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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.

Open: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave.

The cardboard/paper
recycling trailer at the school is **OPEN**

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Thursday, March 16

Senior Menu: Mulligan stew, cornbread, pistachio pudding, pineapple, cookie.

Spring break - No School

Emmanuel Lutheran: WELCA at 1:30 P.M.

St. John's Lutheran: Quilting at 9 a.m.

Friday, March 17

Senior Menu: Hot pork sandwich, coleslaw, baked beans, sherbet.

Spring Break - No School

Sunday, March 19

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion at 9 a.m., No Sunday School, Emmanuel serving at nursing home with confirmands serving.

St. John's Lutheran: Worship with holy communion at 9 a.m.; no Sunday School.

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.

Monday, March 20

School Lunch: Super nachos, refried beans, romaine salad, fruit.

School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza, fruit, juice, milk.

Senior Menu: Creamed chicken, buttermilk biscuit, peas, pineapple/Mandarin orange sauce, cookie.

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

St. John's Lutheran: Christian Literature Circle

Hanlon Brothers
Gravel Hauling

New & Cleaning of
Stockdams with our
60' reach trackhoe

605/395-6531

The advertisement features a yellow excavator with a long reach trackhoe on the left and a yellow wheel loader on the right, both working in a gravel pit. The text is in blue and red, with a phone number in large black font at the bottom.

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Groton Prairie Mixed

Cheetahs 15 ½ , Foxes 14, Chipmunks 14, Coyotes 11, Jackelopes 11, Shih Tzus 6 ½

High game: Men – Tony Madsen 216, Brad Waage 213, 206, Ron Belden 213,
Randy Stanley 210, Mike Siegler 210, Roger Spanier 203
Women – Angie Carlson 190, Darci Spanier 178, Karen Spanier 177, Dar Larson 177

High series: Men – Brad Waage 606, Roger Spanier 567, Mike Siegler 566
Women – Darci Spanier 462, Dar Larson 462, Vicki Walter 459, Nicole Kassube 455

Game, Fish and Parks to Host Antler Auction

PIERRE, S.D. – South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) will host an Antler Auction at the Goeman Auction Pavilion north of Lennox on Saturday, April 22.

The doors open at 8 a.m. A gun auction will take place from 9-11 a.m. CDT with the antler auction to follow.

Antlers make up the bulk of auction items, with hundreds of deer antlers offered to bidders. Other items to be auctioned off include mountain lion and bobcat pelts, mountain lion skulls, elk antlers, bighorn sheep racks, tree stands and more.

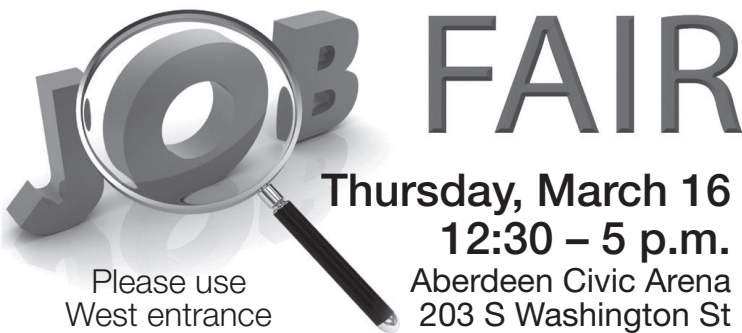
"We have a variety of items for auction that should be attractive to taxidermists, hunters, outdoor craft people and outdoor enthusiasts in general," said GFP conservation officer Jeremy Roe.

A list and pictures of specific items will be online at goemanauction.com in early April. Bidders will be able to participate in this auction via Proxie bid for all items except for tree stands.

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Insecticide Safety Not Just Any Glove Will Do

BROOKINGS, S.D. - When handling insecticides, it is important to wear the proper personal protective equipment (PPE), beginning with gloves.

