

Groton Daily Independent

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3 on All-NEC Boys Team

Three Groton Area players have been named to the All-Conference Northeast Conference team.

Seniors Bennett Shabazz and Sean Schuring were named to the second team and junior Seric Shabazz was named to the third team.

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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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 gravy, mashed potatoes, mixed vegetables, rice and raisins, whole wheat bread.

School Lunch: Chicken strips, wedge fries, fruit, carrots and dip, breadstick.

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

School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m., Groton Community Center

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

Dakota Brush

Brooms, Brushes, Mops, Can Liners, Paper Products.

Get Ready for Spring With
Wash Brushes & Squeegees

397-9337

104 N. Main, Groton

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Gov. Daugaard Signs Bills Into Law

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

HB 1077 – An Act to provide for the assignment of certain benefits in dental care insurance coverage.

HB 1083 – An Act to establish certain provisions for awarding grants and collecting surcharges related to the equal access to our courts fund.

HB 1118 – An Act to eliminate the need to prove the use of force, fraud, or coercion in the human trafficking of minors.

HB 1195 – An Act to revise certain provisions regarding health coverage for applied behavior analysis.

SB 79 – An Act to revise certain provisions regarding the display of motorcycle license plates.

GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6 School Board Meeting

March 13, 2017 – 7:00 PM – GHS Conference Room

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of minutes of February 13, 2017 school board meeting, February 27, 2017 special school board meeting, March 6, 2017 special school board meeting, and March 9, 2017 special school board meeting.

2. Approval of North Central Special Education Co-Op (NCSEC) agenda items...as fiscal agent.

3. Approval of February District bills for payment.

4. Approval of February 2017 Financial Report, Agency Accounts, and Investments.

5. Approval of February 2017 School Transportation Report.

6. Approval of February 2017 School Lunch Report.

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

7. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.

8. Accept or reject Groton Area Elementary project bids.

9. MS/HS Project finance discussion and determination of financing term and structure [Tom Grimmond, Dougherty & Company].

10. Review and approval of 2017-2018 school calendar.

11. 2nd Reading of Recommended Policy Changes to Policy AE Wellness Policy.

12. Review School District Audit.

13. School Board Committee Reports:

a. Building, Grounds, & Transportation: Clint Fjelstad, Merle Harder, Marty Weismantel

b. Personnel, Policy, & Curriculum: Deb Gengerke, Grant Rix

c. Negotiations: Kelly Kjelden, Steve Smith

14. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

NEW BUSINESS:

15. Approve resignation of Mrs. Kayla Krause at the end of the 2016-2017 school year.

16. Approve resignation of Mrs. Katie Miller at the end of the 2016-2017 school year.

17. Approve resignation of Mrs. Gail Kyar at the end of the 2016-2017 school year.

18. Approve resignation of Mrs. Kelli Hanson at the end of the 2016-2017 school year.

19. Approve 2017-2018 signed administrative contracts.

20. Executive session pursuant SDCL 1-25-2(2) for student issue.

21. Approve Open Enrollment 17-25.

22. Discuss time/place of March 27, 2017 school board meeting.

ADJOURN



**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**



**Larry Zimmerman
Secretary**

Veterans Keep Marching On

George Washington once said, "When we assumed the soldier, we did not lay aside the citizen."

There was no waiting line for our men and women in uniform when they raised their right hands and volunteered to serve. There shouldn't be a waiting line when they return home and need our help getting the care they've earned.

Unfortunately, it took the government thirty plus years to recognize that there was a link between Agent Orange and the devastating health effects on our service members. Veterans waited decades to get the care they desperately needed and clearly earned. The VA now recognizes certain cancers and other health problems as presumptive diseases associated with exposure to Agent Orange or other herbicides during military service. Veterans are encouraged to partake in the VA's Agent Orange Registry health exam to ensure that the research continues, presumptives are recognized and care is provided to our veterans.

Conflicts change, contaminants change, but the fact that our heroes are exposed to these toxins has not changed.

Recently the VA launched the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry in response to concerns that veterans who deployed after 1990 were experiencing a range of respiratory illnesses. The goal of the registry is to help researchers study the health effects of burn pits and other airborne hazards. We encourage veterans to visit the registry site (www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/burnpits/registry.asp) to ensure that our heroes will not have to wait four decades for resolution.

Wars, conflicts and battles have been fought throughout the years and continue today.

Continued research is vital if we are to complete our promise to take care of the men and women who served.

Larry Zimmerman, Secretary
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs

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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



Over 70 Patrons attend MS/HS building project meeting

The big election is April 11 when voters of the Groton Area School District will go to the polls to decide the fate of a \$14 million bond issue for a middle/high school renovation project.

Approximately 74 people plus nine school board/administration attended the meeting at the Groton Community Center.

Superintendent Joe Schwan and Business Manager Mike Weber did most of the presentation at the meeting.

The Groton Arena will be paid off in December of 2020, resulting in a reduction of 24.2 cents per thousand dollar assessed valuation. Patrons of Bristol and Conde are not paying for the Arena as they came into the district after the Arena was built. The east side building project will be paid off in 2022, resulting in a drop of 18.1 cents. This affects the entire school district. Groton City residents will see a reduction of \$1.50 in 2019 once the pool is paid off.

The elementary school project is going to be at 41.3 cents and the proposed MS/HS project is at 50 cents. At the 50-cent rate over 20 years, the district would be paying interest only for the first five years until the two current projects are paid for, then those funds will be used to pay for the principle as well. The end result is paying more in interest; however, it would lower the mil level from 84 cents to 50 cents.

The district will need 60 percent voter approval. If passed, the construction would start in the spring of 2018 with the district occupying the new building in fall of 2019. The 1934 addition would be removed with the new addition and other school improvements being done with this plan.

New homeowners must file by March 15, to get owner occupied property tax reduction

PIERRE, S.D. -- Homeowners living in a different or new home this year are advised that the deadline for filing the owner-occupied, single family dwelling certificate is March 15 (postmarked). The certificate allows homeowners the eligibility for a property tax reduction.

Any South Dakota homeowner who owned and occupied a home on Nov. 1, 2016, is eligible for this classification and the property tax reduction. Taxpayers that have received the reductions previously and still own and occupy the same home will continue to receive the property tax reduction without filing a new certificate.

Wendy Semmler, Property Tax program manager said, "The Department of Revenue wants everyone who is eligible to receive the property tax reduction of owner-occupied status for their home."

The 2017 valuation notices sent to taxpayers beginning March 1 will indicate if the property classification is owner-occupied. Homeowners are advised to check their notices and make sure their property is classified as owner-occupied.

Taxpayers who have purchased a home, have built a new home prior to Nov. 1, 2016, or have previously not applied for the classification must apply to their county director of equalization by March 15, 2017.

To obtain a form or ask questions regarding the owner-occupied certificate, homeowners are encouraged to contact their county's director of equalization or call the Property and Special Taxes Division of the South Dakota Department of Revenue at 605-773-3311.

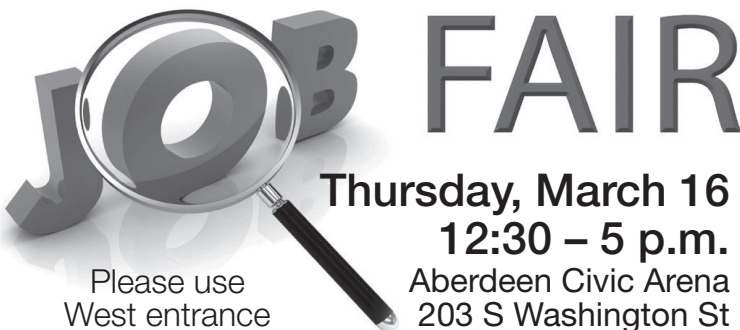
The form is available on the Department of Revenue web site at:

http://dor.sd.gov/Taxes/Property_Taxes/Forms.aspx

Come meet with local hiring businesses!

Discover career opportunities • Meet recruiters
Distribute your resume • Learn about many companies

2017 ABERDEEN AREA



Thursday, March 16

12:30 – 5 p.m.

Aberdeen Civic Arena
203 S Washington St

Please use
West entrance

Let the Department of Labor and Regulation help you prepare

Write your resume • Fill out applications • Practice interviewing skills

Sponsored By:

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- Aberdeen Area Human Resource Association
- Aberdeen Development Corporation
- Aberdeen News Company
- Northern State University, Career Development and Placement Center
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Today in Weather History

March 10, 2005: High winds of 35 to 45 mph with gusts to near 70 mph occurred across all of central and northeast South Dakota from early morning to early evening. The high winds overturned a semi-truck near Mound City; knocked a large branch down onto a pickup truck in Selby; blew a glass door of a store in Clark off; tore a sign down in Aberdeen, and ripped the roof off a mobile home in South Shore.

March 10, 2009: A strong low-pressure system tracking across the panhandle of Oklahoma into the Great Lakes region produced moderate to heavy snow across northeast South Dakota from the morning to the evening of the 10th. Strong north to northwest winds gusting to 45 mph resulted in blizzard conditions. Travel became difficult, if not, impossible across northeast South Dakota. Interstate 29 between Watertown and the North Dakota border was closed for several hours. Several minor accidents occurred along with some injuries. Snowfall amounts included; 3 inches near Milbank; 4 inches near Columbia, Summit, and at Sisseton; 5 inches at Waubay and Wilmot; 6 inches 10 miles northeast of Sisseton, Britton, and Roy Lake; 7 inches in Webster and Westport.

Bitter cold air filtered in behind the low-pressure system bringing record cold to the area. On the 11th, Aberdeen and Sisseton broke their record low highs for the date with afternoon highs only reaching zero. The record at Aberdeen had been in place since 1896. Sisseton also set a record low of 14 degrees below zero on March 12th.

1912 - The barometric pressure reached 29.26 inches at Los Angeles, CA, and 29.46 inches at San Diego CA, setting all-time records for those two locations. (David Ludlum)

1922 - Dodge City, KS, reported a record 24 hour total of 17.5 inches of snow. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Strong northwesterly winds ushered arctic air into the eastern U.S. Gales lashed the middle and northern Atlantic coast. Winds gusted to 50 mph at Manteo NC and Cape Hatteras NC. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A winter storm produced snow and high winds in the Central Rocky Mountain Region. Snowfall totals in Utah ranged up to 42 inches at Alta, with 36 inches reported at the Brian Head Ski Resort in 24 hours. Winds gusted to 72 mph at La Junta CO and Artesia NM. (The National Weather Summary)

(Storm Data)

1989 - Thirty-four cities in the central and southwestern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date. The high of 85 degrees at Hanksville UT was a record for March, and Pueblo CO equalled their March record of 86 degrees. Hill City KS warmed from a morning low of 30 degrees to an afternoon high of 89 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)



livestream

Upcoming Events

Monday, March 13, 7 p.m.








