security number and birthdate to fill out a fake tax return claiming a big refund. If thieves filed the return early in the tax filing season — before the legitimate taxpayer — they could get refunds before the IRS received verifying financial information from employers, banks and brokers.

To make it easier, thieves can get fraudulent refunds on prepaid debit cards that are not linked to bank accounts.

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"I think everybody got caught by surprise by how inventive the criminals were here," Dalrymple said. "I don't think it was just the IRS. I think in general, the whole idea of identity theft caught everybody by surprise."

Criminals can steal victims' personal information from hospitals, doctor's offices, universities, prisons — any entity that collects Social Security numbers and birthdates.

In 2015, federal authorities broke up a massive identity theft ring in Alabama and Georgia that netted \$10 million in fraudulent refunds. Among the victims: Soldiers injured in Afghanistan who were being treated at Fort Benning's hospital.

Last year, authorities broke up a ring in the District of Columbia that tried to obtain more than \$20 million in fraudulent tax refunds. Among the victims: people in assisted living facilities, drug addicts and prison inmates.

In recent years, the IRS has beefed up its computer filters to identity potential fake tax returns. If there are dramatic differences in a taxpayer's return from year to year, it might get flagged for additional review.

Two years ago, the IRS also teamed up with major tax preparers and state tax agencies to share information and improve security.

Identity theft is "the No. 1 issue that the IRS talks to us about," said Brian Ashcraft, director of tax compliance at Liberty Tax. "It's been a huge focus."

Online tax preparers are working to better confirm the identity of their customers through stronger passwords and by using more than one way to verify them, said Julie Miller of Intuit Inc., which owns Turbo Tax. For example, after online customers enter a password, they might receive a text from the company with an additional code to enter.

Congress has also given the IRS more tools to prevent criminals from getting fraudulent tax refunds.

This year, employers are required to report wage information to the IRS by Jan. 31. In the past, most employers had until the end of March to report wage information, often long after refunds had been issued.

Also, the IRS is now required to hold refunds until Feb. 15 for families claiming the earned income tax credit or the additional child tax credit. These credits are available in the form of payments to people who don't make enough money to owe any federal income taxes, which makes them attractive to identity thieves.

The provision, however, delays tax refunds for millions of low-income families.

Tax preparers and the IRS said identity theft is still a major threat as criminals become more sophisticated. To combat it, they regularly share information about new threats and scams, especially during tax season.

"This is not a time to celebrate," said Ciaramitaro of H&R Block. "It's not fixed but I think that cooperation has led to measurable improvement."

Follow Stephen Ohlemacher on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/stephenatap>

Trump on charm offensive with former rivals

By JILL COLVIN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After spending months rehashing the brutal GOP primary campaign and bragging about his victory, President Donald Trump has quietly launched a charm offensive, reaching out to former rivals whose help he now needs.

The latest on his list: Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas, who has said he has significant concerns about the GOP health care bill Trump is pushing for passage. The president and first lady hosted Cruz and his wife, Heidi, and their two daughters for dinner Wednesday night — a day after Trump broke bread with Sen. Lindsay Graham, another rival, over lunch.

Trump has also been spending time with Sen. Marco Rubio, giving him a ride to Florida on Air Force One last week and hosting him and his wife for dinner at the White House. He met recently with Gov. John Kasich of Ohio, hosted Gov. Chris Christie of New Jersey and his wife for Valentine's Day meatloaf, and had a working lunch with Gov. Scott Walker of Wisconsin — all former campaign foes.

The meetings come as Trump continues to lob unsupported accusations at his predecessor in the White

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House, Barack Obama, alienating a potential source of guidance as he's turned his focus toward selling a legislative agenda that he'll need every possible ally to pass.

That means wooing former rivals like Cruz and Sen. Rand Paul, whom Trump has spoken to several times since taking office, including this week, said Paul's spokesman Sergio Gor.

But the 2016 Republican campaign was uniquely brutal, leading to some awkward interactions.

During the campaign, Trump not only went after Cruz, giving him the nickname 'Lyin' Ted,' questioning his faith and bizarrely suggesting his father may have been involved in the Kennedy assassination. He also went after Cruz's wife, re-tweeting an unflattering photo of her next to his wife and threatening to "spill the beans" on her.

Cruz responded by calling Trump "a sniveling coward" and labeling him a "pathological liar" and "utterly amoral." Cruz also declined to endorse Trump in his Republican Convention speech.

Press secretary Sean Spicer ignored a question Wednesday about whether the president intended to apologize to Heidi Cruz, saying instead: "I think they're looking forward to a great dinner."

"This is a president that's going to engage with everybody that can help join in proposing ideas and thoughts and opinions on how to move the country forward. So he looks forward to dinner tonight with Senator and Mrs. Cruz as he has with several others," he said.

Spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders noted the president has been holding meeting after meeting as he tries to sell the health care bill. "I think there's outreach to most of Congress," she said.

Cruz, who met with the president a week after the election, seemed equally willing to bury the hatchet. He told reporters ahead of the dinner that the president had called him several weeks ago and invited him and his family to dinner, and said, "we're very much looking forward to it."

"It's principally a social dinner but I'm sure the conversation will turn to the repeal of Obamacare and I have serious concerns about the House bill as drafted. I do not believe the House bill as currently drafted would pass the Senate," he said.

Trump has in the past marveled at politicians' abilities to move on, even after brutal election campaigns.

"It's a very strange phenomenon," he recently told Fox News, describing his ability to get along with Obama, despite their nasty election rivalry as Obama campaigned on behalf of Democrat Hillary Clinton.

"What amazed me is that I was vicious to him in statements, he was vicious to me in statements, and here we are getting along, we're riding up Pennsylvania Avenue, talk — we don't even mention it," he said. "I guess that's the world of politics."

Trump's latest unsupported claim on Twitter that Obama ordered wiretaps on Trump, has apparently chilled those relations a bit.

Even Graham, one of Trump's fiercest critics during the primary, seems to agree with the idea of moving past the campaign rhetoric.

After their lunch, Graham praised Trump, saying he was "strongly committed to rebuilding our military which is music to my ears. President Trump is in deal-making mode and I hope Congress is like-minded."

Graham also appeared to forgive the president for once reading out his personal cellphone number to a rally crowd.

"How good was the meeting? I gave him my NEW cell phone number," Graham tweeted.

Jason Miller, who worked for Trump's campaign and transition, said that Cruz and other past rivals are eager to find ways to work together.

"I think there's a feeling of optimism and confidence that we can actually pass a conservative agenda," he said.

Yet there is one rival candidate who has yet to make nice with the president: former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush.

While Bush has been in touch with members of the Trump administration, he has yet to make an appearance with Trump and his spokeswoman Kristy Campbell said he has no immediate plans to dine with the president.

AP Congressional Correspondent Erica Werner contributed to this report.

At least 22 dead as fire ravages youth shelter in Guatemala

By JOSE LOPEZ and SONIA PEREZ D., Associated Press

SAN JOSE PINULA, Guatemala (AP) — The trouble started with a mass escape. Dozens of teens held in an overcrowded state-run shelter on the outskirts of Guatemala's capital flooded through the gates Tuesday evening, most only to be caught and locked down in their dorms.

On Wednesday morning someone set fire to mattresses in the girls' section of the rural campus, authorities said. The blaze quickly spread through two dorms, killing at least 22 girls and injuring dozens more, most with second- and third-degree burns.

Distraught parents scribbled their children's names on pieces of paper to pass to shelter staff begging for information. They went to the two local hospitals and the morgue.

Authorities worked to identify victims, but said DNA tests might be necessary for some remains. At Roosevelt Hospital, Dr. Marco Antonio Barrientos asked parents waiting outside for information to come back with photographs, dental records and details about tattoos or other distinctive features.

Piedad Estrada, a street vendor, arrived at the hospital with a photograph of her 16-year-old daughter. She said the teen was pregnant and had been at the shelter for nine days because she ran away from home.

Estrada searched at the hospitals and the morgue, but got no information. She showed the photo to workers at one hospital, but they said they had five girls who were completely bandaged so they could not be sure.

"They only took her from me to burn her," Estrada said. "I blame the state for what has happened."

Late Wednesday at the morgue, Patricia Ramirez said her 15-year-old granddaughter Achly Gabriela Mendez Ramirez was one of the dead. She said her daughter, the girl's mother, had identified Achly's burned body at the shelter earlier in the day, but authorities said they would not release her body until there was a DNA test.

Ramirez said the family was from a region east of the capital in Jutiapa department and Achly had been at the home for one year.

Ambulances had hurried to the hospitals throughout the morning carrying the injured, some partially naked, burned bright pink with large flaps of skin hanging from their bodies.

A 15-year-old girl being treated for minor injuries at Roosevelt Hospital said she and other girls had sought refuge on the roof of their dorm after the disturbances began, fearful of being attacked by other youths. By morning she said she could see the fire in a nearby building.

"I saw the smoke in the place. It smelled like flesh," the girl said.

Hours after the fire, the government in a statement expressed its condolences to the victims' families and promised a thorough investigation. It said that before the incident it had asked that the shelter transfer youths with criminal histories who were there on judges' orders to other facilities, but that had not happened. It said the director had been fired.

Surrounded by trees and a 30-foot wall, the Virgin of the Assumption Safe Home was built to hold 500 young residents, but at the time of the fire housed at least 800. The residents were a mix of children in protective custody who had been victims of abuse as well as older youths with criminal records who had served their sentences but had nowhere else to go.

Complaints about abuse and living conditions at the overcrowded shelter have been frequent.

Jorge de Leon, Guatemala's human rights prosecutor, said in a statement that at least 102 children had been located after escaping from the shelter but more had managed to flee. He said younger children fled the shelter because they were being abused by older residents.

"According to what they say, the bigger kids have control and they attack them constantly," de Leon wrote. "They also complain that food is scarce and of poor quality."

In 2013, a 14-year-old girl was murdered at the facility. Investigators said the girl was strangled by one of the other residents.

Industry groups oppose GOP health bill, Ryan seeks unity

By ALAN FRAM and RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hospitals, doctors and consumer groups mounted intensifying opposition to the Republican health care bill as GOP leaders labored Wednesday to rally a divided party behind their high-stakes overhaul drive. Lawmakers cast Congress' initial votes on the legislation as House Speaker Paul Ryan praised the proposal as "what good, conservative health care reform looks like."