"Wearing the proper gloves and other PPE when handling insecticide products prevents exposure to the skin. Insecticides can penetrate skin to varying degrees," said Adam Varenhorst, Assistant Professor & SDSU Extension Field Crop Entomologist.

"One size does not fit all when it comes to gloves - as some gloves are made from materials which are not resistant to certain insecticides," Varenhorst explained.

To understand exactly what type of gloves and other PPE should be worn when applying insecticide, Varenhorst explained that labels provide the minimum PPE requirements that must be worn when handling containers, spraying, mixing, loading or conducting maintenance on the sprayer.

Chemical resistant gloves are listed as required PPE for almost all insecticide related activities. To ensure the proper gloves are worn, again Varenhorst refers to the product label.

"The PPE section of the label lists what materials are chemically resistant to the ingredients in the product," he said. "It is important to note the level of resistance that is listed for each glove type."

For a sample listing of proper PPE to wear when applying insecticide and an explanation of ratings, visit iGrow.org.

Now Open!
GDI CLEAN!
Downtown
Groton

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pockets before
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Call us for
GDI Clean!
For any questions or
problems, call or text
Paul
605-397-7460
or
Tina
605-397-7285

Boisner Bridal Shower

Bridal Shower for Andrea Boisner, bride-to-be of Jeffrey Tobin. Saturday, March 25, 9:30-11:30 a.m. at Evangelical Lutheran Church, Langford. The couple is registered at Target and Bed Bath & Beyond.

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Bates Township Right-of-Way Notice

Bates Township Board of Supervisors reminds all landowners and tenants that the road right-of-way extends 33 feet from the center of the township road. This ditch is to be maintained and mowed. Any crops planted in the road right-of-way will be mowed and charged to the landowner, effective with the 2017 growing season.

Bates Township Board of Supervisors
Betty Geist
Township Clerk

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

Bates Township Equalization Meeting Notice

The Bates Township Board of Equalization will meet at the Clerk's home on Tuesday, March 23rd, 2017 at 6:30 pm.

All persons disputing their assessments are requested to notify the clerk prior to the meeting.

Betty Geist
Bates Township Clerk
14523 409th Ave
Conde, SD 57434



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

Is the Brucellosis Vaccination Still a good idea?

**Column by Russ Daly, Professor, SDSU Extension Veterinarian,
State Public Health Veterinarian**

Imagine 10 percent of the nation's beef and dairy cattle herd infected with a contagious disease causing pregnancy loss and reproductive failure.

What's more, that same contagious disease makes people sick, sometimes with long-term repercussions.

This was the situation in the mid-1930's with brucellosis, a bacterial reproductive disease of cattle.

Implicated for decades as a significant animal and public health problem, in 1934 the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), in conjunction with state officials, embarked on a brucellosis eradication program, remnants of which continue today.

Early eradication efforts consisted of blood testing and slaughtering infected animals.

While this helped rid herds of a source of infection, it did not prevent those infected cows from spreading the bacteria before they were detected.

That all changed in the early 1940s with the development of a brucellosis vaccine, sometimes called the "Bangs vaccine," for cattle.

Named the "Strain 19" vaccine, it quickly proved to be effective. Even if it did not prevent 100 percent of infections, it greatly reduced abortions and therefore disease spread.

In the mid-1990s, Strain 19 was replaced as the approved vaccine by "RB51," which offers similar protection but fewer problems with blood test interference.

It took time, but the U.S. brucellosis eradication program can now be considered a success.

Cattle brucellosis has been eradicated across the country, except for areas surrounding Yellowstone National Park, where wildlife remains a reservoir. As a result, many states have dropped requirements for brucellosis vaccination of heifers for their resident cattle and for animals entering from other states.

If most brucellosis vaccination requirements are no longer in effect, why should cattle producers continue to make the effort?

1. Bangs vaccination time is a good time for other heifer management practices as well. Rules restrict brucellosis vaccination to heifers between the ages of 4 and 12 months of age.