City Council Meeting

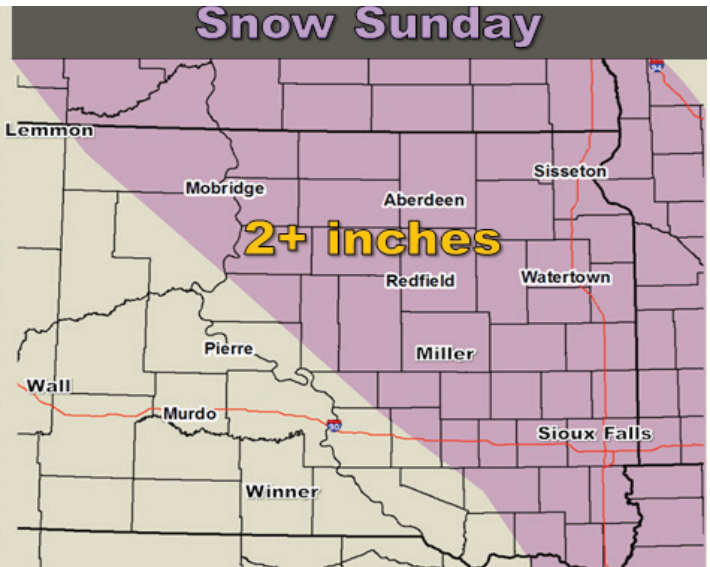
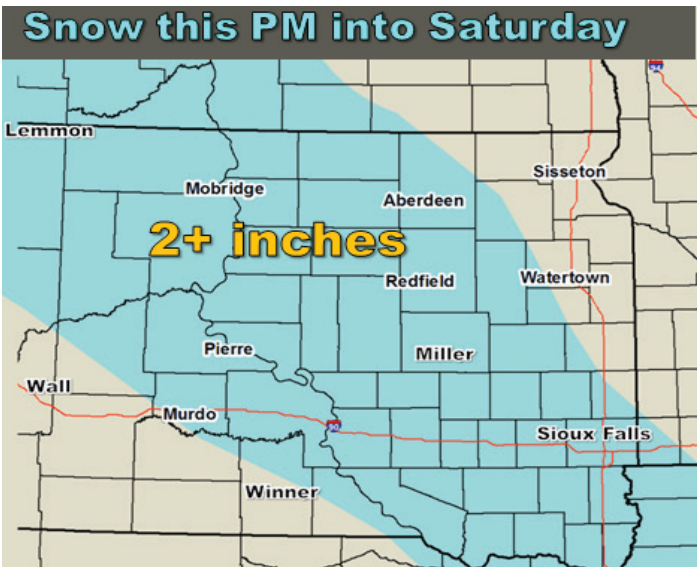
School Board Meeting


gdilive.com


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Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
 40%	 70%	 60% → 20%		 80%	 50% → 20%	
Mostly Cloudy then Chance Snow	Snow Likely	Snow Likely then Slight Chance Snow	Mostly Cloudy	Heavy Snow	Chance Snow then Slight Chance Snow	Partly Sunny
High: 18 °F	Low: 8 °F	High: 20 °F	Low: 8 °F	High: 22 °F	Low: 8 °F	High: 19 °F



 **2 to 5" snow**
highest over north-central SD

 **2 to 7" snow**
highest over eastern SD

 **Most falling this evening through tonight**

 **Most falling during daytime hours Sunday**



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD



Updated: 3/10/2017 5:38 AM Central

Published on: 03/10/2017 at 5:48AM

Two snow events on tap through the weekend, with possible travel impacts, especially Sunday. A prolonged period of light to moderate snow will begin today, and linger into Saturday. 2 to 5 inches of snow is expected from north-central to southeastern South Dakota, with much of the snow falling this evening through tonight. The second round of snow will fall mainly during the daytime hours Sunday, and could bring 2 to 7 inches of snow to eastern South Dakota. Check out the latest forecast at www.weather.gov/abr

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 24.8 F at 12:00 AM

Low Outside Temp: 6.3 F at 11:54 PM

High Gust: 20.0 Mph at 11:40 AM

Rain: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 68° in 1911

Record Low: -24 in 1948

Average High: 37°F

Average Low: 18°F

Average Precip in March.: 0.30

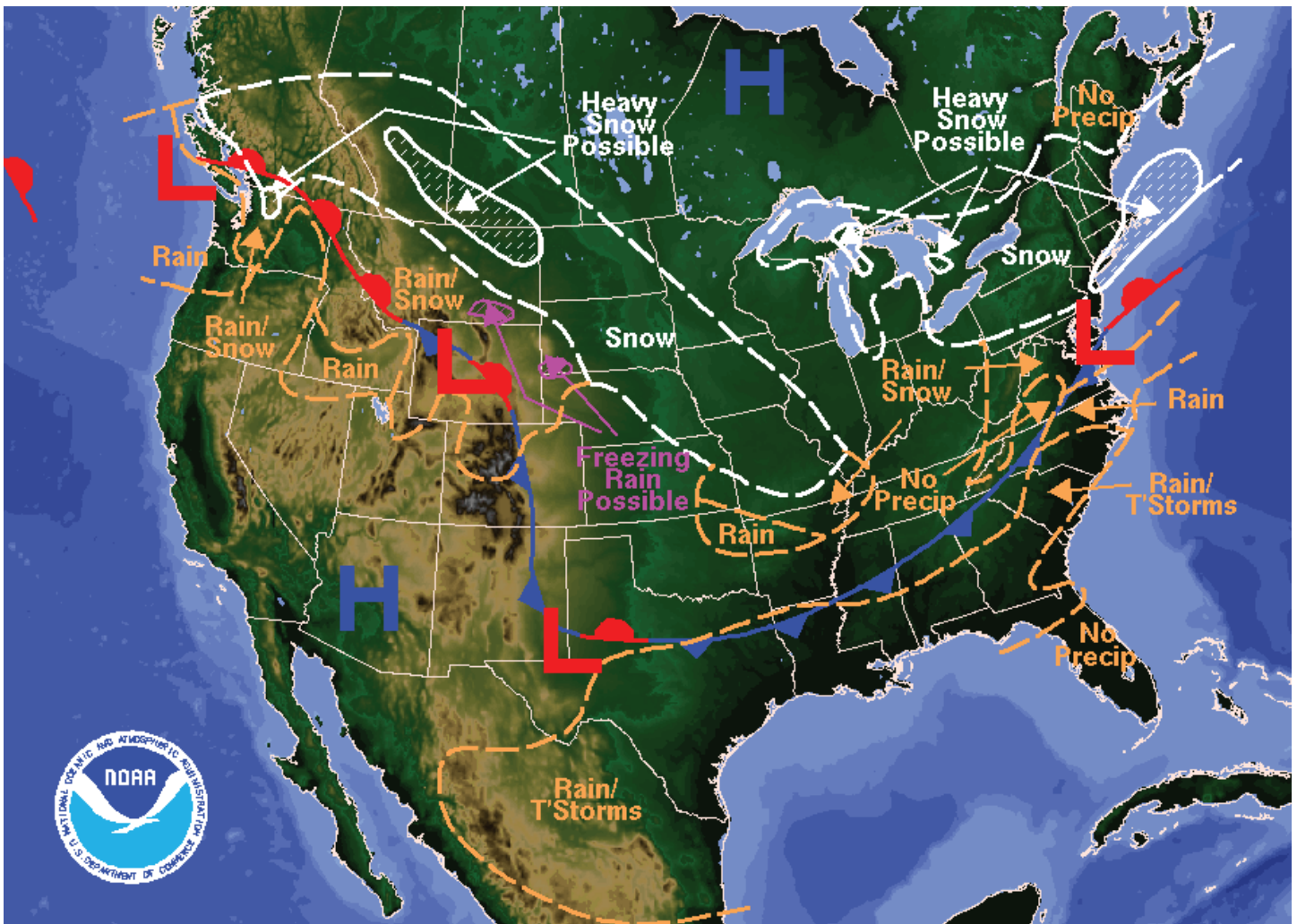
Precip to date in March.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 1.32

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 6:33 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:53 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Fri, Mar 10, 2017, issued 4:12 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

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LIFELONG LEARNING

Oswald Avery and a group of biologists were looking for a method to cure pneumonia. While doing their research they accidentally discovered the properties of DNA – a unique gift from God that gives each person a unique identity. It has had and will have a direct impact on each of our lives as scientists expand its usefulness. It has the potential to assist physicians in diagnosing illnesses and in prescribing medications that will increase the healing process.

Avery did not have the discovery of DNA as a lifetime goal or objective. In fact, he worked in the laboratories of the Rockefeller Institute Hospital in New York City for many years and many of his research efforts failed.

But there was one standard in his life that kept him motivated. Each time he failed in one of his experiments, he took great pride in saying, "Whenever you fall, pick up something!"

Paul had that attitude. In his second letter to the Corinthians he wrote that God's "gracious favor is all you need. My power works best in your weakness."

Paul wrote those words when God refused to remove his "affliction." Yet, through his "affliction" he understood and saw God at work in his life.

How? God gave Paul His courage, strength and power to overcome his doubts and weaknesses. Trust Him! Good things await you!

Prayer: When life seems to be crumbling all around us, Lord, help us to look to You in faith, believing that You have a gift for us in the midst of life's "afflictions." In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: 2 Corinthians 12:9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

News from the Associated Press

Farm Rescue nonprofit gets annual day of recognition

HORACE, N.D. (AP) — The Farm Rescue farm aid nonprofit in the Northern Plains is getting an annual day of recognition.

The National Day Calendar has proclaimed the third Thursday of March as “National Farm Rescuer Day,” beginning next year. It coincides with National Agriculture Week.

North Dakota-based Farm Rescue does physical labor for farmers in need in both Dakotas, Minnesota, Iowa and eastern Montana. Volunteer-based services including crop planting and harvesting, haying, hay bale-hauling and grain-hauling.

Founder Bill Gross says National Farm Rescuer Day provides a specific day to honor past, present and future supporters of the nonprofit, and generate more support.

Mission woman sentenced for pepper-spraying tribal officer

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A Mission woman has been sentenced to half a year in federal prison for spraying pepper spray in the face of a police officer.

U.S. Attorney Randolph Seiler says 29-year-old Abigail Garneaux attacked the Rosebud Sioux police officer last May when he went to arrest her for failing a field sobriety test.

Garneaux pleaded guilty in December to assaulting a federal officer and was sentenced late last month. She will be on home confinement for half a year and supervised release for two years following her prison term.

Garneaux also is known as Abigail Garcia.

Thursday's Scores By The Associated Press

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

State A Tournament

First Round

Lennox 63, Dell Rapids 58

St. Thomas More 57, Madison 32

Vermillion 49, Hamlin 43

Webster 57, Little Wound 50

State B Tournament

First Round

Ethan 56, Avon 43

Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 66, New Underwood 59

Sully Buttes 63, Parker 45

Warner 65, Timber Lake 39

South Dakota lawmakers struggle with difficult state budget

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Two Senate Republican state budget-writers said Thursday they're pushing for small funding increases for education, health care providers and state workers in the upcoming budget year despite lower-than-expected state revenues.

Sens. Deb Peters and Justin Cronin, members of the Joint Committee on Appropriations, said 0.3 percent increases for those areas would require about \$4 million. Senate lawmakers have been backing some form of increases, Peters said.

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"We can find efficiencies within state government in order to fund our priorities," she said.

But Republican Rep. David Anderson, the panel's vice chairman, said earlier in the day that he anticipated flat funding for schools, providers and state workers. Anderson wasn't immediately available for follow-up comment.

Republican Gov. Dennis Daugaard in December proposed 1 percent increases in those key areas for fiscal year 2018, which starts July 1.

The main part of South Dakota's 2017 legislative session ends on Friday, when lawmakers are expected to pass the state budget for fiscal year 2018. The Legislature has been dealing with lower-than-anticipated state tax collections caused by low inflation, less spending in the farm economy and e-commerce transactions that avoid sales taxes.

Lawmakers last month settled on state revenue targets significantly lower than those Daugaard included in his December budget address. Bureau of Finance and Management Commissioner Liza Clark said in an email that the governor's priority is a balanced budget.

"We will continue to work with the Legislature to make that happen," she said.

Rapid City police arrest man in woman's death

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Rapid City police say they have arrested a 23-year-old man in the death of a woman at a motel.

Police arrested the suspect Thursday on suspicion of first-degree murder and aggravated assault.

The body of 30-year-old Deziree Martinez was discovered Wednesday morning at the Price Motel. Police say the woman and the suspect had been inside the room with a third person on Tuesday night when an argument broke out. Authorities say the suspect tried to stab Martinez when the third person stepped in and defended her. Police say the suspect chased the other person from the room with a knife, then returned and stabbed Martinez multiple times before fleeing.

It's the city's fourth homicide this year. There were only two in Rapid City all of last year.

South Dakota House approves governor's protest legislation

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The state House has approved Gov. Dennis Daugaard's public safety bill addressing potential oil pipeline protests in South Dakota.

Members voted 55-12 Thursday for the bill after it initially failed to receive the two-thirds majority required to pass it. The Senate is to take up plan Friday.

A House-Senate negotiating committee earlier Thursday put an emergency provision back into the bill, which would make it take effect immediately.

The bill 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, among other provisions.