The American Medical Association, the American Hospital Association and AARP, the nation's largest advocacy group for older people, were arrayed against the GOP measure. Seven years ago their backing was instrumental in enacting President Barack Obama's health care statute, which President Donald Trump and congressional Republicans are intent on erasing.

The hospitals — major employers in many districts — wrote lawmakers complaining about the bill's cuts in Medicaid and other programs and said more uninsured Americans seem likely, adding, "We ask Congress to protect our patients." Groups representing public, children's, Catholic and other hospitals also expressed opposition.

America's Health Insurance Plans, representing insurers, praised GOP provisions like erasing health industry taxes but warned that proposed Medicaid changes "could result in unnecessary disruptions in the coverage and care beneficiaries depend on."

In epic sessions that stretched past midnight into Thursday morning, leaders began pushing the legislation toward passage by two House committees — Ways and Means, and Energy and Commerce.

GOP leaders faced rebellion within their own ranks, including from conservative lawmakers and outside conservative groups. Top Republicans knew if the upheaval should snowball and crush the legislation it would be a shattering defeat for Trump and the GOP, so leaders hoped approval by both House committees would give them momentum.

In words aimed at recalcitrant colleagues, Ryan, R-Wis., told reporters: "This is what good, conservative health care reform looks like. It is bold and it is long overdue, and it is us fulfilling our promises." The last was a nod to campaign pledges by Trump and many GOP congressional candidates.

Outnumbered Democrats used the panels' meetings for political messaging, futilely offering amendments aimed at preventing the bill from raising deficits, kicking people off coverage or boosting consumers' out-of-pocket costs. They tried unsuccessfully to insert language pressuring President Donald Trump to release his income tax returns, and failed to prevent Republicans from restoring insurance companies' tax deductions for executive salaries above \$500,000 — a break Obama's law killed.

There were signs of growing White House engagement, and perhaps progress.

Trump met at the White House late Wednesday with leaders of six conservative groups that have opposed the GOP legislation, and several voiced optimism afterward.

"I'm encouraged that the president indicated they're pushing to make changes in the bill," said David McIntosh, head of the Club for Growth, though he provided no specifics.

Underscoring Trump's potential impact, Energy and Commerce Chairman Greg Walden, R-Ore., said of GOP holdouts, "A lot of them, they maybe haven't felt the inertia that comes with Air Force One landing in their district."

The legislation would defang Obama's requirement that everyone buy insurance — a provision deeply disliked by Republicans — by repealing the tax fines imposed on those who don't. That penalty has been a stick aimed at pressing healthy people to purchase policies. The bill would replace income-based subsidies Obama provided with tax credits based more on age, and insurers would charge higher premiums for customers who drop coverage for over two months.

The extra billions Washington has sent states to expand the federal-state Medicaid program would begin ending in 2020, and spending on the entire program would be capped at per-patient limits. Around \$600 billion in 10-year tax boosts that Obama's statute imposed on wealthy Americans and others to finance his overhaul would be repealed. Insurers could charge older customers five times more than younger ones instead of the current 3-1 limit, but would still be required to include children up to age 26 in family policies, and they would be barred from imposing annual or lifetime benefit caps.

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"We will answer President Trump's call to action," said Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady, R-Texas, adding later, "Relief is on the way."

Democrats said the Republicans would yank health coverage from many of the 20 million Americans who gained it under Obama's statute, and drive up costs for others because the GOP tax breaks would be skimpier than existing subsidies. And they accused Republicans of hiding bad news by moving ahead without official estimates from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office on the bill's cost to taxpayers and anticipated coverage.

"The bill sabotages the marketplaces where close to 10 million Americans today get coverage and starts a death spiral from which we will never recover," said Ways and Means' top Democrat, Richard Neal of Massachusetts.

On the Republican side, conservatives in particular were up in arms, saying the tax credits would be too expensive and the phase-out of Obama's Medicaid expansion too slow. One conservative group, Freedom-Works, was launching digital and social media ads opposing the legislation, while others like Americans for Prosperity, backed by the wealthy Koch brothers, were working against the legislation.

Numerous GOP centrists and governors were also antagonistic, worried their states could lose Medicaid payments and face higher costs for hospitals having to treat growing numbers of uninsured people.

AP Congressional Correspondent Erica Werner and reporters Andrew Taylor, Kevin Freking, Mary Clare Jalonick and Ken Thomas contributed to this report.

AP source: Cowboys to release QB Romo when NFL year begins

By SCHUYLER DIXON, AP Sports Writer

DALLAS (AP) — Tony Romo's star-crossed career as the starting quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys will soon be over.

A person with knowledge of the decision tells The Associated Press that the Cowboys will release Romo when the NFL year opens on Thursday. The person spoke to the AP on Wednesday on condition of anonymity because the team hasn't announced a decision on Romo, who will get a chance to pursue a starting job elsewhere.

Romo will leave the Cowboys as the franchise leader in yards passing (34,183) and touchdowns (248). But he could never match the postseason success of Hall of Famers and multiple Super Bowl winners Roger Staubach and Troy Aikman.

A 10-year starter who joined the Cowboys as an undrafted free agent in 2003, Romo lost the job last season to rookie Dak Prescott after breaking a bone in his back in a preseason game.

When he was healthy again, Romo conceded the job to Prescott during a franchise-record 11-game winning streak. His departure has been expected ever since.

A trade was unlikely because Romo turns 37 next month, carries a \$24 million salary cap hit and has missed most of the past two seasons with injuries. But he should be attractive as a free agent to contenders wanting a quarterback, a list that could include Denver and Houston.

A release will free about \$5 million in cap space for the Cowboys, who can split the dead money from a \$19 million hit over two seasons.

Romo was 78-49 as the starter, but his playoff debut 10 years ago illustrated the postseason struggles ahead when he infamously flubbed the snap on what could have been a winning field goal in Seattle.

The four-time Pro Bowler went 2-4 in the playoffs, never winning on the road or reaching the NFC championship game.

Owner Jerry Jones and Romo talked "Cowboy for life" when Romo signed the franchise's first \$100 million contract in 2013 — a \$108 million, six-year extension through 2019.

And there wasn't any reason to think it wouldn't happen as recently as two years ago after Dallas won the NFC East at 12-4 in Romo's last full season as the starter. The Cowboys beat Detroit in the wild-card round before losing to Green Bay in the divisional round after the famous catch that wasn't by receiver

Dez Bryant.

In the second game of 2015, though, Romo broke his left collarbone when he was sacked, and the Cowboys went 0-7 without him. He returned for two games and broke the collarbone again as Dallas sunk to last in the division at 4-12.

When Romo injured his back in the preseason against the Seahawks, Prescott had already shown promise in two preseason games. It carried over to the regular season with 11 straight wins after Dallas lost the opener. The Cowboys were the top seed in the NFC at 13-3 but lost their first playoff game to the Packers.

Romo played just one series in his final season with Dallas, throwing a 3-yard touchdown to Terrance Williams in a meaningless regular-season finale at Philadelphia. His last snap in a home regular-season game was the last of three broken collarbones sustained in his career.

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

GOP health care bill is critical first test for Trump

By ERICA WERNER and KEN THOMAS, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As conservatives revolt over Republican health care legislation, Donald Trump faces a crucial first test of his presidency: Can he translate his bully pulpit and popularity with conservative voters into a legislative win?

For Trump, it is a new arena five rocky weeks into his presidency. Thus far his accomplishments have been carried out mostly via executive authority or appointments ratified by the Senate, often overshadowed by self-inflicted distraction.

Now the Washington newcomer finds himself in the more complex realm of legislative deal-making, as GOP leaders push forward their long-promised plan to undo former President Barack Obama's health care law and replace it with a conservative blueprint that shrinks the federal role and reduces assistance to help voters buy coverage.

With the plan under attack from conservatives as well as medical groups and the AARP on Wednesday, congressional Republican leaders made clear they will rely on Trump to corral restive lawmakers and bring them in line.

A lot of them haven't experienced what it's like "with Air Force One landing in their district," Rep. Greg Walden, R-Ore., chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee, said Wednesday before his panel met to begin voting on the legislation. "I think when the president of the United States, who campaigned on repeal and replace, says this is the repeal-and-replace bill ... I think the dynamic changes."

In their early outreach, Trump and Vice President Mike Pence met Wednesday with conservative leaders who have raised objections about the bill. But the activists emerged from the White House with some optimism.

"He heard our concerns, our very serious concerns with the House draft bill," said Club for Growth President David McIntosh. "I'm encouraged that the president indicated they're pushing to make changes in the bill."

Trump also vowed during the meeting to travel to states he won in November and hold big rallies to put unsupportive senators on the spot, according to one meeting participant who spoke on condition of anonymity to disclose details of the private discussion.

And the president acknowledged the repeal and replace effort could fail, the person said. If that happens, Trump argued, Obamacare will continue sputtering and Americans will blame Democrats.

Trump has kept an arm's length from legislative maneuvering on Capitol Hill thus far, sending mixed signals that have led to repeated bouts of confusion about what exactly he supports. Yet with more than 26 million Twitter followers, he can sway GOP lawmakers with a tweet. Before the president was even sworn in, Republicans backed off plans to gut an independent ethics office after he objected over Twitter.

On Tuesday, Republican House members who are part of the GOP vote-counting team met with the president at the White House, with several saying later they were pleasantly surprised by the president's level of engagement on the health bill. He made clear he is fully behind the plan and willing to engage

with individual lawmakers to get them on board. Hours after the meeting wrapped up Trump made good on that commitment with a tweet aimed at Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., an outspoken critic of the House health legislation.

"I feel sure that my friend @RandPaul will come along with the new and great health care program because he knows Obamacare is a disaster!" the president wrote.

"He said he's 100 percent behind it, he's going to be very engaged, he's going to dedicate as much time as he can possibly do to it," said Rep. Markwayne Mullin, R-Okla., who was in Tuesday's meeting with Trump.