During this time, heifers identified as replacements can also be given their first dose of pre-breeding reproductive vaccine, palpated for reproductive score, pelvic measured, retagged and have their udders examined.

In addition, since brucellosis vaccine must be administered by an accredited veterinarian, it gives the operation a built-in opportunity to utilize veterinary expertise to help select and prepare replacement heifers.

2. Bangs vaccination automatically gives heifers a USDA official identification. Vaccinated heifers receive an official tattoo designating the year of vaccination as well as a metal - or possibly RFID (Radio-frequency

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identification) official identification tag.

Even though brucellosis vaccination is not required to cross most state lines anymore, official identification is.

3. Bangs vaccination makes state officials' jobs easier. Brucellosis-vaccinated heifers have their official identification recorded and sent to the state veterinarian's office for storage.

Those records and identifications can become invaluable in investigations of disease outbreaks such as tuberculosis.

Having identification such as the Bang's tag number might mean the difference between an operation being declared "all clear" and having to test their animals when it comes to these disease tracebacks.

4. Bangs vaccination still holds value for many heifer purchasers. At the very least, it indicates that the heifers have at least had a chance to be examined and managed more closely than those not vaccinated against brucellosis.

5. Brucellosis hasn't been eradicated from the face of the earth. Yes, the chance of a dairy or beef cow in a South Dakota herd encountering brucellosis is low. But, as long as a source of the disease exists in the greater Yellowstone area - and other countries - protection is not a bad idea.

If the day ever comes when brucellosis vaccination is a rarity, we could have a cattle population once again quite susceptible to that important disease.

For beef and dairy producers, the best source of information on how brucellosis vaccination fits into an operation is their local veterinarian.

In South Dakota, the Animal Industry Board has a great deal of useful information on brucellosis. To learn more, visit aib.sd.gov.

Today in Weather History

March 16, 2012: Temperatures reaching eighty degrees or higher in March across central and north-east South Dakota is a rare occurrence, and for this to occur in mid-March is exceedingly rare. On March 16th, several locations across the area set record highs by topping the 80-degree mark including Aberdeen, Mobridge, and Pierre. Sisseton and Watertown also set records for March 16th. Aberdeen topped out at 81 degrees, Mobridge reached 83 degrees, with 86 degrees at Pierre.

1885: On this date through the 21st, Pointe-des-Monts, Quebec Canada received 98 inches of snowfall.

1942: A deadly tornado outbreak occurred over the Central and Southern US on March 16-17th. The tornado outbreak killed 153 people and injured at least 1,284. The best estimate indicates this event contained 13 F3 tornadoes, 6 F4s, and one F5. The F5 tornado occurred north of Peoria, Illinois, in the towns of Alta, Chillicothe before crossing the Illinois River and striking the town of Lacon. A quarter of the homes in Lacon were destroyed, and debris was carried for 25 miles.

1975 - A single storm brought 119 inches of snow to Crater Lake, O,R establishing a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1986: A small but rare tornado touched down perilously close to Disneyland in Anaheim, California.

1987 - Softball size hail caused millions of dollars damage to automobiles at Del Rio TX. Three persons were injured when hailstones crashed through a shopping mall skylight. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data) (The Weather Channel)








1988 - A winter storm produced heavy snow in the Central Rockies. Winds gusted to 80 mph at Centerville UT. Eighteen cities in the southeastern U.S. reported new record low temperatures for the date, including Tallahassee FL with a reading of 24 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)