Matt Konenkamp, a policy adviser to the governor, says that Daugaard is inviting South Dakota tribal leaders to discuss with public safety officials and others how best to manage possible protests collaboratively.

Yankton officials propose entertainment venue

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — Officials in Yankton are proposing a multi-faceted entertainment venue that would emphasize downtown and utilize the river.

Yankton Area Progressive Growth officials presented the Port Yankton proposal to the public on Wednesday, the Daily Press & Dakotan (<http://bit.ly/2mFbPyO>) reported.

Port Yankton would encompass expanded gaming while closely echoing the Deadwood development model. According to the proposal, the development would include a casino, music space, river access, convention space, waterparks, restaurants, retail space, a downtown marina and an excursion boat.

The proposal said construction costs would be privately funded and are expected to be between \$30 million and \$50 million.

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"All we're asking for is an opportunity to compete for tourism and recreational visitors with Omaha, Council Bluffs, Sioux City and other bigger towns in our region," said Bernie Hunhoff, who leads Yankton Area Progressive Growth's exploration committee. "We're proposing Port Yankton as a cornerstone to a cultural and entertainment center in the historic Meridian District."

While Hunhoff doesn't usually encourage gambling, he acknowledged that it already has a large presence in the region.

"I've never been a big fan of gambling, but I like to think of myself as a realist," he said, noting that South Dakota currently has 46 casinos, not including video lottery, along with online gambling. "The cow's out of the barn."

Many people praised the idea. Hunhoff said he was happy to see the turnout Wednesday.

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

Man convicted in cartel killing loses appeal in North Dakota

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — A man convicted of murder in a North Dakota drug conspiracy case tied to a major Mexican cartel has lost his appeal after asserting that his lawyers did a poor job and one of them was too chummy with a federal judge.

U.S. District Judge Ralph Erickson of North Dakota sentenced Gabriel Martinez to life in prison in 2008 for the shooting death of Lee Avila of East Grand Forks, Minnesota. The killing was tied to the violent Arellano Felix cartel based in Tijuana, Mexico.

Martinez said in his appeal that defense attorney Thomas Dickson told him Erickson "owed him favors" and Martinez should take a plea deal rather than go to trial.

U.S. District Judge Jeffrey Viken of South Dakota heard the appeal because Erickson was called to testify.

Nebraska seeks fixes for reservation border-town beer sales

By GRANT SCHULTE, Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A tiny Nebraska village known for beer sales near an Indian reservation is getting a fresh look from state lawmakers who are hunting for new ways to fight alcohol abuse, panhandling and violence in the region.

Senators haven't had much luck addressing the problems in Whiteclay, a town blamed for fueling alcoholism on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. Attempts to restrict sales in the village have failed, as did a 2005 effort to deputize Pine Ridge tribal officers in Nebraska. State aid approved for tribal alcohol treatment programs went unspent.

Now, lawmakers are moving forward with a new push to pinpoint why the problems persist and what, if anything, they can do.

Senators gave first-round approval Thursday, 42-0, to a bill that would create a legislative task force to examine the public health problems in Whiteclay. The town's four beer stores sold the equivalent of 3.5 million cans of beer in 2015, despite having only about a dozen residents.

Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks of Lincoln said she introduced the bill because Whiteclay poses a "public health emergency" that has festered for too long. Public drunkenness has plagued Whiteclay for decades; the town draws panhandlers who beg for change and drink until they pass out on sidewalks.

"Our actions and our inactions in Nebraska are having devastating consequences on the people of Pine Ridge," Pansing Brooks said.

Pansing Brooks worked with Sen. Tom Brewer of Gordon, a member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe whose district includes Whiteclay. Brewer said addressing the problems have existed for so long that some people have become apathetic.

"There is literally an entire generation that has been lost, and another generation is about to be lost," Brewer said.

The Nebraska Liquor Control Commission is set to meet April 6 to discuss the stores' liquor licenses amid

complaints that the village lacks adequate law enforcement. In January, the Sheridan County board, whose jurisdiction includes Whiteclay, recommended that the state renew the licenses. Board members have expressed concerns that closing the stores could lead to an increase in intoxicated drivers in Nebraska.

Separately, a new nonprofit group led by a local ministry is trying to raise money to try to buy out the beer stores.

The committee would include senators, public health officials and the executive director of the Commission on Indian Affairs. Members would report their preliminary findings to the full Legislature in December 2017 and again in December 2018. A final report would come due in December 2019, after which time the task force would dissolve.

Sen. John Lowe of Kearney said he believes the problems caused by the widespread drinking should trump the argument that the stores are operating legally.

"There's nothing more important in the state of Nebraska than small business, except for our people," he said.

Follow Grant Schulte on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/GrantSchulte>

South Dakota Developmental Center workers vote to unionize

REDFIELD, S.D. (AP) — Workers at the South Dakota Developmental Center in Redfield have voted to unionize.

The American News reports (<http://bit.ly/2n9ZiaH>) that 88 of the 91 direct support professionals who were eligible to vote favored joining the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. They say it's an effort to improve safety for both clients and staff.

The state-funded facility helps people with intellectual and physical developmental disabilities. Last year, it faced criticism by former employees who accused the center of having a hostile administration, staff shortages and a dangerous work environment. The director at the time resigned.

By state law, the wages of employees at the developmental center can only be set by the state Legislature. Union organizer Thor Backus says that means the new union will focus on safety standards.

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

Keystone XL opponents appeal South Dakota authorization

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Opponents of the Keystone XL oil pipeline have asked a judge in Pierre, South Dakota, to reverse a decision by state regulators to authorize the portion of the project that would traverse the state.

Here's a look at the proceedings:

THE PIPELINE

The \$8 billion Keystone XL project would move crude oil from Alberta, Canada, across Montana and South Dakota to Nebraska, where it would connect with existing pipelines feeding refineries along the Gulf Coast.

Native American tribes, some landowners and environmental groups oppose the pipeline, fearing it would contaminate water supplies and contribute to pollution. Terry Cunha, a spokesman for pipeline developer TransCanada Corp., said in an email that 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."

The project has faced numerous speedbumps, not least of all former President Barack Obama's refusal to authorize the project. Since coming to office, President Donald Trump has signed executive orders in support of Keystone XL and other pipeline projects. TransCanada has submitted a new presidential permit application to the U.S. Department of State for approval.

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AT ISSUE IN SOUTH DAKOTA

The South Dakota Public Utilities Commission last year voted to accept TransCanada's guarantee that it would meet all conditions laid out by the commission when it approved that state's portion of the project in 2010.

Opponents appealed the commission's decision to state court, which heard arguments Wednesday. 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 because construction didn't start within the required four years.

Robin Martinez, an attorney for conservation and family agriculture group Dakota Rural Action, said the commission's decision should be reversed because his clients believed the panel was biased toward TransCanada and that the company failed to demonstrate 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 the Hughes County Courthouse in Pierre, South Dakota, before the hearing. Democratic Sen. Kevin Killer, a member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, said the months of protests opposing construction of the Dakota Access oil pipeline in North Dakota served as "preseason" for the fight against Keystone XL. Killer urged opponents to fight Keystone XL in other states along its route.

Crow Creek Sioux Tribe Chairman Brandon Sazue urged the people of South Dakota to "wake up," saying the dispute is not only about tribal rights.

"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 in preparation for protests in South Dakota similar to the Dakota Access oil pipeline demonstrations 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.

Aberdeen man sentenced to 40 years for killing infant son

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — An Aberdeen man accused of killing his infant son more than a year ago has been sentenced to 40 years in prison.

Twenty-seven-year-old Myron Touche Jr. pleaded guilty in February to manslaughter in the December 2015 death of 3-week-old Elias Touche, who authorities said suffered head trauma when Touche shook the child because he was crying.

The American News reports (<http://bit.ly/2mmOIXz>) that Touche was sentenced Wednesday. He was given credit for more than a year that he's already spent behind bars. He also was ordered to pay restitution to cover medical and burial costs. He'll be eligible for parole after serving 26 years in prison.

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

Mental exam ordered for teen accused of shooting principal

CANTON, S.D. (AP) — A judge has ordered a mental health exam for a high school student charged with shooting his principal in Harrisburg, South Dakota.

The teen will be evaluated by a psychiatrist at the Human Service Center in Yankton and receive treatment if necessary. Attorneys raised questions about his mental competency during a hearing Wednesday on whether he should be tried as an adult.

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Investigators say the student was 16 when he confronted Harrisburg High School Principal Kevin Lein with a handgun in his office on Sept. 30, 2015 and fired a single shot, striking Lein in his right arm. The principal has recovered.

The Argus Leader says few details have been released about a possible motive.

The teen is currently being held at the Juvenile Detention Center in Sioux Falls.

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

Boy, 2, throws tantrum during encounter with Queen Elizabeth

LONDON (AP) — A 2-year-old boy in England wasn't very impressed with a chance to meet Queen Elizabeth and showed it by throwing a tantrum in front of her majesty.

Little Alfie Lun was set to hand the queen flowers at the unveiling of a new war memorial in London on Thursday. Instead, he wriggled out of his mother's arms and attempted to sit on the ground. Eventually his mom was able to pick Alfie up again and he reluctantly handed the queen the bouquet.

The 90-year-old queen is also a great grandmother and didn't appear fazed by the meltdown. She smiled at the boy and his parents throughout the encounter.

Court unanimously ousts South Korea's leader for corruption

By HYUNG-JIN KIM and FOSTER KLUG, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea's Constitutional Court removed impeached President Park Geun-hye from office in a unanimous ruling Friday over a corruption scandal that has plunged the country into political turmoil and worsened an already-serious national divide.

The decision capped a stunning fall for the country's first female leader, who rode a wave of lingering conservative nostalgia for her late dictator father to victory in 2012, only to see her presidency crumble as millions of furious protesters filled the nation's streets.

Two people died during protests that followed the ruling. Police and hospital officials said about 30 protesters and police officers were injured in the violent clashes near the court, which prompted Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-ahn, the country's acting head of state, to plead for peace and urge Park's angry supporters to move on.

The ruling opens Park up to possible criminal proceedings — prosecutors have already named her a criminal suspect — and makes her South Korea's first democratically elected leader to be removed from office since democracy replaced dictatorship in the late 1980s.

It also deepens South Korea's political and security uncertainty as the country faces existential threats from North Korea, reported economic retaliation from a China furious about Seoul's cooperation with the U.S. on an anti-missile system, and questions in Seoul about the new Trump administration's commitment to the countries' security alliance.

Park's "acts of violating the constitution and law are a betrayal of the public trust," acting Chief Justice Lee Jung-mi said. "The benefits of protecting the constitution that can be earned by dismissing the defendant are overwhelmingly big. Hereupon, in a unanimous decision by the court panel, we issue a verdict: We dismiss the defendant, President Park Geun-hye."

Lee accused Park of colluding with longtime confidante Choi Soon-sil to extort tens of millions of dollars from businesses and letting Choi, a private citizen, meddle in state affairs and receive and look at documents with state secrets. Those allegations were previously made by prosecutors, but Park has refused to undergo any questioning, citing a law that gives a sitting leader immunity from prosecution.

It is not clear when prosecutors will try to interview with her.

Park won't vacate the presidential Blue House on Friday as her aides are preparing for her return to her private home in southern Seoul, according to the Blue House. Park wasn't planning any statement on Friday, it said.

Park's lawyer, Seo Seok-gu, who had previously compared Park's impeachment to the crucifixion of Jesus

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Christ, called the verdict a “tragic decision” made under popular pressure and questioned the fairness of what he called a “kangaroo court.”

South Korea must now hold an election within two months to choose Park’s successor. Liberal Moon Jae-in, who lost to Park in the 2012 election, currently enjoys a comfortable lead in opinion surveys.

Pre-verdict surveys showed that 70 to 80 percent of South Koreans wanted the court to approve Park’s impeachment. But there have been worries that Park’s ouster would further polarize the country and cause violence.

Sensing history, thousands of people — both pro-Park supporters, many of them dressed in army-style fatigues and wearing red berets, and those who wanted Park gone — gathered around the Constitutional Court building and a huge public square in downtown Seoul.