"The White House and the president have the largest pulpit in the world," said Rep. Tom Reed, R-N.Y., another lawmaker in Tuesday's meeting. "And to have that spotlight on you as a member, you better be able to explain your position and you better be able to explain why you're supporting Obamacare and not working with us to repeal it."

Also Wednesday Trump dined with Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, a onetime GOP presidential rival and conservative luminary, his wife, Heidi, and their two daughters. Cruz said it was "principally a social dinner but I'm sure the conversation will turn to the repeal of Obamacare." Cruz said he has serious concerns about the House bill as drafted and doesn't think it could get through the Senate, but hopes to work with the administration to improve it.

Trump's team is deploying three former House conservatives — Pence, budget chief Mick Mulvaney and Health Secretary Tom Price — to persuade some of the most skeptical members of the GOP caucus, including members of the Republican Study Committee and the Freedom Caucus.

Pence hit the airwaves on Wednesday with local television interviews in swing states Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, Pennsylvania, North Carolina and Florida. Mulvaney went so far as to invite members of the House Freedom Caucus to join him for a night at the White House bowling lane next week.

Even some holdouts acknowledged that such pressure could make a difference.

"I would be the first to admit that calls from the president will certainly influence members and to suggest otherwise would be to ignore politics," said Rep. Mark Meadows of North Carolina, chairman of the Freedom Caucus, whose members have been speaking out against the bill.

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Associated Press writer Julie Bykowicz contributed to this report.

IS gunmen in white lab coats kill 30 in Kabul hospital

By RAHIM FAIEZ and AMIR SHAH, Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Gunmen wearing white lab coats stormed a military hospital in Afghanistan's capital on Wednesday, killing at least 30 people and wounding dozens in an attack claimed by the Islamic State group.

The attack on the 400-bed military facility, located near two civilian hospitals in Kabul's heavily-guarded diplomatic quarter, set off clashes with security forces that lasted several hours.

The brazen assault reflected the capability of militant groups in Afghanistan to stage large-scale and complex attacks in the heart of Kabul, underscoring the challenges the government continues to face to improve security for ordinary Afghans.

Gen. Dawlat Waziri, a Defense Ministry spokesman, said there were "more than 30 killed and more than 50 wounded" in the attack. Afghan forces battled the attackers floor by floor, he added. The ministry said the attackers were dressed like health workers.

According to Waziri, four gunmen were involved, including two suicide bombers who detonated their explosives vests once the group was inside the hospital.

The two other attackers were shot dead by security forces, the spokesman said. A member of the security forces was killed in the shootout and three other security officers were wounded. Along with the suicide vests, the attackers also had AK-47 rifles and hand grenades, Waziri said.

Obaidullah Barekzai, a lawmaker from southern Uruzgan province, said Wednesday's attack by the Islamic State group and other similar assaults, especially in the capital, are very concerning.

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"This is not the first attack by the Islamic States group, they have carried out several bloody attacks in Kabul," he said.

The U.N. Security Council condemned "the heinous and cowardly terrorist attack" in the strongest terms and underlined the need to bring perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors to justice.

Council members reiterated that "any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, wherever, whenever and by whomsoever committed." They urged all countries "to combat by all means ... threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts."

The assault lasted for several hours, with Afghan helicopters circling over the hospital building, troops rappelling onto rooftops and security forces going floor-by-floor in a gunbattle with the attackers. By mid-afternoon, the attack was over and a clean-up operation was underway.

Abdul Qadir, a hospital worker who witnessed the attack, said an attacker in a white coat shot at him and his colleagues. Ghulam Azrat, another survivor, said he escaped through a fourth floor window after attackers killed two of his friends.

IS claimed the attack in a statement carried by its Aamaq news agency.

An affiliate of the extremist group has carried out a number of attacks in Afghanistan in the last two years, and has clashed with the more powerful and well-established Taliban, who carried out another complex attack in Kabul last week.

Mohammad Nahim, a restaurant worker in Kabul, said he worries that IS militants are getting stronger. "Daesh has no mercy on the humanity," he added, using an Arabic name for the group.

Afghan security forces have struggled to combat both groups since the U.S. and NATO formally concluded their combat mission at the end of 2014, switching to an advisory and counterterrorism role.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani condemned Wednesday's attack during an address in honor of International Women's Day, calling it "an attack on all Afghan people and all Afghan women."

The foreign ministry in neighboring Pakistan condemned the Kabul attack, describing it as a "heinous terrorist attack" and expressing Islamabad's condolences to the victims.

The acting U.N. humanitarian coordinator for Afghanistan, Adele Khodr, warned in a statement that hospitals, medical staff and patients "must never be placed at risk, and under no circumstances be subject to attack" and urged all parties in the conflict to abide by and "respect all medical workers, clinics and hospitals in compliance with international law."

She said that in 2016, at least 41 attacks on health care facilities and workers were recorded across Afghanistan — "an appalling catalogue of attacks that ultimately further hinders delivery of essential and life-saving health care to all Afghans across the country."

Associated Press writers Munir Ahmed in Islamabad and Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations contributed to this report.

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Women go on strike in US to show their economic clout

By ERRIN HAINES WHACK, Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Many American women stayed home from work, joined rallies or wore red Wednesday to demonstrate how vital they are to the U.S. economy, as International Women's Day was observed with a multitude of events around the world.

The Day Without a Woman protest in the U.S. was put together by organizers of the vast women's marches that drew more than 1 million Americans the day after President Donald Trump's inauguration.

The turnout on the streets this time was much smaller in many places, with crowds often numbering in the hundreds. There were no immediate estimates of how many women heeded the call to skip work.

"Trump is terrifying. His entire administration, they have no respect for women or our rights," said 49-year-old Adina Ferber, who took a vacation day from her job at an art gallery to attend a demonstration in New York City. "They need to deal with us as an economic force."

The U.S. event — inspired in part by the Day Without an Immigrant protest held last month — was part of the U.N.-designated International Women's Day.

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In a message, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres said leadership positions are predominantly held by men, and "outdated attitudes and entrenched male chauvinism" are widening the economic gender gap. Closing that gap would add \$12 trillion to global GDP by 2025, he said.

Guterres also lamented that "around the world, tradition, cultural values and religion are being misused to curtail women's rights, to entrench sexism and defend misogynistic practices."

In Warsaw, thousands of women showed Poland's conservative government red cards and made noise with kitchenware to demand full birth control rights, respect and higher pay.

In Rome, hundreds of women marched from the Colosseum to demand equal rights. Thousands marched in Istanbul, despite restrictions on demonstrations imposed since last year's failed coup. Turkish police did not interfere.

Women also held rallies in Tokyo and Madrid.

Germany's Lufthansa airline arranged for six all-female crews to fly into Berlin. Sweden's women's soccer team replaced the names on the backs of the players' jerseys with tweets from Swedish women. Finland announced a new \$160,000 International Gender Equality Prize.

A crowd of about 1,000 people, the vast majority of them women, gathered on New York's Fifth Avenue in the shadow of Trump Tower. Women wore red and waved signs reading "Nevertheless she persisted," "Misogyny out of the White House now" and "Resist like a girl." Thirteen people were arrested for blocking traffic, police said.

School in such places as Prince George's County, Maryland; Alexandria, Virginia; and Chapel Hill, North Carolina, canceled classes after hundreds of teachers and other employees let it be known they would be out. In Providence, Rhode Island, the municipal court closed for lack of staff members.

In Washington, more than 20 Democratic female representatives walked out of the Capitol to address a cheering crowd of several hundred people.

Dressed in red, the lawmakers criticized efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act and eliminate federal funding for Planned Parenthood.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi encouraged more women to go into politics, saying, "You have marched for progress. Now you must run for office."

A few hundred people gathered on the lawn outside Los Angeles City Hall to rally for women's rights. Julie D'Angelo took the day off from her job in music licensing, saying she wanted to stand for those women who can't afford time away from work or are too intimidated to ask for the day off.

Hundreds of women dressed in red and holding signs with photos of their local lawmakers gathered at the Utah Capitol to remind legislators they are closely watching how they handle women's issues.

In Denver, several hundred people marched silently around the state Capitol. Kelly Warren brought her daughters, ages 3 and 12.

"We wanted to represent every marginalized woman whose voice doesn't count as much as a man's," said Warren, a sales associate in the male-dominated construction industry.

Some businesses and institutions said they would either close or give female employees the day off.

The owners of the Grindcore House in Philadelphia closed their vegan coffee shop, where eight of the 10 employees are women.

"The place definitely wouldn't run without us," said Whitney Sullivan, a 27-year-old barista who planned to attend a rally.

In New York, a statue of a fearless-looking girl was placed in front of Wall Street's famous charging bull sculpture. The girl appeared to be staring down the animal. A plaque at her feet read: "Know the power of women in leadership. SHE makes a difference."

As part of the Day Without a Woman protest, women were also urged to refrain from shopping.

Some criticized the strike, warning that many women cannot afford to miss work or find child care. Organizers asked those unable to skip work to wear red in solidarity.

Monique LaFonta Leone, a 33-year-old health care consultant in Colorado Springs, Colorado, had to work but put on a red shirt and donated to charity, including Planned Parenthood.

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"I have bills to pay, but I wanted to make my voice heard, no matter how quiet," she said. "I also wanted to make a statement to say that women are doing it for themselves. We're out here in the workforce and making a difference every day."

Trump took to Twitter to salute "the critical role of women" in the U.S. and around the world. He tweeted that he has "tremendous respect for women and the many roles they serve that are vital to the fabric of our society and our economy."

First lady Melania Trump marked the day by hosting a luncheon at the White House for about 50 women. The White House said none of its female staff members skipped work in support of International Women's Day.

Lovely Monkey Tattoo, a female-owned tattoo parlor in Whitmore Lake, Michigan, offered tattoos with messages like "Nevertheless, She Persisted" — a reference to the recent silencing of Sen. Elizabeth Warren on the Senate floor — with proceeds going to Planned Parenthood.

Women make up more than 47 percent of the U.S. workforce and are dominant among registered nurses, dental assistants, cashiers, accountants and pharmacists, according to the census.

They make up at least a third of physicians and surgeons, and the same with lawyers and judges. Women also account for 55 percent of all college students.

At the same time, American women earn 80 cents for every dollar a man makes. The median income for women was \$40,742 in 2015, compared with \$51,212 for men, according to census data.