1989 - A winter storm brought heavy snow and high winds to the southwestern U.S. Winds gusted to 60 mph at Lovelock NV, Salt Lake City UT, and Fort Carson CO. Snow fell at a rate of three inches per hour in the Lake Tahoe area of Nevada. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced large hail and damaging winds from northwest Florida to western South Carolina. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 75 mph at Floridatown FL. Sixteen cities across the northeastern quarter of the nation reported record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 78 degrees at Burlington VT smashed their previous record for the date by 23 degrees. New York City reported a record high of 82 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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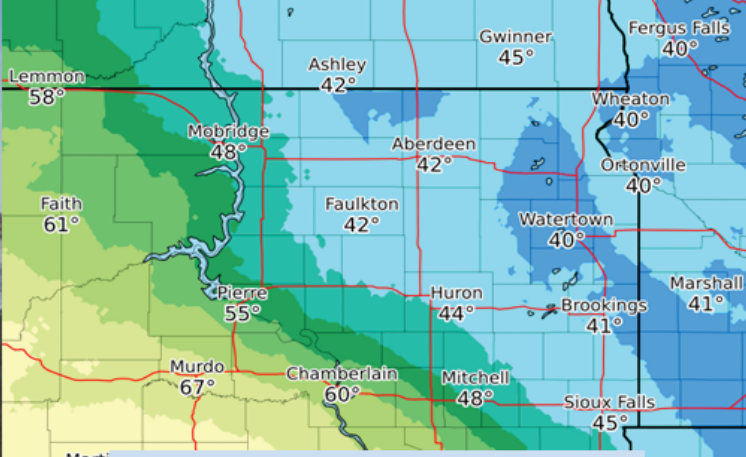
Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
						
Mostly Cloudy	Decreasing Clouds	Mostly Sunny then Mostly Sunny and Breezy	Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny
High: 42 °F	Low: 32 °F	High: 42 °F	Low: 19 °F	High: 45 °F	Low: 33 °F	High: 61 °F



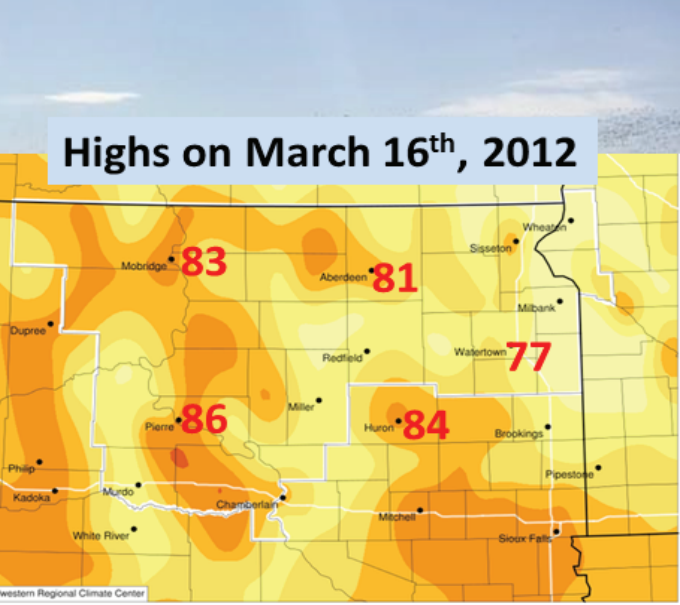
Near Normal Temps Today

Nothing Compared to March 16, 2012








High Temperatures Today



Highs on March 16th, 2012

National Weather Service – Aberdeen, SD

 weather.gov/Aberdeen
 National Weather Service Aberdeen
 @NWSAberdeen
Updated: 3/16/2017 5:47 AM Central

Published on: 03/16/2017 at 5:50AM

High temperatures today will range within a few degrees of normal with reading in the lower 40s. Much warmer temperatures can be expected along and west of the Missouri River. Record high temperatures were observed on this day back in 2012 with several locations topping the 80 degree mark!