A big television screen was set up near the court so people could watch the verdict live. Hundreds of police were on hand, wearing helmets with visors and black, hard-plastic breastplates and shin guards. The streets near the court were lined with police buses and barricades.

Some of Park’s supporters reacted with anger after the ruling, shouting and hitting police officers and reporters with plastic flag poles and steel ladders, and climbing on police buses. Anti-Park protesters celebrated by marching in the streets near the presidential Blue House, carrying flags, signs and an effigy of Park dressed in prison clothes and tied up with rope.

The Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency said two people died while protesting Park’s removal. An official from the Seoul National University Hospital said that a man in his 70s, believed to be a Park supporter, died from head wounds after falling from the top of a police bus.

An official from the Kangbuk Samsung Hospital in Seoul said another man brought from the pro-Park rally died shortly after receiving CPR at the hospital. The hospital official couldn’t immediately confirm the cause of death.

In a televised speech, Hwang said “there would be people who feel they cannot understand or accept (the court ruling), but it’s now time to move on and end all conflict and standoff.”

Park’s parliamentary impeachment in December came after weeks of Saturday rallies that drew millions who wanted her resignation. Overwhelmed by the biggest rallies in decades, the voices of Park supporters were largely ignored. But they’ve recently regrouped and staged fierce pro-Park rallies since.

Prosecutors have arrested and indicted a slew of high-profile figures over the scandal, including Park’s confidante Choi, top Park administration officials and Samsung heir Lee Jae-yong.

Since Park is no longer in power, prosecutors can summon, question and possibly arrest her. Her critics want to see Park appear on TV while dressed in prison garb, handcuffed and bound like others involved in the scandal. But some analysts worry that could create a backlash by conservatives ahead of the presidential vote.

Among the most serious problems facing South Korea is China’s retaliation against the deployment of a U.S. high-tech missile defense system in the South. Ties with North Korea are terrible, with Pyongyang seeking to expand its nuclear and missile arsenal. Japan hasn’t sent back its ambassador, who was recalled two months ago over history disputes. South Korea also worries about the Trump administration asking for a greater financial contribution for U.S. troop deployment in the South.

Hwang has led the government as acting leader since Park’s impeachment, and he will continue to do so until South Korea elects new president. Some media reports said Hwang might run for president as a conservative candidate. If that happens, he would have to resign to run and a deputy prime minister would become interim leader.

In 2004, then President Roh Moo-hyun was impeached by parliament for alleged election law violations and incompetence, but the Constitutional Court later reinstated his power.

Associated Press writer Kim Tong-hyung contributed to this report.

Women's health services face cuts in Republican bill

By MARY CLARE JALONICK, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Women seeking abortions and some basic health services, including prenatal care, contraception and cancer screenings, would face restrictions and struggle to pay for some of that medical care under the House Republicans' proposed bill.

The legislation, which would replace much of former President Barack Obama's health law, was approved by two House committees on Thursday. Republicans are hoping to move quickly to pass it, despite unified opposition from Democrats, criticism from some conservatives who don't think it goes far enough and several health groups who fear millions of Americans would lose coverage and benefits.

The bill would prohibit for a year any funding to Planned Parenthood, a major provider of women's health services, restrict abortion access in covered plans on the health exchange and scale back Medicaid services used by many low-income women, among other changes.

Washington Sen. Patty Murray, the top Democrat on the Health, Labor, Education and Pensions Committee, said the legislation is a "slap in the face" to women. She said it would shift more decisions to insurance companies.

"You buy it thinking you will be covered, but there is no guarantee," Murray said.

House Republican leaders said the bill, which is backed by President Donald Trump, will prevent higher premiums some have seen under the current law and give patients more control over their care.

"Lower costs, more choices not less, patients in control, universal access to care," House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., said Thursday.

The abortion restrictions and cuts to women's health care could draw opposition from some Republican women.

Sens. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Susan Collins of Maine have both said that a prohibition on Planned Parenthood funding shouldn't be part of the bill. Last month, before the legislation was released, Murkowski told the Alaska state legislature that she doesn't believe that taxpayer money should go toward abortions but added, "I will not vote to deny Alaskans access to the health services that Planned Parenthood provides."

Support from Collins and Murkowski will be crucial once the bill moves to the Senate, since there are 52 Republicans and the GOP will need 50 votes to pass it.

A look at how the bill would affect women's health care:

PLANNED PARENTHOOD

Republicans have tried for years to block federal payments to the group, but weren't able to do so with Democrat Barack Obama in the White House. Now that Republican Donald Trump is president, they are adding the one-year freeze in funding to their bill.

Most GOP lawmakers have long opposed Planned Parenthood because many of its clinics provide abortions. Their antagonism intensified after anti-abortion activists released secretly recorded videos in 2015 showing Planned Parenthood officials discussing how they sometimes provide fetal tissue to researchers, which is legal if no profit is made.

Federal dollars comprise nearly half of the group's annual billion-dollar budget. Government dollars don't pay for abortions, but the organization is reimbursed by Medicaid for other services, including birth control, cancer screenings and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases. The group has said the vast majority of women seek out those non-abortion services.

Ryan boasted this week that the bill is a "conservative wish list," as it "ends funding to Planned Parenthood and sends money to community centers." Democrats argue that many of the other clinics are already overloaded and would not be able to meet the increased demand for screenings and other services.

ABORTION COVERAGE

Under Obama's health law, health plans on the exchange can cover elective abortions, but they must collect a separate premium to pay for them so it's clear that no federal funds are used. The GOP bill would

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go further, prohibiting the use of new federal tax credits to purchase any plan that covers abortions.

That could make it more difficult for women covered under the federal exchange to find a plan that covers abortions at all, because many companies may just drop the abortion coverage if it disqualifies the entire plan from the tax credits.

Massachusetts Rep. Joe Kennedy, a Democrat, said during the Energy and Commerce Committee's debate on the bill Thursday that he is concerned those prohibitions will extend to hospitals that do abortions, as well.

MEDICAID AND 'ESSENTIAL HEALTH BENEFITS'

The bill would phase out the current law's expanded Medicaid coverage for more low-income people that 31 states accepted, which is almost completely financed by federal funds. That could affect women's health care services, including mammograms and prenatal care, for those who would lose that coverage. The legislation also repeals the requirement that state Medicaid plans must provide "essential health benefits" that are currently required, including pregnancy, maternity and newborn care for women.

The legislation will still require that private health plans fund the essential health benefits, but those insurers will have more leeway as to how much is covered.

Rep. John Shimkus, R-Ill., complained during the committee debate about the current law's requirements that certain services be covered.

"What about men having to purchase pre-natal care?" Shimkus said in response to a question from a Democrat who asked him what mandates he was concerned about. "Is that not correct? And should they?"

Associated Press writer Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar contributed to this report.

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

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

1. COURT REMOVES SOUTH KOREA'S PRESIDENT

The unanimous ruling caps a stunning fall for Park Geun-hye, the country's first female leader, whose corruption scandal plunges the country into political turmoil.

2. DEMOCRATS SWIPE PAGE FROM GOP PLAYBOOK

Democratic state attorneys general step up their challenges to Trump's revised travel ban, trying to use the court system to thwart the executive branch the same way the Republicans did under Obama.

3. FOR SOME WOMEN, GOP BILL A STEP BACK

Women seeking abortions — and some basic services such as prenatal care, contraception and cancer screenings — would face restrictions and extra costs under the Republicans' health care bill.

4. ABBAS, TRUMP TO HOLD FIRST PHONE CALL

The Palestinian leader has spent many hours on the phone and in meetings with U.S. presidents and officials over the past decade but so far has been unsuccessful in reaching the new U.S. president.

5. DUTCH ELECTION A GAUGE OF ANTI-IMMIGRANT WAVE

All of Europe is watching a vote in the Netherlands for indications on whether populism, and anti-Islam sentiment, on the continent is gaining strength or blowing over.

6. TRUMP CAMP KEEPING EX-ADVISED AT ARM'S LENGTH

The White House tries to distance itself from Carter Page, who briefly served as a foreign policy adviser on Trump's campaign and is now at the center of the controversy over Trump associates' connections to Russia.

7. WHO'S HAVING SECOND THOUGHTS

Organizers of Boston's embattled St. Patrick's Day Parade — reviled for barring gay veterans from marching — schedule an emergency meeting to reconsider their decision.

8. REMEDY SOUGHT FOR NEPAL'S AMBULANCE SHORTAGE

Doctors at Stanford University are training four dozen EMTs in the hope that they can gradually transform the Himalayan nation's meager emergency services.

9. WHY CYCLISTS NO LONGER HAVE TO HIBERNATE

More riders are staying outdoors thanks to "fat bikes" — mountain bikes with comically large tires — that allow them to conquer winter's worst.

10. TEXANS CUT TIES WITH BROCK OSWEILER

One year after signing a \$72 million, four-year deal with Houston, the quarterback is headed to Cleveland.

Solid hiring and pay gains expected in February jobs report

By CHRISTOPHER S. RUGABER, AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. employers are thought to have hired at a brisk pace in February, and the unemployment rate is expected to stay low — a result that would provide further evidence of a consistently solid job market.

Economists have forecast a job gain of 186,000 and a decline of one-tenth of a percentage point in unemployment to 4.7 percent, according to data provider FactSet. With employers competing to hire a dwindling supply of applicants and higher minimum wages taking effect in some states, average pay is also thought to have risen.

The Labor Department will release the February jobs report at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time.

If the economists' forecasts prove roughly correct, the Federal Reserve will almost surely feel confident enough to resume raising interest rates when it meets next week. It would mark the Fed's third rate hike in 15 months, a reflection of how far the economy has come since the Great Recession ended nearly eight years ago.

Friday's report will also be the first to cover a full month under President Donald Trump. Trump has already tweeted cheerfully about a survey of private-sector hiring released earlier this week that suggested a robust job gain in February.

That survey, by payroll provider ADP, concluded that private employers added 298,000 jobs in February, the biggest monthly gain in three years. Construction companies hired the most workers in 11 years and manufacturers the most in five, ADP found.

The surge in construction jobs likely reflected unseasonably warm February weather, particularly in the North, which kept job sites open that would otherwise have been shut down by winter weather. If warm weather boosted the pace of construction hiring in Friday's government report, other weather-sensitive industries, like retail and restaurants, will likely also show sharp job gains.

Apart from any effects of unusual weather, much evidence suggests that the U.S. job market is fundamentally healthy or nearly so. The number of people seeking first-time unemployment benefits — a rough proxy for the pace of layoffs — reached a 44-year low two weeks ago.

And in January, employers added a vigorous 227,000 jobs, according to the government's figures, higher than last year's monthly average of 187,000.

Business and consumer confidence has soared since the presidential election, with many business executives saying they expect faster economic growth to result from Trump's promised tax cuts, deregulation and infrastructure spending.

The U.S. economy is also benefiting from steadier economies overseas. Growth is picking up or stabilizing in most European countries as well as in China and Japan. The 19-nation alliance that uses the euro currency expanded 1.7 percent in 2016, an improvement from years of recession and anemic growth. Germany's unemployment rate has fallen to 3.9 percent, although in crisis-stricken Greece, unemployment remains a painful 23 percent.

In the United States, employers have been hiring solidly for so long that in some industries, they're being compelled to raise pay. Hourly wages for the typical worker rose 3.1 percent in 2016, according to a report Thursday by the Economic Policy Institute. That's much higher than the 0.3 percent average annual pay gain, adjusted for inflation, since 2007, the EPI said.

Minimum wage increases last year in 17 states and Washington, D.C., helped raise pay among the lowest-

paid workers, the EPI found. Pay increases for the poorest 10 percent of workers were more than twice as high in states where the minimum wage rose as in states where it did not.

At the start of 2017, minimum wages rose again in 19 states, a trend that might have helped raise pay last month.

U.S. builders are breaking ground on more homes, and factory production has recovered from an 18-month slump, fueling growth and hiring. In February, manufacturing expanded at the fastest pace in more than two years, according to a trade group. Businesses have stepped up their purchases of industrial equipment, steel and other metals, and computers.