A Day Without A Woman: <https://www.womensmarch.com/womensday/>

Associated Press writers Phuong Le in Seattle; Mike Householder in Ann Arbor, Michigan; Michelle Smith in Providence, Rhode Island; William Mathis and Edith Lederer in New York City; Nick Riccardi in Denver; and Kevin Freking in Washington contributed to this report.

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

Former Trump aide Flynn says lobbying may have helped Turkey

By **STEPHEN BRAUN** and **CHAD DAY**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's former national security adviser, Michael Flynn, who was fired from his prominent White House job last month, has registered with the Justice Department as a foreign agent for \$530,000 worth of lobbying work before Election Day that may have aided the Turkish government.

Paperwork filed Tuesday with the Justice Department's Foreign Agent Registration Unit said Flynn and his firm were voluntarily registering for lobbying from August through November that "could be construed to have principally benefited the Republic of Turkey." It was filed by a lawyer on behalf of the former U.S. Army lieutenant general and intelligence chief.

After his firm's work on behalf of a Turkish company was done, Flynn agreed not to lobby for five years after leaving government service and never to represent foreign governments.

Under the Foreign Agent Registration Act, U.S. citizens who lobby on behalf of foreign government or political entities must disclose their work to the Justice Department. Willfully failing to register is a felony, though the Justice Department rarely files criminal charges in such cases. It routinely works with lobbying firms to get back in compliance with the law by registering and disclosing their work.

A Turkish businessman who hired Flynn's consulting firm told The Associated Press on Wednesday that the amended filings were made in response to pressure from Justice Department officials in recent weeks. The businessman, Ekim Alptekin, said in a phone call from Istanbul that the changes were a response to "political pressure" and he did not agree with Flynn's decision to file the registration documents with the Justice Department.

"I disagree with the filing," he said. "It would be different if I was working for the government of Turkey,

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but I am not taking directions from anyone in the government.”

Flynn’s attorney did not respond to questions about whether the Justice Department or FBI had contacted Flynn about his lobbying activities.

Flynn’s consulting firm, Flynn Intel Group Inc., had previously disclosed to Congress that it worked for Inovo BV, a Dutch-based company owned by Alptekin. But neither Flynn nor his company had previously filed paperwork with the Justice Department, which requires more extensive transparency about work that benefits foreign governments and political interests.

In the filings with the Justice Department, Flynn’s attorney, Robert Kelner, noted they served as a termination of the registration, saying the firm had ceased operations in November, the same month the lobbying contract ended.

Calls to phone numbers associated with Flynn and his firm weren’t answered. Kelner, his attorney, declined to comment through a spokesman for his law firm, Covington & Burling.

Reached Wednesday afternoon, an official at the Turkish embassy in Washington said he would refer the questions to the embassy spokesman. The spokesman did not immediately respond.

The White House did not immediately respond to requests for comment Wednesday afternoon.

Trump fired Flynn last month for misleading Vice President Mike Pence and other administration officials about his contacts with Russia’s ambassador to the U.S., Sergey Kislyak.

As a key member of Trump’s transition team last December, Flynn spoke by phone several times with Kislyak during the period when former President Barack Obama expelled 35 Russian diplomats from the U.S. and levied new sanctions in response to Russian election-related hacking.

According to the new paperwork, Flynn’s firm took on the Turkish-related lobbying work in August while he was a top Trump campaign surrogate. Flynn Intel disclosed in its filing that in mid-September, the company was invited by Alptekin to meet with Turkish officials in New York.

Alptekin acknowledged Wednesday that he had set up the meeting between Flynn and the two officials. He said they met at an undisclosed hotel in New York. Alptekin said Flynn happened to be in New York while the Turkish officials were attending United Nations sessions and a separate conference Alptekin had arranged.

“I asked one of Gen. Flynn’s staff if he was in town and would be available to meet and they got in touch with him,” said Alptekin, who owns several businesses in Turkey.

Among those officials, the documents said, were Turkey’s ministers of foreign affairs and energy. Flynn’s company did not name the officials but reported the two worked for Turkey’s government “to the best of Flynn Intel Group’s current understanding.”

Alptekin, who previously told The Associated Press he has no relationship with the Turkish government, is a member of a Turkish economic relations board run by an appointee of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Turkish president.

Erdogan’s power base is Turkey’s Islamic voters, and since a failed coup in July, he has accelerated a crackdown against the nation’s weakening secularist faction. Erdogan has accused cleric Fethullah Gulen of orchestrating the aborted coup and called for his extradition from the U.S., where he lives. The Obama administration did not comply, and Gulen still lives in a compound in Pennsylvania.

According to the filing, Flynn Intel’s work involved collecting information about Gulen and pressuring U.S. officials to take action against the cleric, including a meeting in October between Flynn’s firm and a representative of the House Homeland Security Committee.

Flynn Intel arranged the meeting to discuss a technology developed by another Flynn Intel client. But after discussing the technology, the firm changed the subject to Gulen, pressuring the committee to hold congressional hearings to investigate the cleric, said a U.S. official with direct knowledge of Flynn Intel’s work. That request was rebuffed. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity because the official was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

The official said Flynn Intel never revealed whom it was representing during the meeting.

The October meeting came as Flynn was working on an op-ed promoting Turkey’s political and business

affairs that was later published in The Hill, a Washington-based political newspaper. Flynn wrote that Turkey needed support and echoed Erdogan's warnings about Gulen, whom he called a "shady" Turkish Muslim cleric living in Pennsylvania. Flynn argued that Gulen should not be given safe harbor in the U.S.

In the new filing, Flynn disclosed that in writing the op-ed, he relied on research conducted as part of the Inovo BV contract. Flynn's firm also admitted it conducted "open-source research," directed by Inovo, focusing on Gulen.

The results "were provided to Inovo" and to a separate lobbying firm, S.G.R. LLC Government Relations and Lobbying, a public relations company retained by Flynn Intel. The materials were aimed for distribution to "third parties," but because the project terminated early, "the full scope of the contract was not performed," according to the filings.

In the filings, Flynn emphasized that neither Inovo BV nor the Turkish government directed him to write the op-ed. He also said he was not paid for the op-ed. Alptekin said he had been opposed to Flynn's writing the op-ed, although he agreed with its anti-Gulen and pro-Turkley stances.

Alptekin added that he had asked for some of the \$530,000 in payments to the Flynn Intel Group to be returned to him because of his dissatisfaction with the company's performance.

Associated Press writer Julie Bykowicz contributed to this report.

Ex-aides: Trump has long been worried about recorded calls

By JAKE PEARSON, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Long before he tweeted about wiretaps, Donald Trump worried about who was listening in on his calls.

As a real estate mogul and reality TV star — well before he alleged on Twitter that former President Barack Obama wiretapped his phones during the campaign — Trump expressed regular concern that his phone lines were not secure, according to three former Trump Organization executives.

At times he talked about possible listening devices and worried that he was being monitored, two executives said. In other times, he was doing the monitoring. One of the executives said Trump occasionally taped his own phone conversations using an old-school tape recorder, although Trump once denied this.

"I assume when I pick up my telephone, people are listening to my conversations anyway, if you want to know the truth," Trump told conservative radio host Hugh Hewitt on December 1, 2015, when asked about NSA spying powers. "It's pretty sad commentary, but I err on the side of security."

The former Trump Organization employees, whose collective tenure with the company spanned decades, detailed Trump's concern for surveillance on condition of anonymity because they feared retribution for disclosing internal practices.

A spokeswoman for the White House didn't return an email seeking comment on Trump's past use of, or concern about, possible surveillance.

Trump is hardly the only private businessperson concerned with security, experts said.

Rob Kimmons, a Houston, Texas-based private investigator who Trump hired to monitor the activities of another private detective his first wife had hired during their divorce, said wealthy individuals and businesspeople concerned about both thieves and competitors often engage in counter-surveillance.

"It's more common than people think," he said.

But to the former executives, Trump's recent accusations felt familiar.

The president claimed in a series of early morning tweets over the weekend that his predecessor in the White House had ordered that Trump's phones in Trump Tower be monitored in October, suggesting that "a good lawyer could make a great case" out of it. A spokesman for Obama immediately denied the claims and neither Trump nor the White House has offered any proof to substantiate them.

It wasn't the first time that worry was expressed. During his presidential bid, Trump campaign aides mentioned suspicions that their offices in Trump Tower were being bugged and that their communications were being monitored, though there was never any proof of that.

Others have claimed Trump recorded their own conversations with him.

In 2000, a reporter for Fortune wrote in a story questioning Trump's stated net worth that the then-real estate mogul "admitted he had begun taping" a conversation in which he threatened to sue the publication, a practice confirmed by one of the former Trump executives.

But when asked about tape-recording in a 2007 deposition by lawyers representing journalist Tim O'Brien, Trump denied he had done so, arguing he may have warned journalists that he would tape record in order to keep them honest.

"I think I might have said I want to tape," Trump testified.

Associated Press writers Jeff Horwitz and Julie Pace contributed to this report.

Ranchers assess damage after wildfires in 4 states

By **ROXANA HEGEMAN** and **HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH**, Associated Press

WICHITA, Kan. (AP) — Kansas rancher Greg Gardiner got into some of his scorched pastures for the first time Wednesday and surveyed what he likened to a battle zone: carcasses of dead cattle everywhere.

"It's pretty much a catastrophe," Gardiner said as he looked out on his ranch near Ashland, charred by wildfires that have burned through hundreds of acres in four states. "It's as bad as a mind can make it."

Gardiner cries when he talks about how thankful he is that none of his family members were lost in wildfires that have led to the deaths of six people. Gardiner's brother Mark lost his home — like dozens of other people in largely rural areas of Kansas, Texas, Oklahoma and Colorado — but he is safe.

Gardiner figures he lost 500 cattle. Any badly burned animals found still alive are mercifully shot.

"A lot of people have gone out and run out of shells and come back to get more shells," said Gardiner, speaking by cellphone. "It's pretty grisly work out here right now, to be honest."

He saw a coyote's carcass and wryly stated that there's not even coyotes left to clean up the dead. No wildlife is left as far as he can tell.