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 33.6 F at 3:42 PM

Low Outside Temp: 10.7 F at 12:00 AM

High Gust: 25.0 Mph at 11:11 AM

Snow: Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 81° in 2012

Record Low: -17 in 1906

Average High: 40°F

Average Low: 20°F

Average Precip in March.: 0.51

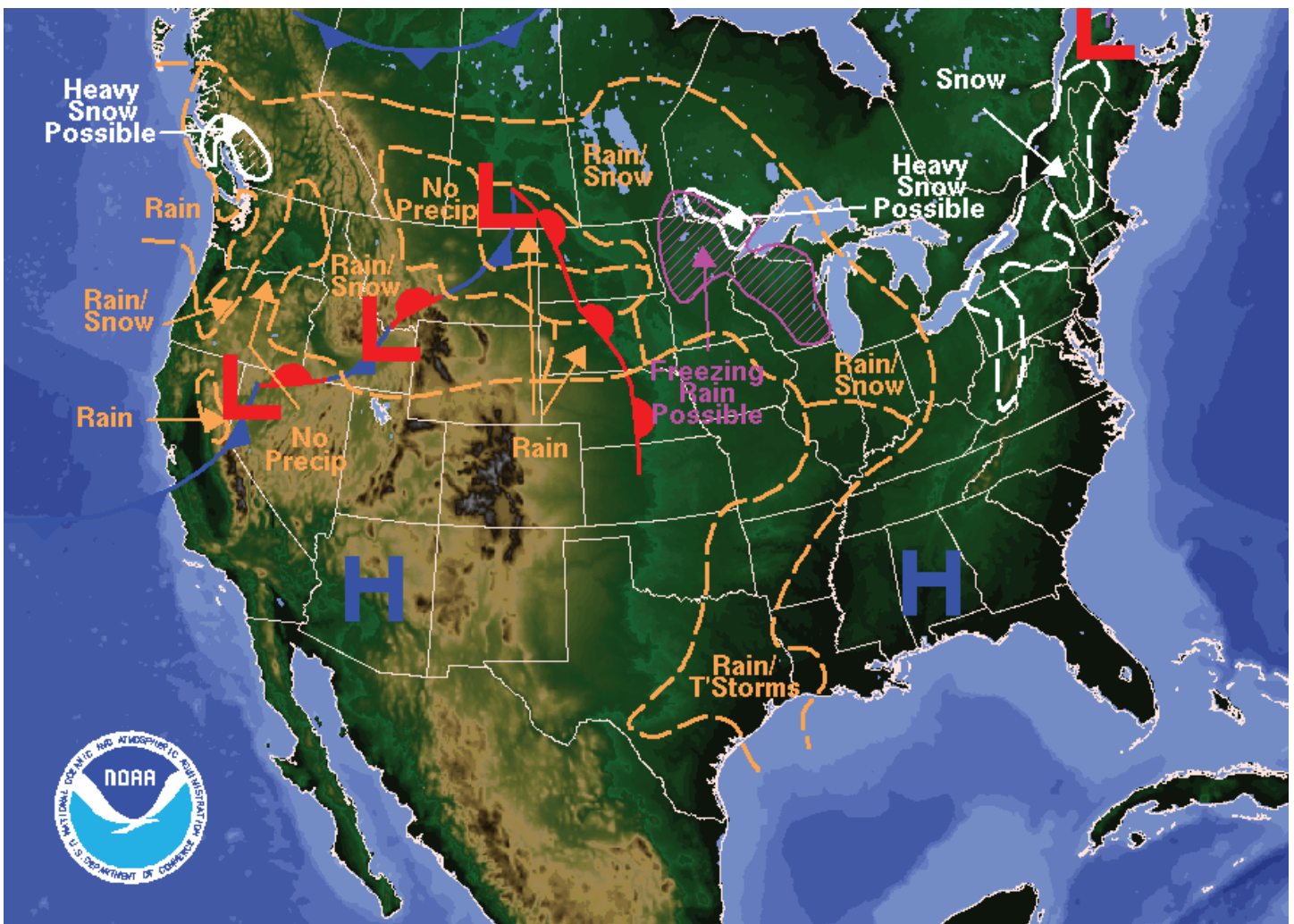
Precip to date in March.: 0.59

Average Precip to date: 1.53

Precip Year to Date: 0.59

Sunset Tonight: 7:41 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:41 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Thu, Mar 16, 2017, issued 4:27 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts



HOW TO SELF-DESTRUCT

It was the second class of the new semester. The professor entered the classroom walking rapidly. Before getting behind his desk he shouted, "Hold up your assignment with your right hand!" One student, however, held up his assignment with his left hand.