And in January, Americans bought homes at the fastest pace in a decade despite higher mortgage rates. That demand has spurred a 10.5 percent increase in home construction in the past 12 months.

Democratic AGs mount fight against Trump travel ban

By MARTHA BELLISLE and JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER, Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — In stepping up legal challenges to President Donald Trump's revised travel ban, Democratic attorneys general are trying to use the court system to thwart the executive branch in the same way their GOP counterparts did under President Barack Obama.

Washington state Attorney General Bob Ferguson said Thursday he was asking a federal judge to find that his order last month halting the old travel ban applies to the new one, too.

Ferguson's action came a day after Hawaii launched its own lawsuit. Washington, Minnesota, Oregon, New York and Massachusetts planned to file a new complaint challenging the revised travel ban Monday.

"My message to President Trump is: Not so fast," Ferguson said.

Ferguson and his fellow Democratic attorneys general are now doing what Republicans did when Obama was in office — filing lawsuits to block policies. Republican attorneys general took Obama to court over a variety of issues, most notably his health care legislation.

Attorneys general are the chief lawyers for state governments and can sue more broadly on behalf of their states. Most are elected and can act independently of their legislatures or governors, although Ferguson, for example, has the support of Washington Gov. Jay Inslee, also a Democrat.

Trump's revised ban bars new visas for people from six predominantly Muslim countries: Somalia, Iran, Syria, Sudan, Libya and Yemen. It also temporarily shuts down the U.S. refugee program.

Unlike the initial order, the new one says current visa holders won't be affected, and removes language that would give priority to religious minorities.

Hawaii Attorney General Doug Chin said that the state could not stay silent on Trump's travel ban because of Hawaii's unique culture and history. Hawaii depends heavily on tourism, and the revised ban would hurt the state's economy, he said.

The courts need to hear "that there's a state where ethnic diversity is the norm, where people are welcomed with aloha and respect," Chin said.

In the original lawsuit targeting the first ban, Ferguson said it was unconstitutional and hurt the state's businesses and universities.

Ferguson said it's not the government, but the court, that gets to decide whether the revised order is different enough that it would not be covered by previous temporary restraining order.

White House spokesman Sean Spicer said Thursday the administration believed the revised travel ban will stand up to legal scrutiny.

"We feel very confident with how that was crafted and the input that was given," Spicer said.

Ferguson said he was pleased other attorneys general had sought to take part in the legal action. On Thursday, the Seattle judge granted Oregon's request to join Washington and Minnesota in the case opposing the travel ban; New York and Massachusetts say they'll also join the case.

"We have a strong case and they are willing to join our efforts," Ferguson said of his fellow Democrats. New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman in a statement called the executive order "a Muslim ban by another name."

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Other states that have filed briefs supporting Washington's initial lawsuit include California, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and Virginia.

Sinco Kelleher reported from Honolulu. Associated Press writers Tarek Hamada in Phoenix and Gene Johnson in Seattle contributed to this report.

A look at legal issues with Trump's revised travel ban

By GENE JOHNSON, Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Some of the states that helped derail President Trump's first travel ban are mounting efforts to block his second one, saying that while the new order applies to fewer people, it's infected with the same legal problems.

Hawaii on Wednesday launched the first lawsuit over the revised order after amending an earlier complaint filed against the old ban. Washington, Massachusetts, New York, Oregon and Minnesota plan to do the same Monday in federal court in Seattle, where a judge issued an order last month halting the first travel ban.

In the meantime, Washington Attorney General Bob Ferguson asked the judge to find that his order applies to the second ban as well. If the judge agrees, the government would not be able to put the new ban into effect next Thursday as scheduled, without further action from the court.

With more legal challenges still to come, here's a look at the hurdles Trump's new travel ban faces.

SAME AS THE OLD BAN?

Washington and Hawaii have made similar claims, arguing that Trump's travel ban is an effort to carry out the Muslim ban he promised during his campaign and a violation of the First Amendment, which bars the government from officially favoring or disfavoring any religion. In this regard, they say, the new ban is no better than the old.

They point to statements by Trump's advisers, including former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, who said Trump asked him how to implement a Muslim ban legally, and more recently Stephen Miller, who said the revised order was designed to have "the same basic policy outcome" as the first.

The new ban applies to refugees who are not already on their way to the United States and to people seeking new visas. Under the original ban, even people with valid visas and legal U.S. residents from the listed countries were barred from entering the country.

"The revised executive order does narrow the scope of who's impacted," Ferguson told a news conference Thursday. "That does not change the underlying constitutional problems: If you're acting in an unconstitutional way — this is effectively a Muslim ban — the fact that it's a smaller group of individuals who are harmed does not change the analysis."

When the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld U.S. District Judge James Robart's order blocking the first travel ban, it did not resolve the states' First Amendment claim. But the judges referred to the states' argument as serious and significant.

Some legal scholars have questioned the strength of the government's case on this point, noting that the order does not apply to all Muslims or even all predominantly Muslim nations — a point 9th Circuit Judge Richard Clifton made during oral arguments in Washington's case.

ISN'T IT THE PRESIDENT'S JOB TO PROTECT THE COUNTRY?

It is, and the administration has argued that the travel ban is not about discrimination but national security. The revised order specifies that people coming from the listed countries — Somalia, Iran, Syria, Sudan, Libya and Yemen — "warrant additional scrutiny in connection with our immigration policies because the conditions in these countries present heightened threats."

But as Hawaii pointed out in its lawsuit, intelligence analysts at the Department of Homeland Security have questioned that rationale, concluding that citizenship is an "unlikely indicator" of terrorist ties. Their

report noted that since 2011, 82 people were inspired by a foreign terrorist group to try to carry out attacks in the United States. Half were native-born U.S. citizens. The rest came from 26 countries, with the most coming from Pakistan, which is not on the travel ban list.

That would seem to undermine the rationale for the travel ban, critics say.

In addition, the states and civil liberties groups have alleged another flaw: U.S. immigration law generally prohibits the government from discriminating based on nationality when issuing immigrant visas. The president cannot rewrite that law by executive order, the states argue.

Matt Adams, legal director of the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, said his organization plans to file an amended class-action complaint in Seattle federal court on Friday to challenge the new ban. He said the administration must consider who people are — not where they come from — in deciding whether to issue visas.

ALOHA, TOURISM

Some legal scholars have questioned whether states have standing to bring their cases, citing limits the Supreme Court has placed on when states can sue the federal government.

Michael McConnell, a constitutional law professor at Stanford Law School, said in an email Thursday that he remains “highly skeptical” that states can file lawsuits over this issue.

The 9th Circuit panel, however, found that Washington and Minnesota did have standing, at least at that early stage of the litigation. The judges noted that some people would not enter state universities or join the faculty at those universities, causing real harm for the states.

Hawaii focuses on an additional aspect of harm: the loss of tourism, and thus tax dollars, in the heavily travel-dependent state.

“I don’t think standing’s a serious problem,” said Rory Little, a former Supreme Court clerk who teaches at the University of California Hastings College of the Law. “There’s clearly harm to state budgets, harm to state universities.”

This story has been corrected to show the effective date of the revised travel ban is next Thursday, not Wednesday.

Ex-adviser’s tenuous ties to Trump campaign draw scrutiny

By JULIE PACE, AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — For months, President Donald Trump and his advisers have tried to distance themselves from Carter Page, a little-known investment banker who briefly served as a foreign policy adviser on the Republican’s presidential campaign.

This week, Page — who is at the center of the swirling controversy over Trump associates’ connections to Russia — painted himself as a recurrent visitor to Trump Tower, the New York skyscraper that housed Trump’s campaign offices.

“I have frequently dined in Trump Grill, had lunch in Trump Café, had coffee meetings in the Starbucks at Trump Tower, attended events and spent many hours in campaign headquarters on the fifth floor last year,” Page wrote in a letter to the Senate Intelligence Committee, which is investigating Russia’s hacking of Democratic groups and possible campaign contacts with Moscow.

Page tied his presence in Trump Tower to the president’s unverified assertion the President Barack Obama had the building wiretapped, though Page provided no evidence to back up that assertion.

Page’s comments were the latest wrinkle in the swirling controversy surrounding Trump associates’ connections to Russia. The New York Times has reported that Page is among the Trump associates whose potential contacts with Russia are being investigated by the FBI. Congressional committees probing Russia’s hacking during the election and Trump campaign ties have asked Page to preserve materials related to their investigations.

Trump’s White House and campaign advisers dismiss Page as an inconsequential figure who has never

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met the president. He wasn't on the campaign payroll and severed ties with the Trump team before the election.

Still, Page's connection to the campaign, however tenuous, has boosted his public persona. In July, he was invited to speak at the graduation ceremony at Moscow's New Economic School, a role often filled by prominent international politicians, including President Barack Obama in 2009.

Page's appearance at the Russian university immediately raised eyebrows.

For an adviser to an American presidential hopeful speaking overseas, his message was strikingly critical of the U.S. It came as Trump's calls for warmer relations with the Kremlin were a source of criticism from Democrats and alarm from some fellow Republicans.

Washington had a "hypocritical focus on ideas such as democratization, inequality, corruption and regime change" in its dealings with Russia, Page said at the school.

Page and former Trump campaign officials say he made the trip in a personal capacity and not as a representative of the campaign. But university officials have been clear that Page's connections and insight into the Trump campaign were the draw.

"We were interested in what was going on — already then, Trump's candidacy raised eyebrows, and everyone was really curious," said Shlomo Weber, the academic director at the New Economic School, in an interview with Komsomolskaya Pravda radio station.

A newsletter announcing Page's visit read, "You are invited to a lecture by Carter Page, foreign policy adviser for Donald Trump's election campaign."

Page has said he asked for, and received, permission from the Trump campaign to appear in a personal capacity.

Page has offered contradictory answers about his contacts with Russian officials during his visit. On Thursday, he told The Associated Press he did not meet with Russian Deputy Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich, who also spoke at the graduation. But in September, he told The Washington Post that he did speak with Dvorkovich briefly.

Back in the U.S. a few days later, Page talked with Russia's ambassador to the U.S. at an event on the sidelines of the Republican National Convention, according to a person with knowledge of the meeting. Attorney General Jeff Sessions spoke with the Russian envoy at the same event, a conversation he failed to reveal when asked about contacts with Russians during his Senate confirmation hearings.

Page, a former Merrill Lynch investment banker who worked out of its Moscow office for three years, now runs Global Energy Capital, a firm focused on energy sectors in emerging markets. According to the company's website, he has advised on transactions for Gazprom and RAO UES, a pair of Russian entities.

In December, Page returned to Moscow, where he noted he had "the opportunity to meet with an executive from Rosneft," the Russian oil giant, according to a video clip of his remarks posted on YouTube. Rosnet's chairman, Igor Sechin, a close associate of Russian President Vladimir Putin, has been targeted by U.S. sanctions, though Page says he was not referring to Sechin in his remarks.

Some of the suspicion surrounding Page stems from the fact that no one who worked for the campaign can quite explain how he ended up on Trump's list of foreign policy advisers. Page has also sidestepped those questions, saying he doesn't want to put others "in the same damaged pot as myself."

One campaign official said Page was recruited by Sam Clovis, an Iowa Republican operative who ran the Trump campaign's policy shop and is now a senior adviser at the Agriculture Department. Clovis did not respond to messages from the AP.

Trump has distanced himself from Page, saying he never met him. Those who served on the campaign's foreign policy advisory committee also said they had limited contact with Page.

"Only met him once very briefly," said George Papadopoulos, the director of the Center for International Energy and Natural Resources Law and Security in London.

Page stopped advising the campaign sometime around the end of summer, though the exact circumstances of the separation are unclear. After the campaign, Trump's lawyers sent Page at least two cease-and-desist letters, according to another campaign official, who like others, insisted on anonymity because

they were not authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

Associated Press writers Jim Heintz in Moscow and Maria Danilova in Washington contributed to this report.