While cattle producers like Gardiner spent much of Wednesday assessing their losses, fire crews were attempting to extinguish the blazes. Most of the burned land is in Kansas, where more than 1,000 square miles has been consumed in a series of blazes, including one believed to be the largest in the state's recorded history.

It is too soon to know yet how many animals perished. In Clark County, where Gardiner lives, ranchers so far have lost about 2,500 adult cattle and at least 1,000 calves, said Randall Spare, co-owner of Ashland Veterinary Center.

"It is just horrendous," rancher David Clawson said from his home near Englewood, a Kansas town of about 50 residents where a fire destroyed 12 homes.

Ranch hands were among those who have been killed in the fires. In the Texas Panhandle, three ranch hands died trying to save cattle from fires that have burned nearly 750 square miles.

Gray County Judge Richard Peet said it appears 20-year-old Cody Crockett was on horseback and his girlfriend, 23-year-old Sydney Wallace, was nearby on foot as fire and smoke swirled around them. Peet says Wallace died of smoke inhalation. Crockett suffered burns, as did 35-year-old Sloan Everett who also was on horseback. Their bodies were found near each other.

A fourth person who died in Texas — 25-year-old Cade Koch — was attempting to drive home when smoke from a separate fire to the north enveloped him. His wife, Sierra Koch, who is pregnant, described her husband as a hard-working, friendly man who "treated everybody with the utmost respect."

"He was hard-headed and had a huge heart," she said.

In Kansas, the Highway Patrol said Corey Holt, of Oklahoma City, died Monday when his tractor-trailer jackknifed as he tried to back up because of poor visibility on a highway, and he succumbed to smoke after getting out of his vehicle.

About 545 square miles also has burned in Oklahoma, where a woman had a heart attack while trying to keep her farm and died.

No deaths were recorded in Colorado, where more than 45 square miles burned.

Hollingsworth reported from Kansas City, Missouri.

Associated Press writers Jim Suhr in Kansas City, Missouri; John Hanna in Topeka, Kansas; David Warren in Dallas; Jill Bleed in Little Rock, Arkansas; and Colleen Slevin in Denver contributed to this report.

Probe sought after AP report on church abuse allegations

By MITCH WEISS and JEFFREY COLLINS, Associated Press

A district attorney has asked the state to investigate two assistant prosecutors after an Associated Press story that quoted former congregants of a North Carolina church as saying the men derailed criminal probes into allegations of abuse by sect leaders.

David Learner said Wednesday that he wants the State Bureau of Investigation to look into the accusations against his employees, who are members of the evangelical Word of Faith Fellowship church.

The AP story, released Monday, cited nine former Word of Faith members who said Frank Webster and Chris Back provided legal advice, helped at strategy sessions and participated in a mock trial for four congregants charged with harassing a former member.

The ex-congregants also said that Back and Webster, who is sect leader Jane Whaley's son-in-law, helped derail a social services investigation into child abuse in 2015 and attended meetings where Whaley warned congregants to lie to investigators about abuse incidents.

"This is long overdue," said Rick Cooper, a U.S. Navy veteran who spent more than 20 years as a congregant at Word of Faith and raised nine children in the church. "I'm glad they're finally taking this seriously."

During the Jan. 1, 2013, mock trial for the four members, Jeffrey Cooper — an attorney who is one of Rick Cooper's sons — said Whaley and other ministers watched Back play the familiar role of a prosecutor trying to trip up defendants during cross-examination. Three of the defendants eventually were acquitted and charges were dropped against a fourth.

Nathan Key, a spokesman for Learner, said in an email that Webster and Back will keep working during the investigation but did not say if they would continue to prosecute cases. He did not respond to follow-up questions.

Under North Carolina law, prosecutors cannot provide legal advice or be involved in outside cases in any manner. Violation of those rules can lead to ethics charges, dismissal or disbarment. Offering legal advice in an ongoing investigation to help a person avoid prosecution could lead to criminal charges.

Back and Webster have not responded to several messages left by the AP about the allegations.

They are assistant district attorneys for Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba counties in western North Carolina. Word of Faith is based in Spindale in nearby Rutherford County.

Last week, the AP revealed decades of physical and emotional abuse inside the church, which has 750 members in Spindale, North Carolina, and nearly 2,000 members in churches based in Brazil and Ghana. Former members described congregants as being punched, choked and thrown through walls as part of a violent form of deliverance meant to purify sinners. (<http://apne.ws/2lmuzDA>)

Former church member John Huddle called for state and federal investigations after the AP's stories, saying the severity and intensity of the abuses against church members has grown more alarming.

Huddle questioned why Lori Cornelius, a church member who is a longtime social services worker, also isn't being investigated. During a social services check of complaints that students at the church-run K-12 school were encouraged to beat classmates to cast out devils, former members said Cornelius coached children on what to tell investigators with the help of Back and Webster. That probe ended with no charges.

Telephone messages left for Cornelius' boss, Cleveland County Department of Social Services Director Karen Ellis, were not returned Wednesday. Cornelius would not discuss the allegations when contacted by the AP.

Read more of AP's investigation of the Word of Faith Fellowship here: <http://apne.ws/2lmuzDA>
The AP National Investigative Team can be reached at investigate@ap.org

Border Patrol may loosen lie-detector hiring requirement

By ELLIOT SPAGAT, Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The Border Patrol's parent agency would exempt many veterans and law enforcement officers from a hiring requirement to take a lie-detector test under a proposal to satisfy President Donald Trump's order to add 5,000 agents, according to a memo released by the agents' union.

The memo by Kevin McAleenan, acting Customs and Border Protection commissioner, calls the polygraph a "significant deterrent and point of failure" for applicants and a recruiting disadvantage against Immigration and Customs Enforcement, a separate agency that is responsible for deporting people settled in the U.S. ICE is under Trump's orders to hire 10,000 people, and it does not require lie detectors.

The Associated Press reported in January that about two-thirds of job applicants fail CBP's polygraph, more than double the average rate of law enforcement agencies that provided data under open-records requests. Those failures are a major reason why the Border Patrol recently fell below 20,000 agents for the first time since 2009. Many applicants have complained about being subjected to unusually long and hostile interrogations.

The undated memo lays out a plan for the agency to build a force of 26,370 agents in five years, which would deprive Trump of hitting his target during his current term.

Any waiver of the lie-detector mandate may require congressional approval due to a 2010 law that introduced the requirement to root out corruption and misconduct after an earlier hiring surge doubled the size of the Border Patrol in eight years. McAleenan's memo is addressed to the Homeland Security Department deputy secretary for approval, suggesting that the Trump administration may not yet back the plan.

CBP officials did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Wednesday. Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly, who oversees both CBP and ICE, told reporters Tuesday in Dallas that he still thinks the polygraph is "a good idea," while acknowledging that it has hindered hiring.

The National Border Patrol Council, which represents Border Patrol agents, received the memo Tuesday and has been working closely with the agency on hiring plans, said Shawn Moran, a union vice president. He called the changes to the polygraph "a more commonsense approach" and said current failure rates are "ridiculous."

"Obviously we want to get the best candidates. We want to make sure that we have stringent background checks, but when it comes to the polygraph, that thing, I think, has been far too excessive in weeding out potentially good candidates," Moran said.

A former official who played a key role introducing the polygraph said Wednesday that the hiring plan was "a roadmap to further compromise the current and future integrity of CBP."

James Tomscheck, who was the agency's internal affairs chief from 2006 to 2014, said McAleenan "is attempting to degrade the vetting" to accommodate a political mandate.

"Ultimately this data-deprived decision will greatly reduce security at our borders," Tomscheck wrote in an email.

The memo said the Border Patrol gets 60,000 to 75,000 applications a year and has hired an average of 529 candidates during each of the last four years, which translates to a hiring rate of less than 1 percent. It has lost an average of 904 agents a year through attrition, lowering its workforce to 19,627 in January.

The acting commissioner estimated that the Border Patrol would need to hire 2,729 agents a year to hit Trump's target in five years, accounting for attrition.

The hiring plan at the nation's largest law enforcement agency would cost \$328 million during the fiscal year that ends Sept. 30 and \$1.9 billion the following year. McAleenan said the changes would need to take effect within six months for maximum effect.

The Border Patrol is clearly worried that ICE will poach agents to reach its own highly ambitious hiring requirements. Aside from not requiring a lie detector, McAleenan notes that ICE hires in major metropolitan

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areas, while Border Patrol jobs are often in remote regions far from medical care, schools and job opportunities for spouses. ICE employees are also often eligible for more overtime pay than Border Patrol agents.

The proposed waivers would exempt state and local law enforcement officers in good standing who have successfully completed a polygraph with their employers. Federal law enforcement officers who have passed certain types of background checks would also be exempt, and the number of military members and veterans who can skip the test would be expanded.

McAleenan said CBP is also considering a six-month experiment with an alternative polygraph test that takes less time to administer.

The memo calls for the Rio Grande Valley in south Texas — the busiest corridor for illegal crossings — to get 800 to 1,000 more agents, the largest increase under two proposed scenarios. The Laredo, Texas, sector would get 700 more agents.

Taking a polygraph became a hiring requirement at CBP after the hiring surge led to more agents getting arrested for misconduct. A Government Accountability Office report in 2013 said the lie detectors flagged applicants who wanted the job to smuggle drugs or engage in other crimes.

A panel of law enforcement experts appointed during President Barack Obama's administration last year called CBP's polygraph "an important integrity tool" in hiring and recommended employees be periodically tested, as the FBI does. It called corruption "the Achilles' heel of border agencies."

Kelly testified in Congress last month that he did not think the Border Patrol or ICE would hit hiring targets "within the next couple of years."

"We will add to the ranks of the ICE and Border Protection people as fast as we can, but we will not lower standards and we will not lower training," he said.

Associated Press Writer Claudia Lauer in Dallas contributed to this report.

Will WikiLeaks work with tech firms to defeat CIA hacking?

By **TED BRIDIS, RAPHAEL SATTER and JACK GILLUM, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The anti-secrecy group WikiLeaks raised the prospect Wednesday of sharing sensitive details it uncovered about CIA hacking tools with leading technology companies whose flagship products and services were targeted by the government's hacker-spies.