Angrily the professor looked at the student and shouted, "Your right hand you stupid idiot!"

Calmly, the student responded, "Sir, this is the only hand I have. I lost my right hand in combat."

The Greeks defined anger as a "brief madness." In Scripture it has several meanings, including "strong feelings of displeasure, fury or wrath." Whichever meaning we choose leads to the same outcome: the expression of destructive behavior. When we become angry, we are not in control of ourselves and we do things that are displeasing to God and harmful to others.

The Psalmists always give good advice. When speaking of anger and self-control one of them said, "Stop your anger! Turn from your wrath."

When we become angry, we usually become frustrated, lose control of our emotions and then take it out on others. We think that we know what they should do and assume a role that is reserved for God.

Better for the Christian to turn anger into affection and frustration into forgiveness and prayer.

Prayer: Help us, Savior, to fill our hearts with Your love. May we honor others as You do, Lord, and seek to build them up rather than to tear them down in anger. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 37:8 Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret – it leads only to evil.

News from the Associated Press

A look at a trial over Missouri River flooding

By The Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — A look at the civil trial over the U.S. Army Corps' stewardship of the Missouri River and landowner claims that the agency's decisions have contributed to devastating floods.

WHAT'S ALLEGED: Several hundred landowners named in the class-action lawsuit filed in 2014 allege in the U.S. Court of Federal Claims that the Army Corps has de-emphasized flood control along the Missouri and put more emphasis on habitat restoration, leading to more flooding. The plaintiffs also insist the Corps unconstitutionally deprived them of their land, essentially taking it without compensation.

THE CORPS' STANCE: The federal government argues in court filings that authorities never promised to stop all flooding along the 2,341-mile-long Missouri, and that the Corps' providing habitat for endangered species didn't exacerbate the inundation six years ago. Officials have said the Corps balances flood control and an array of other potential uses of the river, including shipping, recreation and hydropower.

THE TRIAL: The trial began March 6 in Kansas City, Missouri, and will shift in late April to Washington, D.C., with no decision expected at least until summer, at the earliest.

THE JUDGE: The presiding judge — Nancy Firestone, a former federal prosecutor appointed to the claims court in 1998 — served in the late 1990s as a deputy assistant attorney general in the U.S. Department of Justice's environment and natural resources division after holding top positions in the Environmental Protection Agency, including as a judge of its environmental appeals board. She has Missouri connections, having gotten a bachelor's degree from St. Louis' Washington University and a law degree from the University of Missouri at Kansas City.

Army Corps on trial over Missouri River flooding complaint

By JIM SUHR, Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is defending itself at trial against more than 300 farmers and other landowners who say the agency's management of the Missouri River has contributed to major flooding in five states, most notably 2011 flooding that caused billions of dollars in damage.

The lawsuit, filed in 2014 in the U.S. Court of Federal Claims, argues that the Corps has altered its practices regarding the river's water storage, release and flow management since the mid-2000s, de-emphasizing flood control while pushing to restore habitat for endangered species. It contends that the Corps unconstitutionally deprived plaintiffs of their land, essentially taking it without compensation.

Although the lawsuit doesn't specify the amount of damages being sought, the landowners' attorney has said it could exceed \$250 million. The plaintiffs believe case law is on their side, given a U.S. Supreme Court ruling in December 2012 that the federal government is not automatically exempt from paying for damage caused by temporary flooding from its dams.

The case, which isn't expected to be decided until this summer at the earliest, reflects longstanding debate about the Corps' management of the river as the agency tries to strike a balance among competing interests — landowners, the barge industry, water suppliers, hydropower utilities, environmentalists and recreational users of the waterway, notably on upriver reservoirs. Regulating the river's levels comes through the Corps' management of discharges from a half-dozen large upstream reservoirs, each meant to hold snowmelt and other excess water during the spring before the Corps gradually releases it the rest of the year.