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

Supreme Court brings gavel down on O'Connor workout class

By JESSICA GRESKO, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Years after she left the Supreme Court, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor remained enthusiastic about the early morning exercise class she started at the highest court in the land — the basketball court that sits one floor above the courtroom where she heard arguments for nearly a quarter-century.

While the first female justice never managed to persuade her fellow justices to join her regularly, her class became a court fixture and a hit with a devoted group of women who live in the court's Capitol Hill neighborhood.

Now, more than 35 years after the class began and more than a decade after O'Connor left the bench, the court has ruled that the women must take their workout somewhere else.

"Unfortunately, the time had come for the class to relocate," Supreme Court spokeswoman Kathleen Arberg wrote in an email to The Associated Press. "Few employees attended the class and for some time now, the Justice has not been a participant and cannot oversee the group's access to the gym, which is in a private area of the building open only to Court employees."

Allowing area residents to attend the class was a "rare exception" to court policy made because of O'Connor's role in the class, Arberg wrote. O'Connor is now 86. Her family was informed of the change, Arberg said.

According to a New York Times article from 1981, the year O'Connor joined the court, O'Connor on her third day at the court sent a notice to all female Supreme Court employees that she was starting an exercise class. The class would meet five mornings a week beginning at 8 a.m. and a YWCA instructor would lead the class, which would cost \$35 monthly. The letter said that the class would include "conditioning in slimnastics with some aerobic dance."

In addition to court employees, O'Connor's female clerks were encouraged to join, but others got invites, too. In time there were yearly T-shirts with slogans like "Cool Out with the Supremes."

Until recently, on Monday, Wednesday and Friday there was aerobics and work with weights and resistance bands. Tuesdays was for yoga. Participants often grabbed a post-workout coffee at the court's public cafeteria. These days, the group of about 20 exercisers includes women in their 60s, 70s and 80s, with one participant in her 90s.

O'Connor discussed her workout legacy during an appearance at the Newseum in 2012, six years after she retired.

"I still have my class. It's still going on and I went this morning, as a matter of fact, at 8 a.m., and it was good. That meant a lot to me, to have that class. That just really mattered," O'Connor said.

Muriel Martin-Wein, 76, who has attended the class for years, said the women were "all heartsick" when they were told they would have to leave the Supreme Court building.

"It was a real thrill. It made us feel special," she said of being at the court.

O'Connor's secretary, Linda Neary, declined to comment on the change, which was first reported by The National Law Journal. Dega Schembri, who led instruction on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, said the class will move to a nearby church on Mondays and the city's Eastern Market on Wednesdays and Fridays.

"I'm happy that we're able to continue something that she started," Schembri said of O'Connor.

The class might still have been based at the court if O'Connor had been able to persuade another justice to attend. But she repeatedly struck out. Justice Stephen Breyer attended the class a few times but didn't want to be the only man, O'Connor has said. Both Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who joined the court in

1993, and Justice Sonia Sotomayor, who joined in 2009, have said the class met too early.

That doesn't mean the current justices are uninterested in fitness. Three of them work out at the court using the same personal trainer. And Ginsburg, who is 83, has at least one core strength move in common with the O'Connor exercisers. They both do the plank.

Associated Press writer Mark Sherman contributed to this report.

Follow Jessica Gresko on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/jessicagresko>. Her work can be found at <http://bigstory.ap.org/content/jessica-gresko>.

A look at key criminal defendants in South Korean scandal

By HYUNG-JIN KIM, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Formally removed from office by a historic Constitutional Court ruling Friday, Park Geun-hye has lost her presidential immunity from prosecution over a corruption scandal that has sent dozens of high-profile figures to face criminal trials.

They include Park's friend of 40 years, Choi Soon-sil, Samsung's de-facto leader Lee Jae-yong, top presidential advisers, two former culture ministers and a music video director. Their charges include bribery, extortion, abuse of power and perjury.

A look at the allegations facing Park, and the key criminal defendants caught up in a scandal that has roiled South Korea for months.

PARK GEUN-HYE

Park has refused to undergo prosecutors' questioning, citing a law that provides a sitting leader with immunity from prosecution except for grave crimes like treason. But now that she's a former president, Park is stripped of that privilege and will likely face a direct investigation.

Prosecutors have accused Park of colluding with Choi to pressure 16 companies to donate a total of 77.4 billion won (\$66.7 million) for the launch of two foundations controlled by Choi. They also allege that Park, along with Choi, took millions of dollars in bribes from Samsung's Lee, who is accused of seeking government support to strengthen his control over the business empire.

Park is also accused of conspiring with Choi and top officials to draw up of a blacklist of cultural figures critical of her policies to deny them state support.

Prosecutors also believe Park had one of her presidential aides convey dozens of documents with state secrets to Choi.

Park has acknowledged that she got help from Choi to edit some of her speeches. But she denies legal wrongdoing.

CHOI SOON-SIL

Choi has been arrested and charged with abuse of power, extortion and attempted fraud. If convicted on all charges, she could receive up to 15 years in prison.

Choi has acknowledged that she received some of Park's speech drafts in advance but didn't know they included sensitive information. She denies other allegations.

Choi is also charged with pressuring Hyundai Motors and the KT telecommunication firm to sign \$6 million and \$5.7 million worth of ad contracts, respectively, with Playground, an ad agency she ran.

She also faces charges that she pushed Hyundai to buy \$930,450 worth of car components from a company owned by an acquaintance.

LEE JAE-YONG

The 48-year-old Samsung Electronics vice chairman faces bribery, embezzlement and three other charges punishable by at least five years in prison if he's proven guilty. A team of Samsung lawyers denied all

charges against Lee during a preliminary court hearing Thursday.

Prosecutors allege that Lee and his aides used Samsung corporate funds to buy expensive horses for Choi's daughter. According to prosecutors, Samsung allegedly gave or promised 43.3 billion won (\$38 million) to four entities controlled by Choi.

Prosecutors allege the money was given to obtain government backing for a contentious merger of two Samsung companies in 2015 that served as a key step in passing corporate control to Lee from his ailing father.

AHN JONG-BEOM

Park's former senior secretary for policy coordination, Ahn was allegedly involved with Choi in extorting money from 16 companies at Park's order. He is charged with extortion, abuse of power and bribery.

JUNG HO-SUNG

Jung is one of Park's close associates and worked for her since she entered politics in the late 1990s. He's been charged with passing on classified presidential documents to Choi, including information on ministerial candidates.

CHO YOON-SUN

Park's culture minister, Cho, was arrested and indicted over the blacklist allegations. She became the first incumbent Cabinet member to be arrested over the scandal, and quickly resigned. Former Culture Minister Kim Jong-deok and ex-presidential chief of staff Kim Ki-choon were also indicted over the blacklist.

CHA EUN-TAEK

A well-known music video director, Cha is on trial for allegedly using his close ties with Choi to win key culture-related projects from government agencies.

Masterpiece restored: Stolen Stradivarius will sing again

By BEN NUCKOLS, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After a meticulous restoration that took more than a year, a Stradivarius violin that was stolen from violinist Roman Totenberg and missing for decades is about to return to the stage.

Mira Wang, a violinist who immigrated to the United States from China 30 years ago to study under Totenberg, will play the instrument at a private concert in New York on March 13, and more performances after that are possible.

The violin known as the Ames Stradivarius is one of roughly 550 surviving instruments made by Antonio Stradivari, history's most renowned violin maker. Built in 1734, it's likely worth millions of dollars, although it hasn't been appraised since it was recovered.

It was stolen in 1980 while Totenberg was greeting well-wishers after a performance in Boston, and wasn't recovered until 2015, three years after Totenberg died at age 102.

The presumed thief, journeyman violinist Philip Johnson, was himself dying of pancreatic cancer when he showed his ex-wife a locked violin case in his basement. Nearly four years after his death, she took the violin inside the case for an appraisal and learned it was the stolen Stradivarius. It was soon returned to Totenberg's family.

It's not clear how often Johnson played the instrument, but The Washington Post reported that he played it in public as recently as 2011, the year he died.

For Totenberg's three daughters, who like their father had given up hope that they'd ever see the violin again, its recovery has been a series of joys. Jill Totenberg compared it to "Christmas, even though we're Jewish."

They'll hear it again at Wang's performance for the first time since it disappeared.

"I'm sure we'll all cry. I'm absolutely sure of it. Whether we cry at the same time is something else, but we definitely will cry," she said. "When that violin was returned to us, we really felt like our father was

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back in the room with us that day.”

Another happy surprise: 35 years after it disappeared, the violin wasn't in bad shape. Johnson couldn't take it to a repair shop without being discovered, and he used Super Glue and Elmer's to patch a few spots. It was unplayable because it had no strings and the sound post inside was broken. But when Bruno Price of Rare Violins of New York first laid eyes on the instrument, he was pleased it was so well-preserved. He and the Totenbergs believe Johnson couldn't have played it all that often.

“For us, in the restoration of the violin, it was purely conservation rather than any serious repairs of any kind,” Price said. “So, in a way, the violin is probably in better shape for having been stolen — a horrible thing to say.”

Price and his staff took their time with the restoration, trying to make as few major repairs as possible. They sealed some cracks, fixed the broken sound post and replaced the neck, which must be done periodically anyway.

For Totenberg's three daughters — Jill, a public-relations executive; Nina, the legal-affairs correspondent for National Public Radio; and Amy, a federal judge — there was no question that Wang would play the violin first.

“I'm not sure she assumed it, but all three of us assumed it,” Nina Totenberg said. “She really is like the fourth Totenberg sister.”

For Wang, the instrument presents its own challenges, even though she's been playing her own Stradivarius for two decades. She had about a month to practice before the concert, a timetable she compares to a jockey hopping on an unfamiliar racehorse just before a race.

“To be able to really know a violin of that caliber, you need years. You need years to really know the nuances and to bring out the certain colors and bring out the different varieties of sound,” Wang said. “But we'll make the best out of it.”

Wang will perform two chamber pieces: a string quintet by Felix Mendelssohn and a piano quintet by Antonin Dvorak.

No additional concerts are scheduled, but it's possible that Wang will get more opportunities to play the violin. The family plans to sell it eventually, either to a musician or to a person or organization that ensures it will continue to be played and maintained.

“In the end, there's going to be one person (for whom) it's going to suit their type of playing even more perfectly than with Mira,” Price said. “There's a very personal connection that comes with these great instruments, but it sounds fantastic.”

Follow Ben Nuckols on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/APBenNuckols> .

Amal Clooney: Don't let Islamic State get away with genocide

By EDITH M. LEDERER, Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Human rights lawyer Amal Clooney urged Iraq and the world's nations on Thursday not to let the Islamic State extremist group “get away with genocide.”

The wife of actor George Clooney, who represents victims of IS rapes and kidnappings, told a U.N. meeting that what's “shocking” is not just the group's brutality but the “passive” response by the world's nations to the campaign to investigate its crimes and bring the perpetrators to justice.

She urged Iraq's Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi to send a letter to the U.N. Security Council so it can vote to set up an investigation into crimes by the group in Iraq where IS once controlled about 40 percent of the country's territory but is now being routed by government and coalition forces.

“Justice is what the victims want...” Clooney said, “but justice will be forever out of reach if we allow the evidence to disappear, if mass graves are not protected, if medical evidence is lost, if witnesses can no longer be traced.”

Clooney expressed frustration that nothing has happened since she came to the U.N. six months ago seeking accountability for victims of the Islamic State group, also known by the acronym ISIS and the

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Arab name Daesh.

"Killing ISIS on the battlefield is not enough. We must kill the idea behind ISIS by exposing the brutality and bringing individual criminals to justice," she said.

Clooney represents Nadia Murad, a Yazidi woman captured by IS in Iraq in 2014, who has spoken out about since her release about being raped, sold as a sex slave, and praying for death while in captivity.

Murad, now a goodwill ambassador for the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime for the Dignity of Survivors of Human Trafficking, told the meeting that victims have patiently waited for over a year for the investigation of IS to start "to be able to at least bury our dead."

"Why it is taking so long? I cannot understand why you are letting ISIS get away with it, or what more you need to hear before you will act," Murad said, her voice breaking with emotion. "So today, I ask the Iraqi government and the U.N. to establish an investigation and give all the victims of ISIS the justice they deserve."