If that sharing should take place, the unusual cooperation would give companies like Apple, Google, Microsoft, Samsung and others an opportunity to identify and repair any flaws in their software and devices that were being exploited by U.S. spy agencies and some foreign allies, as described in nearly 9,000 pages of secret CIA files WikiLeaks published on Tuesday.

The documents, which the White House declined anew Wednesday to confirm as authentic, describe clandestine methods for bypassing or defeating encryption, antivirus tools and other protective security features for computers, mobile phones and even smart TVs. They include the world's most popular technology platforms, including Apple's iPhones and iPads, Google's Android phones and the Microsoft Windows operating system for desktop computers and laptops.

"This is the kind of disclosure that undermines our security, our country and our well-being," White House spokesman Sean Spicer said. "This alleged leak should concern every single American."

Spicer defended then-candidate Donald Trump's comment in October 2016 — "I love WikiLeaks!" — after it published during the presidential campaign private, politically damaging emails from Hillary Clinton's campaign manager. Spicer said there was a "massive, massive difference" between WikiLeaks publishing stolen, personal emails of a political figure and files about national security tools used by the CIA.

The CIA has declined to confirm that the documents are authentic. But on Wednesday, the agency said Americans should be "deeply troubled" by the disclosures.

WikiLeaks has not released the actual hacking tools themselves, some of which were developed by government hackers while others were purchased from outsiders. The group indicated it was still considering its options but said in a statement Wednesday: "Tech companies are saying they need more details of CIA

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attack techniques to fix them faster. Should WikiLeaks work directly with them?" It wasn't clear whether WikiLeaks — a strident critic of Google and Facebook, among others — was serious about such action.

A message seeking additional details from WikiLeaks was not immediately returned, and an attempt to speak to founder Julian Assange at the Ecuadorean Embassy in London on Tuesday was rebuffed.

Security experts said WikiLeaks was obligated to work privately with technology companies to disclose previously unknown software flaws, known as zero-day vulnerabilities because consumers would have no time to discover how to defend themselves against their use, and with companies that design protection software. WikiLeaks has said the latest files apparently have been circulating among former U.S. government hackers and contractors.

"The clear move is to notify vendors," said Chris Wysopal, co-founder and chief technology officer of Veracode Inc. "If WikiLeaks has this data then it's likely others have this data, too. The binaries and source code that contain zero days should be shared with people who build detection and signatures for a living."

The political fallout and damage to U.S. intelligence operations was still being assessed. The former head of the CIA and National Security Agency, Michael Hayden, sought to assure people the U.S. would use such cyber weapons only against foreign targets.

"I can tell you that these tools would not be used against an American," Hayden said Tuesday night on "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert."

"But there are people out there that you want us to spy on. You want us to have the ability to actually turn on that listening device inside the TV, to learn that person's intentions."

One clear risk is that WikiLeaks revealed enough details to give foreign governments better opportunities to trace any of the sophisticated hacking tools they might discover back to the CIA, damaging the ability to disguise a U.S. government hacker's involvement. "That's a huge problem," said Adriel T. Desautels, the chief executive at Netragard LLC, which formerly sold zero-day exploits to governments and companies. "Our capabilities are now diminished."

Some vendors were already sifting through the disclosures to fix flaws in their software. The first confirmed patch came from Avira Operations GmbH & Co., a German antivirus vendor, which told The Associated Press it fixed what it described as "a minor vulnerability" within a few hours of the WikiLeaks release.

Apple said many of its security vulnerabilities disclosed by WikiLeaks were already fixed. In a statement late Tuesday, it said its initial analysis showed that the latest version of the iOS system software for iPhones and iPads fixed many of those flaws. Apple said it will "continue work to rapidly address any identified vulnerabilities."

Google hasn't commented yet.

The WikiLeaks disclosures were an extraordinary coup for a group that has already rocked American diplomacy with the release of 250,000 State Department cables, embarrassed the U.S. military with hundreds of thousands of logs from Iraq and Afghanistan and upended the U.S. presidential election by publishing Democratic Party emails.

The new releases are all the more remarkable given that WikiLeaks' founder Assange is midway through his fifth year at the Ecuadorean Embassy. He received political asylum after skipping bail to avoid extradition to Sweden, where he is wanted for an allegation of rape. Last year, a United Nations panel declared that the U.K. and Sweden were detaining him arbitrarily, but there's no suggestion that Swedish or British authorities will budge on their desire to detain and extradite him.

Meanwhile, the upcoming second round of Ecuador's presidential contest may mean Assange's welcome at the embassy is wearing thin. The front-runner in the race, Guillermo Lasso, has said he would evict Assange, an action Assange says could eventually lead to his extradition to the United States.

Satter reported from Paris. Associated Press writers Ken Thomas and Deb Riechmann in Washington and Michael Liedtke in San Francisco contributed.

Rubble and ash in Mosul museum retaken from Islamic State

By SUSANNAH GEORGE, Associated Press

MOSUL, Iraq (AP) — The antiquities museum in the Iraqi city of Mosul is in ruins. Piles of rubble fill exhibition halls and a massive fire in the building's basement has reduced hundreds of rare books and manuscripts to ankle-deep drifts of ash.

Associated Press reporters were granted rare access to the museum on Wednesday after Iraqi forces retook it from the Islamic State group the day before.

After examining AP photographs of the destruction, two Iraqi archeologists confirmed that many of the artifacts destroyed by IS were the original ancient stone statues dating back thousands of years, rather than replicas as some Iraqi officials and experts previously claimed.

IS captured Mosul in 2014 and released a video the following year showing fighters smashing artifacts in the museum with sledgehammers and power tools. The voice narrating the IS video justified the acts with verses from the Quran referencing the prophet Mohammed's destruction of idols in the Kaaba.

"These statues and idols, these artifacts, if God has ordered its removal, they became worthless to us even if they are worth billions of dollars," the narration said.

The sacking of the Mosul museum was just a single act in nearly three years of systematic destruction of Iraq's cultural heritage at the hands of IS. The militants leveled ancient palaces, temples and churches throughout Nineveh province and beyond, often releasing videos boasting of their acts. IS has even demolished some mosques, saying they were used to venerate saints, which IS considers a form of polytheism.

Inside the Mosul museum's main exhibition hall, the floor was littered with the jagged remains of an ancient Assyrian bull statue and fragments from cuneiform tablets.

"These are the remains of a lamassu and the lions of Nimrud," Layla Salih, an Iraqi archaeologist and former curator of the Mosul museum said as she examined AP photographs of the remains. Salih said when IS took over Mosul, the museum housed two massive lamassu statues — winged lions recovered from the ancient Assyrian city of Nimrud.

"They were priceless," she said, "they were in perfect condition."

Hiba Hazim Hamad, a former archaeology professor in Mosul, confirmed Salih's assessment, saying she believed the building held hundreds of ancient artifacts at the time IS overran the city, "thousands if you count the small pieces," she added.

Adjoining rooms on the two main floors were largely empty save for a set of carved wooden coffins and doors left untouched. There were also smaller piles of rubble from what appeared to be additional destroyed artifacts, but the stones were crushed beyond recognition.

Hamad said these could be the remains of destroyed replicas, but even if replicas were on display, the original pieces would have still been inside the museum in the basement safe when IS overran the building.

"It's standard procedure for all museums (in Iraq)," she said referring to the practice of keeping the most valuable pieces locked away from view.

Mosul's antiquities museum — built in the 1970s and the second largest in Iraq — once housed priceless Mesopotamian artifacts dating back thousands of years and a collection of rare Islamic and pre Islamic texts.

"Daesh came to Iraq to destroy our heritage because they don't have their own," said Federal Police Cpl. Abbas Muhammad, using the Arabic acronym for the group. Muhammad was one of the first to enter the building after it was retaken from IS Tuesday and was holding the site with a handful of other troops on Wednesday.

The museum now effectively marks the front line in the fight against IS for Mosul's western half after Iraqi forces retook it during a push up along the Tigris River. Troops have turned one of its halls and its garden into a makeshift base, placing machine gunners at the building's corners under olive trees and blocking nearby roads with rubble, old cars and mounds of dirt.

The territory IS overran in Syria and Iraq is home to some of the region's most important historical sites and monuments. The extremist group is also believed to have looted ancient artifacts in order to sell them on the black market to finance its operations.

Lamia al-Gaylani, an Iraqi archaeologist who has been working in the field of preservation in Iraq since the 1960s, said IS destroyed Iraq's heritage in an effort to erase the country's identity and legitimize their own state in its place.

"They want their own history," she said. "Especially in a city like Mosul where the people are very proud of their history, I think (IS) did this as a form of revenge."

While al-Gaylani said destruction like what was wrought at Mosul's museum sparked outrage across Iraq, she said she worries that that anger won't necessarily translate to better protection in the future for the heritage Iraq has left.

"Most Iraqi people are focused on their own survival," she said, "and the government is not concerned with heritage."

A handful of history books remained in the main entryway of the museum beside a bag of placards from old exhibits.

They describe flint objects found in Nineveh dating back to about 4,000 BC, copper oil lamps discovered in Ur dating back to 2,600 BC and Sumerian statues dating back to 2,050 BC.

"Mosul is the heart of Iraqi civilization," said Federal Police Maj. Muhammad al-Jabouri, a Mosul native from a nearby neighborhood.

"When I heard how Daesh destroyed this place," he said, as his eyes filled with tears. "Death would have been a greater mercy for me."

Associated Press writers Khalid Mohammed and Andrea Rosa in Mosul, Iraq and Salar Salim in Irbil, Iraq contributed to this report.

Police: Woman in labor demanded injection of heroin and meth

By KATHY McCORMACK, Associated Press

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — A woman in labor demanded a friend inject her with heroin and methamphetamine before firefighters arrived at their home and she gave birth while entering an ambulance, New Hampshire police said Wednesday.

Police in Concord arrested Felicia Farruggia, 29, of Concord, this week, about six months after her son was born. He is in state custody.

Police also arrested Rhianna Frenette, 37, of Belmont, who is accused of giving Farruggia the drugs. They're charged with felony reckless conduct. Frenette also faces a misdemeanor count on the same offense.

"This case is just, honestly, absolutely appalling in my mind," Lieutenant Sean Ford said. "No one died, but the risk to that child and to the mother. ... This stuff is just getting out of control."