In court filings, the federal government argues that authorities never promised to stop all flooding along the 2,341-mile-long Missouri River, which flows into the Mississippi River north of St. Louis. The Corps, which has said it is required by Congress and the courts to act in the river's best interest, maintains that providing habitat for endangered species didn't exacerbate the inundation six years ago — a

claim echoed by a top Midwest volunteer for the Sierra Club.

The trial started last week. The Corps typically does not comment publicly about litigation, and it didn't reply to recent messages by The Associated Press.

Outside experts who reviewed the 2011 flooding said the Corps did the best it could in dealing with record amounts of water that flowed into the river after unusually heavy spring rain in Montana and North Dakota.

That flooding lasted more than three months after the Corps began releasing massive amounts of water from swollen upstream reservoirs. It overwhelmed levees, carved gouges up to 50 feet deep, created sand dunes 15-feet-high, deposited debris in farmers' fields and devastated hundreds of thousands of acres of mostly farmland in South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas and Missouri.

Caroline Pufalt, the St. Louis-based chairwoman of the Sierra Club's Missouri River Network, said blaming the Corps on environmental grounds is "a red herring," and that while the Corps may make decisions in the interest of habitat, such actions are rare.

Pufalt said the Corps did the best it could six years ago, given "unusual circumstances" involving so much water in the Missouri River system.

"These floods were kind of unavoidable," Pufalt said. "The folks who have filed this lawsuit mistakenly think there's some magic thing the Corps can do, given the current river, that will take away their flood risk, and that's not going to happen."

Iowa beats South Dakota 87-75 to open NIT

By LUKE MEREDITH, AP Sports Writer

IOWA CITY, Iowa (AP) — Iowa viewed the NIT as a chance in part for its youngsters to get their first taste of the postseason.

The Hawkeyes survived the first round thanks to standout performances from three of its most promising freshmen.

Freshmen Jordan Bohannon scored 19 points with 11 assists, fellow newcomer Tyler Cook scored 18 with eight rebounds and Iowa opened the NIT with an 87-75 win over South Dakota on Wednesday.

"I go to those guys because they produce. I don't consider those freshmen anymore anyway," Iowa coach Fran McCaffery said.

Senior Peter Jok had 20 to lead the Hawkeyes (19-14), one of four top seeds in the 32-team event.

But for about 30 minutes Iowa couldn't quite shake South Dakota, which excelled at crashing the offensive glass and getting to the free-throw line. The Hawkeyes finally took a double-digit lead on Ahmad Wagner's layup with 8:31 left, and Wagner's layup a minute later made it 68-54.

"Right when we needed it," McCaffery said.

Iowa, one of the last four teams left out of the NCAA Tournament, got 59 points from first-year-players — with Isaiah Moss adding 16.

Matt Mooney had 23 points for the Coyotes (22-12), who earned an NIT bid after winning the Summit League regular-season crown.

"I felt really good at halftime," South Dakota coach Craig Smith said. "We just had some inexperienced plays out there."

BIG PICTURE

Iowa: The Hawkeyes are one of the few teams that could argue that the NIT might actually be better for them than the NCAA Tournament. Iowa started four underclassmen nearly all year, and a long run in this tournament would give the Hawkeyes valuable experience heading into 2017-18 — when a trip to the NCAA Tournament will again be expected.

South Dakota: After finishing with a losing record in '15-16, the Coyotes won the conference title this year. Losses in the conference tournament and the NIT shouldn't take away from the fact that South Dakota improved greatly under Smith, now in his third season. "Played super hard. Just made some mistakes," Smith said.

J-BO ON THE GO

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In his last two games, Bohannon has averaged 21.5 points and 10.5 assists — and his 3 with just over a minute left made it 82-70. However Iowa sets its roster in the next year and beyond, there's little doubt that Bohannon will be a key part of it. "He really had to work, especially in the first half. But he just kept going," McCaffery said. "He's a tough guy, and he's also really smart."