Clooney addressed prime minister al-Abadi saying it was initially Iraq's idea to involve the U.N. and sending a letter "would silence those who doubt your commitment to bring Daesh to justice."

If no letter is forthcoming, she said the Security Council could act without Iraq's consent, or it could refer the extremist group to the International Criminal Court, or the General Assembly could establish "an accountability mechanism" as it did for crimes in Syria in December. U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres could also launch an investigation, she said.

"But none of this has happened," Clooney said. "Instead, mass graves in Iraq lie unprotected and unexhumed, witnesses are fleeing and not one ISIS militant has faced trial for international crimes anywhere in the world."

Clooney urged all countries "to stand up for justice" and demonstrate "moral leadership" to make sure that ISIS is held accountable.

Britain's U.N. Ambassador Matthew Rycroft told the meeting he looks forward to finalizing the Security Council resolution with Iraq "very, very soon." He said the aim is to assist Iraq "with the difficult but crucial challenge of preserving the huge amount of evidence of Daesh crimes committed on Iraqi territory."

Iraq's U.N. Ambassador Mohamed Alhakim said the government plans to try cases involving low and mid-level members of Daesh but it will have to work with the international community to bring the top leaders to justice.

He made no mention, however, of U.N. help in preserving evidence or the required letter.

Death toll rises to 35 in fire at youth shelter in Guatemala

By JOSE LOPEZ and SONIA PEREZ D., Associated Press

SAN JOSE PINULA, Guatemala (AP) — A blaze that killed at least 35 girls at a shelter for troubled youths erupted when some of them set fire to mattresses to protest rapes and other mistreatment at the badly overcrowded institution, the parent of one victim said Thursday.

Officials said they are still investigating who started the fire Wednesday at the long-criticized shelter on the outskirts of Guatemala's capital. It houses troubled and abused boys and girls as well as juvenile offenders.

Nineteen victims were found dead at the scene, and 16 more succumbed one by one to their grisly injuries at hospitals in Guatemala City. Several more girls were fighting for their lives, some with severe burns over more than half their bodies. The National Institute of Forensic Science said that 17 of the bodies have been identified.

The 35th death was announced by the General Hospital late Thursday while President Jimmy Morales called for a restructuring of the country's youth shelter system, which houses some 1,500 children around the country, during a news conference. Outside the presidential palace, dozens of protesters gathered to demand answers.

The fire started when someone ignited mattresses in a dormitory that held girls who had been caught

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the day before during a mass breakout attempt, authorities said.

On Thursday, distraught parents haunted hospitals and the morgue, passing scraps of paper scrawled with the names of loved ones they hoped to find.

Geovany Castillo said his 15-year-old daughter Kimberly suffered burns on her face, arms and hands but survived. She was in a locked area where girls who took part in the escape attempt had been placed, he said.

"My daughter said the area was locked and that several girls broke down a door, and she survived because she put a wet sheet over herself," Castillo said.

"She said the girls themselves set the fire," he said, adding: "She said the girls told her that they had been raped and in protest they escaped, and that later, to protest, to get attention, they set fire to the mattresses."

Another surviving 15-year-old girl said that male residents had apparently been able to enter at least some of the girls' dormitories before the fire. She and others took refuge on a roof for fear of being attacked and saw the fire break out in a nearby building.

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

The state-run Virgin of the Assumption Safe House has long been the subject of complaints about abuse, inadequate food and crowded and unsanitary conditions behind its 30-foot wall. The shelter was built to hold 500 young residents but housed at least 800 at the time of the fire.

Morales issued a statement blaming the disaster on the courts for ignoring a request by his administration to transfer juvenile offenders out.

"Before the fire, the government had asked the appropriate authorities to immediately transfer youthful offenders to other detention centers, to avoid greater consequences," the president's office wrote.

"The government regrets the fact that those authorities did not heed that request in an opportune way, something which could have prevented the tragedy."

Jorge de Leon, Guatemala's human rights prosecutor, said in a statement that during the mass breakout the evening before the fire, at least 102 children who escaped had been located, but others 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 said. "They also complain that food is scarce and of poor quality."

In 2013, a 14-year-old girl was strangled by another resident, investigators said.

Authorities said DNA tests might be necessary to identify some remains. A doctor at one hospital 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 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."

Legal challenges to Trump's travel ban mount from US states

By MARTHA BELLISLE and JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER, Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Legal challenges against President Donald Trump's revised travel ban mounted Thursday as Washington state said it would renew its request to block the executive order and a judge granted Oregon's request to join the case.

The events happened a day after Hawaii launched its own lawsuit, and Washington state Attorney General Bob Ferguson said New York state also asked to join his state's legal effort. Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey said the state is joining fellow states in challenging the revised travel ban.

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Washington was the first state to sue over the original ban, which resulted in Judge James Robart in Seattle halting its implementation around the country. Ferguson said the state would ask Robart to rule that his temporary restraining order against the first ban applies to Trump's revised action.

"My message to President Trump is — not so fast," Ferguson told reporters. "After spending more than a month to fix a broken order that he rushed out the door, the President's new order reinstates several of the same provisions and has the same illegal motivations as the original."

Robart on Thursday granted Oregon's request to join Washington and Minnesota in the case opposing the travel ban.

Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum said the executive order has hurt Oregon, its residents, employers, agencies, educational institutions, health care system and economy.

Trump's revised ban bars new visas for people from six predominantly Muslim countries: Somalia, Iran, Syria, Sudan, Libya and Yemen. It also temporarily shuts down the U.S. refugee program.

Unlike the initial order, the new one says current visa holders won't be affected, and removes language that would give priority to religious minorities.

Hawaii Attorney General Douglas Chin said that the state could not stay silent on Trump's travel ban because of Hawaii's unique culture and history. Hawaii depends heavily on tourism, and the revised ban would hurt the state's economy, he said.

The courts need to hear "that there's a state where ethnic diversity is the norm, where people are welcomed with aloha and respect," Chin said.

He noted that the new travel ban order comes just after the 75th anniversary of the Feb. 19, 1942, executive order by President Franklin Roosevelt that sent Japanese Americans to internment camps during World War II. That order was put in place after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Hawaii had an internment camp.

Ferguson said it's not the government, but the court, that gets to decide whether the revised order is different enough that it would not be covered by previous temporary restraining order.

"It cannot be a game of whack-a-mole for the court," he said.

White House spokesman Sean Spicer said Thursday the administration believed the revised travel ban will stand up to legal scrutiny.

"We feel very confident with how that was crafted and the input that was given," Spicer said.

Ferguson said he was pleased that attorneys general from New York and Oregon had sought to take part in the legal action.

"We have a strong case and they are willing to join our efforts," he said of his fellow Democrats. New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman in a statement called the executive order "a Muslim ban by another name."

Other states that have filed briefs supporting Washington's initial lawsuit include California, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and Virginia.

In his initial lawsuit Ferguson said the original ban was unconstitutional and hurt the state's businesses and universities.

A federal appellate court later upheld a temporary restraining order issued against the first travel ban.

The Trump administration says the old order will be revoked once the new one goes into effect on March 16.

In filing a lawsuit Wednesday night, Hawaii said the revised order would harm its Muslim population, tourism and foreign students.

Attorneys for Hawaii filed the lawsuit against the U.S. government 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.

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."

Imam Ismail Elshikh of the Muslim Association of Hawaii is a plaintiff in the state's challenge. The ban will prevent his Syrian mother-in-law from visiting him, he said.

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The man is a U.S. citizen, has rights and would be prevented from seeing his mother-in-law, Chin said. The mother-in-law is awaiting approval of a visa to see her relatives in Hawaii.

The woman and others have become victims because of the ban's "standardless set of waivers and exceptions that weren't set by Congress," Chin said.

Hawaii's lawsuit challenging the travel ban focuses on damage to the state's economy and mainly tourism. Chin says the tourism angle is unique because the state relies heavily on visitors and Hawaii officials have a right to defend the economy.

He said people may fear traveling even within Hawaii because they would be forced to encounter a federal agent every time they get on a plane to visit a neighboring island.

Sinco Kelleher reported from Honolulu. Associated Press writers Tarek Hamada in Phoenix and Gene Johnson in Seattle contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to show the spelling of Judge Robart's name on the first reference.

Media the enemy? Trump sure is an insatiable consumer

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Before most people are out of bed, Donald Trump is watching cable news.

With Twitter app at the ready, the man who condemns the media as "the enemy of the people" may be the most voracious consumer of news in modern presidential history.

Trump usually rises before 6 a.m. and first watches TV in the residence before later moving to a small dining room in the West Wing. A short time later, he's given a stack of newspapers — including The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Financial Times, The Washington Post and, long his favorite, The New York Post — as well as pile of printed articles from other sources including conservative online outlets like Breitbart News.

The TVs stay on all day. The president often checks in at lunch and again in the evening, when he retires to the residence, cellphone in hand.

It is a central paradox of the Trump presidency. Despite his fervent media criticism, Trump is a faithful newspaper reader who enjoys jousting with reporters, an avid cable TV news viewer who frequently live-tweets what he's watching, and a reader of websites that have been illuminated by his presidential spotlight, showcasing the at-times conspiratorial corners of the internet.

No recent president has been so public about his interest in his media coverage, nor seemed so willing to mobilize the powers of the federal government based on a media report that he has just read, heard or watched.

In fact, the power of Trump's media diet is so potent that White House staffers have, to varying degrees of success, tried to limit his television watching and control some of what he reads.

The president's cable TV menu fluctuates. Fox News is a constant, and he also frequently watches CNN despite deriding it as "fake news." Though he used to watch "Morning Joe," a Trump aide said the president has grown frustrated with his coverage on the MSNBC program and has largely stopped.

For Trump, watching cable is often an interactive experience. More than dozen times since his election, he has tweeted about what he saw on TV just minutes before.

On Nov. 29, he posted about instituting potentially unconstitutional penalties for burning the American flag 30 minutes after Fox ran a segment on the subject. On Jan. 24, he threatened to "send in the Feds!" to Chicago a short time after watching a CNN segment on violence in the city. On Feb. 6, after CNN reported about a "Saturday Night Live" skit on the increasing power of the president's advisers, Trump just 11 minutes later tweeted, "I call my own shots, largely based on an accumulation of data, and everyone knows it!"

On Tuesday, Trump tweeted five different times about the news of the day being discussed on his preferred morning show, "Fox & Friends."

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MSNBC's Rachel Maddow, a frequent Trump critic, told The Associated Press that she finds it "unsettling" that Trump "may be getting most of his understanding of the world based on whatever he stumbles upon on cable."

While pleased that Trump is following the media, Maddow noted that "the White House is designed as an instrument to feed the president of the United States expertly curated and highly selective, well-vetted information from every corner of the world."

Others note the president is there may be some smart politics behind Trump's media diet.

He "advertised getting his news the same way his supporters do, which helps make a connection," said Tobe Berkovitz, a communications professor at Boston University.

The president's advisers try to curb his cable consumption during the workday. But there are no limits when he returns to the residence.

He also avidly watches his own staff's TV performances, including White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer's daily briefing. Aides have been known to shape their public comments to please the president or try to influence him.

Trump's consumption of cable news differs considerably from previous commanders in chief, who have at least claimed to be disconnected from the cable chatter. Jay Carney, White House press secretary under Barack Obama, has claimed that Obama "doesn't watch cable news," though that did not keep the former president from criticizing the medium.

Where Trump differs most from his presidential predecessors is his reliance on getting news online — even though he rarely uses a computer and prefers aides to print out articles for him to read.

What he was seeing on Twitter and conservative websites like the Drudge Report and the conspiracy-laden Infowars helped forge his political persona — and his public misinformation campaign questioning whether Obama was born in the United States.

And social media has become a way for some news sources to gain an audience with the president.

Last Thursday, as questions swirled around contacts between Attorney General Jeff Sessions and the Russian ambassador, a Reddit user posted a picture of Russian President Vladimir Putin and New York Sen. Charles Schumer from a 2003 photo op. Two hours later, the blog The Gateway Pundit reprinted the photo with the headline "Where's the Outrage?"