Both women were arraigned from jail on Wednesday; bail was set at \$25,000 for Frenette and \$15,000 for Farruggia. It wasn't immediately known whether they had attorneys; the public defender's office in Concord said it had no record that the cases were assigned.

Police say Frenette used an unsanitary syringe to try to inject Farruggia at least once before she was successful. After that, Farruggia's boyfriend called 911. Shortly afterward, firefighters arrived, and Farruggia gave birth while entering the ambulance.

A police affidavit said while at the hospital, the baby was in stable condition but was breathing rapidly, something that could have been caused by a number of conditions. His urine was positive for methamphetamine and amphetamine. His mother's urine was positive for those drugs and benzodiazepine.

According to the affidavit, Farruggia said she started having contractions, went to the bathroom and lay on the floor. She asked Frenette to come in, as she was screaming and crying and said, "I can't do this," referring to the labor pain. She said Frenette had heroin and told her "it would take the edge off." She said she didn't stop Frenette from injecting her.

But Frenette told police that when she went into the bathroom, she saw Farruggia trying to inject herself, essentially "mutilating herself with the needle," which broke. Frenette said she took a used needle provided

by someone else and "shot out probably more than half" of the substance inside it before injecting the rest into Farruggia. She said the ambulance was called after that.

Frenette told police she acknowledged that what she did was wrong, but believed that Farruggia would have injected herself with more of the drug, believed to be heroin, if she hadn't intervened. Frenette also said she herself was likely high on methamphetamine.

Both women have criminal records; Farruggia also has been involved in "guardianship of a minor" cases, an individual parenting petition and a custody petition, going back to 2005.

A spokesman for the state Health Department, which oversees the Division of Children Youth and Families, said that in order to protect client confidentiality, he could not confirm whether the agency is involved in a case.

Panama ex-dictator Noriega is critical after brain surgeries

By JUAN ZAMORANO, Associated Press

PANAMA CITY (AP) — Former Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega was in critical condition and sedated in a hospital's intensive care unit Wednesday after undergoing two brain surgeries.

Noriega, 83, underwent the first procedure Tuesday morning to remove a benign tumor from his brain. But after that surgery, doctors discovered a hemorrhage that forced them to go back in that afternoon, his daughters and lawyer said.

Noriega attorney Ezra Angel said doctors succeeded in stopping the bleeding during the second procedure, and Noriega was returned to intensive care.

"His condition has not improved, nor has it worsened," Angel said Wednesday.

Officials at the Santo Tomas public hospital in Panama City did not comment or return calls.

The tumor was detected in the months after Noriega returned to Panama in December 2011 and was imprisoned for corruption and the killings of political opponents during his reign in the 1980s.

Doctors have said it grew unexpectedly recently and threatened the life of the former dictator, who has also suffered from vascular ailments and uses a wheelchair.

Noriega was transferred from prison to house arrest Jan. 29 to prepare for the procedure, which was originally scheduled for mid-February.

The former general ruled Panama with an iron fist in 1983-89. He was ousted by a U.S. invasion in 1989 and jailed for years in the United States on drug charges.

He was then imprisoned in France for money laundering, before being returned in 2011 to Panama, where he had already been convicted in absentia.

Trump's in-house guardrail: White House Counsel Don McGahn

By JULIE BYKOWICZ, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As Donald Trump raged in an Oval Office filled with tense senior aides, he trained his eyes on one in particular: White House Counsel Don McGahn.

During the Friday afternoon tirade, which would spill into a Saturday morning tweetstorm, Trump erupted over his attorney general's decision to step out of a sensitive investigation on Russian contacts and tangled with his team over how to redo his troubled travel ban. His angriest remarks were reserved for McGahn, who was tasked with making a complex legal case on both fronts to a president concerned about political optics.

But less than 24 hours after being on the receiving end of a Trump smackdown, McGahn was in Florida with his boss at an amiable work session and dinner. The new travel ban the president signed on Monday shows he took the lawyer's advice to stop pursuing his appeal of the first one.

In a White House that prides itself on defying the system, McGahn often has the unenviable task of defining that system's parameters. He's an in-house guardrail for a president who likes to veer out of traditional bounds, and McGahn certainly doesn't win all of his battles. Yet for far longer than anyone in the White House outside of Trump's family, McGahn has retained his status of trusted confidant and adviser

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to a man who isn't interested in making the job easy.

"Don's style is such that it avoids having him get sucked into the vortex," said Leonard Leo, an adviser to the White House on the Supreme Court nomination process and judicial and legal appointments. "He's not yapping in the president's ear just for the sake of being close to power. So when they do talk, it's more meaningful."

McGahn — a 48-year-old election lawyer who ended his side-gig as a guitarist in an '80s cover band to take on the all-consuming his White House post — walked into an empty West Wing office on Jan. 20. He's lived the past month and a half in dog years. In rapid fire, he's fielded unprecedented ethics questions, suffered a bruising legal defeat on a signature policy and managed the hiring, and one firing, of prominent officials.

A single tweet can send him scrambling without warning, as last weekend when the president accused former President Barack Obama of wire-tapping his phone at Trump Tower. McGahn and his team were dispatched to find out what, if any, options the president had to learn more about the situation, according to White House spokesman Sean Spicer, who disputed there was anything inappropriate about the inquiry.

"If you know Don and the team here, these are unbelievably talented lawyers," Spicer said Monday. "They are very skilled at knowing where the bounds are."

McGahn declined to comment for this story.

In one of his few interviews, with a conservative TV station during the Republican National Convention last summer, he laughed when asked to preview what Trump would say in his speech that night: "I wouldn't dare begin to guess what Mr. Trump is going to say."

His boss' unpredictability isn't McGahn's only challenge. Trump's business ties raise a pile of legal and ethical quandaries for this White House. McGahn has hired 26 senior lawyers for his Office of the White House Counsel, including a team of four to contend with the nonstop questions that dog a billionaire president who retains a financial interest in his global real estate and marketing empire.

He has sought advice and support from many of his predecessors, including Obama's first chief White House Counsel Bob Bauer and George H.W. Bush's top attorney C. Boyden Gray.

"It was more of a commiseration," Gray said of his conversation with McGahn. While the elder Bush had a successful private-sector career in which he pioneered offshore drilling, he'd sold everything off by the time he went into politics, he said. "There weren't the entanglements the Trump family has."

As the campaign's general counsel, McGahn was with Trump on June 16, 2015, the day he announced his bid for the Republican presidential nomination. He was with him on the ground in every important primary state and again on Nov. 8, as the final results rolled in. Only Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law-turned adviser, has also traveled each step in Trump's improbable rise.

That familiarity has made McGahn comfortable enough with Trump to push him without permanently damaging their relationship — even if a discussion becomes "heated" or "spirited," as two administration officials described last week's exchange. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private conversations.

It fell to McGahn to explain that it was up to no one but Attorney General Jeff Sessions to make the decision to recuse himself from any investigation into Trump campaign links to Russia — a move that Trump argued felt like an admission of defeat.

"It can be emotionally draining," the adviser Leo said. "You don't just have to answer complex legal questions, but you have to do so in a way that is accepted and embraced by your boss."

Although Trump's first travel ban was written with little legal vetting, McGahn took heat for it as courts blocked it. Some legal experts called the executive order sloppy. The federal appeals panel said it could not rely on McGahn's after-the-fact written assurance that lawful permanent residents were exempt. The new ban expressly does not apply to that group.

McGahn also was in the middle of the ouster of Michael Flynn, Trump's first national security adviser. According to the White House, he was the first to learn from the acting attorney general, Sally Yates, that Flynn had not been forthcoming about the nature of his contacts with the Russian ambassador to the U.S.

McGahn took the information to Trump that same day, although Flynn wasn't fired until after details

were made public.

McGahn, who friends say has both the humor and intensity to withstand pressure, is a former chairman of the Federal Election Commission, where he pushed to give political groups and candidates more flexibility in raising and spending money. His wife, Shannon McGahn, recently joined the Treasury Department as a senior adviser, after serving as staff director for the House Financial Services Committee.

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US, China lock horns on missile defense against NKorea

By **MATTHEW PENNINGTON, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — If China was hoping for a concession from the U.S. after recently suspending coal imports from cash-poor North Korea, it got the opposite.

The U.S. is starting to deploy a missile defense system in South Korea which the allies say is needed to defend against North Korea. But China and North Korea view it as a threat.

That adds to strains in the high-stakes relationship between Washington and Beijing weeks into Donald Trump's presidency. And it could further complicate cooperation between the two world powers in combating something they both oppose — North Korea's nuclear program.

The U.S. military said Tuesday it has started bringing in equipment for the deployment of the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense system, or THAAD. It says the system is designed to intercept and destroy short and medium-range ballistic missiles during the last part of their flights.

The announcement came after North Korea on Monday launched four ballistic missiles into ocean off Japan — a show of force in response to annual U.S.-South Korean military drills. The allies say they are routine but Pyongyang views them as rehearsal for an invasion.

China is concerned that THAAD has powerful radar that could track Chinese missiles and weaken its deterrence against the United States. Beijing said Tuesday it will take "necessary measures" to protect itself and warning that the U.S. and South Korea should be prepared to bear the consequences.

China has already exerted pressure on some South Korean commercial interests, but it remains unclear how the deployment will impact ties with Washington, which insists China is not targeted by THAAD. U.S.-based experts say that Chinese concerns are exaggerated, if not entirely unwarranted.

"The question is whether China having expressed their grievances will be prepared to let this pass or will let it erode their relationship with South Korea and a meaningful capacity for cooperation with the United States on North Korea," said Jonathan Pollack of the Brookings Institution think tank.

China proposed Wednesday that North Korea could suspend its nuclear and missile activities in exchange for a halt in joint military drills conducted by the U.S. and South Korea.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi said in Beijing that the "suspension-for-suspension can help us break out of the security dilemma and bring the parties back to the negotiating table."

Both the U.S. and South Korea resisted the idea. U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, said: "We have to see some sort of positive action taken by North Korea before we can ever take them (North Korea) seriously."

North Korea is one of the main national security challenges facing the Trump administration. It may already have the capability to strike South Korea and Japan — and the tens of thousands of American forces there — with nuclear weapons, and could pose the same threat to the U.S. mainland within years.