The image careened across the internet from an Infowars editor's post to the Drudge Report to Trump's own Twitter account as he delivered that outrage, demanding an investigation into Schumer's alleged ties to Putin.

That wasn't the only time last week when Trump put the White House stamp on a theory that originated on the edges of the conservative movement. Radio host Mark Levin voiced without evidence the idea that Obama had wiretapped Trump Tower. That accusation was picked up the next day by Breitbart News, the site formerly run by Trump's current chief strategist Steve Bannon.

An aide placed that piece in Trump's daily reading pile, said a White House official, who like other aides would not be named discussing the president's private routine. Fueled by that report on Saturday, Trump unleashed a series of jaw-dropping tweets that accused his predecessor of spying on him.

"It's not the normal Beltway echo chamber. This is a very different echo chamber: Something will bounce from cable to the internet to Trump," said Berkovitz, the communications professor.

The president's clip file is assembled by junior aides, though senior staffers occasionally slip in an article they want him to see. Often he'll sit with staff and use a Sharpie marker to scrawl instructions — or complaints to push back on — on the pages.

Additional reporting by David Bauder in New York and Julie Pace in Washington.

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7 injured in ax attack at German station; 1 arrest

BERLIN (AP) — A man was arrested after injuring seven people with an ax at the main train station in Duesseldorf, Germany on Thursday in what appeared to be a random attack, police said.

Officers were alerted about an attack shortly before 9 p.m. (2000 GMT), prompting a large-scale police response.

"A person, probably armed with an ax, attacked people at random," police said in a statement. Seven people were injured, three of them seriously. The statement said police are investigating whether the suspect attacked passengers on a commuter train as well.

The suspected attacker was arrested after jumping off an overpass near the train station, the statement said. The 36-year-old man, described as being from "the former Yugoslavia" and living in the nearby city of Wuppertal, suffered serious injuries and was being treated in a hospital.

"The suspect appears to have had psychological problems," police said.

An ax was recovered and officers were searching the area in and around the station, which was closed for the investigation. Police withdrew an earlier report that a second person had been arrested, saying later that they were working on the assumption the man had acted alone.

German authorities have heightened security measures following a series of attacks in public places over the past year.

In one attack last July, a 17-year-old Afghan asylum-seeker traveling on a train near Wuerzburg injured five people with an ax and a knife before being shot dead by police. The attack was later claimed by the Islamic State group.

GOP leaders claim momentum as health bill clears hurdles

By ERICA WERNER and ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican leaders drove their long-promised legislation to dismantle Barack Obama's health care law over its first big hurdles in the House on Thursday, claiming fresh momentum despite cries of protest from right, left and center.

After grueling all-night sessions, the Energy and Commerce and Ways and Means committees both approved their portions of the bill along party-line votes. The legislation, strongly supported by President Donald Trump, would eliminate the unpopular tax penalties for the uninsured under the Affordable Care Act, replacing Obama's law with a conservative blueprint likely to cover far fewer people but — Republicans hope — increase choice.

The vote in Ways and Means came before dawn, while the Energy and Commerce meeting lasted past 27 hours as exhausted lawmakers groped for coffee refills, clean shirts and showers.

Angry Democrats protested that Republicans were acting in the dead of night to rip insurance coverage from poor Americans. But Republican leaders sounded increasingly confident that, after seven years of empty promises about undoing Obama's law, they might finally be able to overcome their own deep divisions and deliver a bill to Trump to sign.

"This is the closest we will ever get to repealing and replacing Obamacare," Speaker Paul Ryan of Wisconsin said at a press briefing where he arrived in shirt-sleeves to deliver a wonky power-point presentation on the GOP bill, part TED Talk and part "Schoolhouse Rock."

"The time is here. The time is now. This is the moment. And this is the closest this will ever happen," Ryan said.

Leaders are aiming for passage by the full House in the next couple of weeks, and from there the legislation would go to the Senate and, they hope, on to Trump's desk. The president has promised to sign it, declaring over Twitter on Thursday, "We are talking to many groups and it will end in a beautiful picture!"

Yet at the same time the president is leaving himself a political out, privately telling conservative leaders that if the whole effort fails, Democrats will ultimately shoulder the blame for the problems that remain. That's according to a participant in the meeting Wednesday who spoke only on condition of anonymity to relay the private discussion.

Democrats reject that notion, and the entire GOP effort.

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"What we have seen is the Republicans' long-feared and job-killing health bill that means less coverage and more cost to American people," said House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi of California. "I don't think the president really knows what he's talking about."

The GOP legislation would kill Obama's requirement that everyone buy insurance by repealing the tax fines imposed on those who don't. 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 phase out, and spending on the entire program would be capped at per-patient limits. Around \$600 billion in 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.

Democrats said the Republicans would yank health coverage from many of the 20 million people who gained it under Obama's statute, and drive up costs for others. 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 its anticipated coverage.

And even as Republican leaders expressed confidence, enormous obstacles remained. A growing coalition of interest groups has lined up in opposition, including AARP and numerous medical professionals, from mental health providers to doctors, nurses, hospitals and more. Republican senators from politically divided states have voiced qualms about the changes to Medicaid, and opposition remains from conservative lawmakers and groups.

There were signs, though, that some of that conservative opposition could be softening amid concerted lobbying from Trump, Vice President Mike Pence and other administration officials. Trump dined Wednesday night with Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas, a skeptic of the bill, and kept up his wooing efforts Thursday, inviting a group of lawmakers including two influential House conservatives to lunch at the White House.

One of them, Rep. Mark Meadows of North Carolina, who chairs the House Freedom Caucus, said afterward that there are still "major concerns that need to be addressed, but I really appreciate the president's willingness to consider issues that are important to all Americans."

Meadows and other conservatives were pushing the administration to change a provision in the House bill that phases out extra Medicaid dollars for states beginning in 2020; they hoped to move the date up to 2018. But that would make the bill more difficult to swallow for a pivotal group of Republican senators whose states expanded Medicaid under the Obama law.

House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy rejected any need for change. "It's a good bill," he said. As for how to attract conservative lawmakers, he asked rhetorically, "They're going to support Obamacare?"

The Senate loomed as perhaps the tougher challenge, as GOP Sen. Tom Cotton of Arkansas voiced new objections over Twitter. "House health care bill can't pass Senate w/o major changes. To my friends in House: pause, start over. Get it right, don't get it fast," Cotton wrote.

And in another measure of concern, the chief medical officer at Medicaid, Dr. Andrey Ostrovsky, registered his opposition over Twitter, saying he was aligning himself with medical professionals opposed to the bill "despite political messaging from others at HHS," the Health and Human Services Department.

Associated Press reporters Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar, Julie Bykowicz, Andrew Taylor, Kevin Freking, Mary Clare Jalonick, Stephen Ohlemacher and Ken Thomas contributed to this report.

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Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, March 10, the 69th day of 2017. There are 296 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 10, 1848, the U.S. Senate ratified the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican-American War.

On this date:

In 1629, England's King Charles I dissolved Parliament; he did not call it back for 11 years.

In 1785, Thomas Jefferson was appointed America's minister to France, succeeding Benjamin Franklin.

In 1876, Alexander Graham Bell's assistant, Thomas Watson, heard Bell say over his experimental telephone: "Mr. Watson — come here — I want to see you" from the next room of Bell's Boston laboratory.

In 1927, the Sinclair Lewis novel "Elmer Gantry" was published by Harcourt, Brace & Co.

In 1933, a magnitude 6.4 earthquake centered off Long Beach, California, resulted in 120 deaths.

In 1949, Nazi wartime broadcaster Mildred E. Gillars, also known as "Axis Sally," was convicted in Washington, D.C., of treason. (She served 12 years in prison.)

In 1952, Fulgencio Batista once again became leader of Cuba in a bloodless coup that deposed President Carlos Prio Socarras.

In 1969, James Earl Ray pleaded guilty in Memphis, Tennessee, to assassinating civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. (Ray later repudiated that plea, maintaining his innocence until his death.)

In 1973, the Pink Floyd album "The Dark Side of the Moon" was first released in the U.S. by Capitol Records (the British release came nearly two weeks later).

In 1985, Konstantin U. Chernenko, who was the Soviet Union's leader for 13 months, died at age 73; he was succeeded by Mikhail Gorbachev.

In 1987, the Vatican issued a 40-page document on scientific techniques involving procreation, condemning such practices as surrogate motherhood, test-tube births and cloning.

In 1993, Dr. David Gunn was shot to death outside a Pensacola, Florida, abortion clinic. (Shooter Michael Griffin is serving a life sentence.)

Ten years ago: In their first direct talks since the Iraq war began, U.S. and Iranian envoys traded harsh words and blamed each other for Iraq's crisis at a one-day international conference in Baghdad. President George W. Bush, in Uruguay as part of his Latin America tour, asked Congress for \$3.2 billion to pay for 8,200 more U.S. troops in Afghanistan and Iraq on top of the 21,500-troop buildup he had announced in Jan. 2007. Standup comedian Richard Jeni, 49, died at a Los Angeles hospital of a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Five years ago: Rick Santorum won the Kansas caucuses in a rout and Republican presidential front-runner Mitt Romney countered in Wyoming. Israel pounded Gaza for a second day, trading airstrikes and rocket fire with Palestinian militants, killing 15 of them. F. Sherwood Rowland, 84, the Nobel prize-winning chemist who sounded the alarm on the thinning of the Earth's ozone layer, died in Corona del Mar, California.

One year ago: Donald Trump and his Republican rivals turned their presidential debate in Miami into a mostly respectful but still pointed discussion of Social Security, Islam, trade and more. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made an official visit to the White House. Sir Ken Adam, the British film production designer behind the sets for some of the James Bond movies and "Dr. Strangelove," died in London at age 95.

Today's Birthdays: Talk show host Ralph Emery is 84. Bluegrass/country singer-musician Norman Blake is 79. Actor Chuck Norris is 77. Playwright David Rabe is 77. Singer Dean Torrence (Jan and Dean) is 77. Actor Richard Gant is 73. Rock musician Tom Scholz (Boston) is 70. Former Canadian Prime Minister Kim Campbell is 70. TV personality/businesswoman Barbara Corcoran (TV: "Shark Tank") is 68. Actress Aloma Wright is 67. Blues musician Ronnie Earl (Ronnie Earl and the Broadcasters) is 64. Producer-director-writer Paul Haggis is 64. Alt-country/rock musician Gary Louris is 62. Actress Shannon Tweed is 60. Pop/jazz singer Jeanie Bryson is 59. Actress Sharon Stone is 59. Rock musician Gail Greenwood is 57. Magician

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Lance Burton is 57. Movie producer Scott Gardenhour is 56. Actress Jasmine Guy is 55. Rock musician Jeff Ament (Pearl Jam) is 54. Music producer Rick Rubin is 54. Britain's Prince Edward is 53. Rock singer Edie Brickell is 51. Actor Stephen Mailer is 51. Actor Philip Anthony-Rodriguez is 49. Actress Paget Brewster is 48. Actor Jon Hamm is 46. Country singer Daryle Singletary is 46. Rapper-producer Timbaland is 45. Actor Cristian (kris-tee-AHN') de la Fuente is 43. Rock musician Jerry Horton (Papa Roach) is 42. Actor Jeff Branson is 40. Singer Robin Thicke is 40. Actress Bree Turner is 40. Olympic gold medal gymnast Shannon Miller is 40. Contemporary Christian singer Michael Barnes (Red) is 38. Actor Edi Gathegi is 38. Rock musician Matt Asti (MGMT) is 37. Actor Thomas Middleditch (TV: "Silicon Valley") is 35. Country singer Carrie Underwood is 34. Actress Olivia Wilde is 33. Rhythm-and-blues singer Emeli Sande (EH'-mihl-ee SAN'-day) is 30. Country singer Rachel Reinert is 28. Actress Emily Osment is 25.

Thought for Today: "There is no tyranny so despotic as that of public opinion among a free people." — Donn Piatt, American journalist (1819-1891).