For China, the North's nuclear program poses a less direct challenge, but it could destabilize Northeast Asia and incentivize Japan, a rival of China's to acquire nuclear weapons of their own. And it could encourage the U.S. to strengthen its military posture in the region with systems like THAAD.

In a sign of growing impatience with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, China announced last month it was suspending coal imports from North Korea for the rest of the year in adherence to U.N. sanctions passed in November after the isolated nation's most powerful nuclear test explosion to date.

But Beijing remains reluctant to exert too much pressure on its traditional ally, fearing that a regime collapse would lead to a unified Korea allied with Washington at its border.

Joel Wit, a former State Department official and specialist on North Korea, said that the main factor in

the continuing disconnect between the U.S. and China on dealing with Pyongyang is rooted not in differences over missile defense, but in a stalemate over how to approach the problem.

"The U.S. is always talking about increasing pressure, and taking military steps to protect its allies and itself," he said. "But the Chinese are always talking about need to reach out and talk to the North Koreans."

State Department acting spokesman Mark Toner made clear Tuesday that the U.S. administration is not seeking direct engagement with a provocative Pyongyang. When Secretary of State Rex Tillerson makes his first visit to the region next week, with stops in Tokyo, Seoul and Beijing, he'll be seeking a "strategic coordination" to address the escalating threat posed by North Korea.

"Right now we are focused on sanctions, and implementing those sanctions to the fullest extent possible, but we're looking at other possibilities as well," Toner said, without elaborating.

The THAAD deployment will hang over Tillerson's meetings with the Chinese.

Missile expert John Schilling said Beijing's concern is that the system's radar could provide detailed tracking of Chinese long-range missiles and that could be used to alert U.S. missile defenses.

"This is somewhat exaggerated as a threat, but the full capabilities of the THAAD system are classified so it can't be entirely discounted," he said, adding that China could counter that by modifying their missiles with multiple warheads or decoys, a process that it has likely begun already.

"We have to consider whether this leads in the direction of an arms race between United States and China," Schilling said, "which I don't think anybody wants."

Caveman menu: Woolly rhino in Belgium, mushrooms in Spain

By **SETH BORENSTEIN, AP Science Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Eating like a caveman meant chowing down on woolly rhinos and sheep in Belgium, but munching on mushrooms, pine nuts and moss in Spain. It all depended on where they lived, new research shows.

Scientists got a sneak peek into the kitchen of three Neanderthals by scraping off the plaque stuck on their teeth and examining the DNA. What they found smashes a common public misconception that the caveman diet was mostly meat. They also found hints that one sickly teen used primitive versions of penicillin and aspirin to help ease his pain.

The dental plaque provides a lifelong record of what went in the Neanderthals' mouths and the bacteria that lived in their guts, said study co-author Alan Cooper, director of the Australian Centre for Ancient DNA in Adelaide.

"It's like a fossil," he said.

While past studies showed varied Neanderthal diets, genetic testing allowed researchers to say what kind of meat or mushrooms they ate, Cooper said. The 42,000-year-old Belgian Neanderthal's menu of sheep and woolly rhino reflected what roamed in the plains around the Neanderthal's home, he said. The research is in Wednesday's journal *Nature*.

"I do wonder what rhino tastes like," said study lead author Laura Weyrich, a paleo microbiologist at the University of Adelaide. "I'm not a big fan of sheep. I think I'll take the rhino."

There were no signs of meat in the diet of the two 50,000-year-old Spanish Neanderthals, but calling them vegetarians would be a stretch, Cooper said. Their own bones showed that they were eaten by cannibals.

The two specimens in Spain were a female adult and a teenage male, who wasn't a son or brother but may have been some other relative according to their DNA, Weyrich said.

The young male was obviously sick, with an infected mouth and other injuries, she said. But on his teeth — and only his — were two residues. One was from the poplar tree where doctors would later get a key ingredient in aspirin and the other was from mold that had a version of the antibiotic penicillin.

The primitive penicillin was a surprise, Cooper said. It's too premature to say the mold was being used for that purpose, but "it does make me wonder," he said.

The research gives direct evidence for what was already suspected about their diverse diets and use of medicine, said University of Colorado Museum's Paola Villa, who wasn't part of the study. She called the new study "very significant."

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Neanderthals went extinct about 37,000 years ago, about 26,000 years before their dinners, the woolly rhinos, she said

Follow Seth Borenstein at <http://twitter.com/borenbears> and his work can be found at <http://bigstory.ap.org/content/seth-borenstein>

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, March 9, the 68th day of 2017. There are 297 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 9, 1841, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *United States v. The Amistad*, ruled in favor of a group of Africans captured by U.S. authorities after they had seized control of a Spanish schooner, *La Amistad*, that was transporting them to a life of slavery in Cuba; the justices ruled, 7-1, that the Africans had been illegally enslaved, and should be set free.

On this date:

In 1796, the future emperor of the French, Napoleon Bonaparte, married Josephine de Beauharnais (boh-ahr-NAY'). (The couple later divorced.)

In 1862, during the Civil War, the ironclads USS Monitor and CSS Virginia (formerly USS Merrimac) clashed for five hours to a draw at Hampton Roads, Virginia.

In 1907, Indiana's General Assembly passed America's first involuntary sterilization law, one aimed at "confirmed criminals, idiots, imbeciles, and rapists" in state custody. (This law was struck down in 1921 by the Indiana Supreme Court, but a new law was passed in 1927 that was repealed in 1974.)

In 1916, more than 400 Mexican raiders led by Pancho Villa attacked Columbus, New Mexico, killing 18 Americans. During the First World War, Germany declared war on Portugal.

In 1933, Congress, called into special session by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, began its "hundred days" of enacting New Deal legislation.

In 1945, during World War II, U.S. B-29 bombers began launching incendiary bomb attacks against Tokyo, resulting in an estimated 100,000 deaths.

In 1954, CBS newsman Edward R. Murrow critically reviewed Wisconsin Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy's anti-communism campaign on "See It Now."

In 1964, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan*, raised the standard for public officials to prove they'd been libeled in their official capacity by news organizations.

In 1977, about a dozen armed Hanafi Muslims invaded three buildings in Washington, D.C., killing one person and taking more than 130 hostages. (The siege ended two days later.)

In 1987, Chrysler Corp. announced it had agreed to buy the financially ailing American Motors Corp.

In 1992, former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin (men-AH'-kem BAY'-gihn) died in Tel Aviv at age 78.

In 1997, gangsta rapper The Notorious B.I.G. (Christopher Wallace) was killed in a still-unsolved drive-by shooting in Los Angeles; he was 24. French journalist Jean-Dominique Bauby (zhahn doh-mee-NEEK' baw-BEE'), 44, died at a hospital outside Paris just after publication of his book "The Diving Bell and the Butterfly," which he'd dictated by blinking his left eyelid after being almost totally paralyzed by a stroke.

Ten years ago: Attorney General Alberto Gonzales and FBI Director Robert S. Mueller (MUHL'-ur) acknowledged the FBI had improperly used the USA Patriot Act to secretly pry out personal information about Americans; they apologized and vowed to prevent further illegal intrusions. Former FBI agent Robert Levinson went missing after checking out of a hotel on Iran's Kish (kihsh) Island a day before his 59th birthday; his fate remains unknown. Brad Delp, lead singer for the band Boston, was found dead in his southern New Hampshire home; he was 55.

Five years ago: A high-profile international mission to end the Syrian crisis stumbled before it began as the opposition rejected calls by U.N. envoy Kofi Annan for dialogue with President Bashar Assad as point-

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less and out of touch after a year of violence. Lindsey Vonn of the United States won the World Cup giant slalom race in Are, Sweden to clinch her fourth overall title.

One year ago: Six days before the Florida primary, Democrats Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders tangled in an intense debate in Miami over who was the true friend of American Hispanics, and had even worse things to say about Republican front-runner Donald Trump. During a Trump rally in Fayetteville, North Carolina, John Franklin McGraw struck protester Rakeem Jones as Jones was being removed by sheriff's deputies (McGraw, who later apologized for his actions, received a 30-day suspended sentence). Five people, including a pregnant woman, were shot to death in an ambush during a cookout in Wilksburg, a suburb of Pittsburgh; two suspects have been charged. A man convicted of killing five people, including his ex-wife, in a 1997 shooting rampage near Houston, was executed by the state of Texas.

Today's Birthdays: Former Sen. James L. Buckley, Conservative-N.Y., is 94. Singer-actress Keely Smith is 89. Singer Lloyd Price is 84. Actress Joyce Van Patten is 83. Country singer Mickey Gilley is 81. Actress Trish Van Devere is 76. Singer-musician John Cale (The Velvet Underground) is 75. Singer Mark Lindsay (Paul Revere and the Raiders) is 75. Former ABC anchorman Charles Gibson is 74. Rock musician Robin Trower is 72. Singer Jeffrey Osborne is 69. Country musician Jimmie Fadden (The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band) is 69. Actress Jaime Lyn Bauer is 68. Magazine editor Michael Kinsley is 66. TV newscaster Faith Daniels is 60. Actress Linda Fiorentino is 59. Actor Tom Amandes is 58. Actor-director Lonny Price is 58. Country musician Rusty Hendrix (Confederate Railroad) is 57. Actress Juliette Binoche is 53. Rock musician Robert Sledge (Ben Folds Five) is 49. Rock musician Shannon Leto (30 Seconds to Mars) is 47. Rapper C-Murder (AKA C-Miller) is 46. Actor Emmanuel Lewis is 46. Actress Jean Louisa Kelly is 45. Actor Kerr Smith is 45. Actor Oscar Isaac is 38. Rapper Chingy is 37. Actor Matthew Gray Gubler is 37. Rock musician Chad Gilbert (New Found Glory) is 36. Roots rock musician Ben Tanner (Alabama Shakes) is 34. Actress Brittany Snow is 31. Rapper Bow Wow is 30. Rapper YG is 27. Actor Luis Armand Garcia is 25. Actress Cierra Ramirez is 22.

Thought for Today: "Conscience is the perfect interpreter of life." — Karl Barth, Swiss theologian (1886-1966).