DICKERSON RETURNS

Trey Dickerson, a point guard, played one season at Iowa before transferring to South Dakota. He had 10 points and three rebounds in 21 minutes.

THE NUMBERS

South Dakota grabbed 12 offensive rebounds and went 18 of 25 from the free-throw line. But Iowa shot 57 percent from the field and 10 of 23 on 3s. ... Tyler Flack had 16 points for the Coyotes. ... After turning the ball over 10 times in the first half, Iowa cut that number down by four in the second half. ... Iowa drew nearly 13,000 to the 15,000-seat Carver Hawkeye Arena, an impressive number considering both its disappointing loss to Indiana in the Big Ten Tournament and the fact that its students were on spring break.

UP NEXT

Iowa hosts TCU in the second round on Sunday at 6:30 p.m. CT.

More college basketball at www.collegebasketball.ap.org

Gov. Dennis Daugaard signs anti-meth legislation into law

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Dennis Daugaard has signed into law two bills meant to fight growing methamphetamine use in South Dakota.

The Republican governor said Wednesday that the bills will help stop meth from entering the state, keep people from using it and help those who are addicted become sober.

One measure from the Department of Social Services appropriates more than \$600,000 in funding to expand intensive meth treatment services. The other bill increases sanctions if people on probation or parole use drugs, boosts incentives for offenders to complete drug treatment and focuses supervision resources on high-risk offenders.

A work group that included the attorney general, judges, lawmakers and authorities proposed the plan.

Judge dismisses ABC's Diane Sawyer from 'pink slime' case

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota judge has dismissed ABC anchor Diane Sawyer from a defamation lawsuit over the network's reports on a beef product that critics dubbed "pink slime."

First Judicial Circuit Court Judge Cheryl Gering granted Sawyer's motions for summary judgment last month, dismissing her from the case also against ABC and correspondent Jim Avila. A trial is scheduled to start in June.

ABC says it's pleased the court dismissed claims against Sawyer and looks forward to defending the reports at trial.

Beef Products Inc., based in Dakota Dunes, sued in 2012, and says ABC's multiple reports misled consumers into believing its lean, finely textured beef product was unsafe and led to plant closures and layoffs.

An attorney for the plaintiffs didn't immediately return a request for comment.

Navajo officer's death reflects dangers for tribal officers

By MARY HUDETZ, Associated Press/CJ Project

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — The first time Houston Largo faced deadly gunfire as a Navajo police officer, he and other tribal police had swarmed a patch of desert near the Chuska Mountains to pursue

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an armed domestic violence suspect.

The 40-mile chase that began near Shiprock, New Mexico, had crossed into Arizona, where the suspect armed with an assault rifle crashed his vehicle that March 2015 night and opened fire. One officer was killed and two were wounded, while Largo escaped injury and received a commendation for helping a fellow officer to safety.

On Sunday, Largo again faced gunfire — this time alone on a dark New Mexico road while en route to a domestic violence call on the eastern edge of the United States' largest American Indian reservation. The 27-year-old was found critically wounded, on the ground bleeding about 50 yards from the vehicle he had stopped, sheriff's officials said. He was flown to an Albuquerque hospital where he died.

"He embodied what we ask for from our officers right to the very end," said Amber Kanazbah Crotty, a lawmaker on the Navajo Nation council. "The violence we are seeing is showing our officers are not only stretched thin, but they also are facing challenges with the vastness of the area."

The Navajo Nation covers 27,000 square miles in New Mexico, Arizona and Utah where tribal officers patrol the rural roads alone, Navajo Police Chief Phillip Francisco said. That can leave them without backup during a life-or-death situation, especially in circumstances where the nearest fellow officer is more than an hour away, he said.

Tribal jurisdictions across the West often cover sweeping, remote areas that are larger than some U.S. states, but with far fewer police.

"It's just a fact of geography that creates all sorts of challenges as far as policing reservations," said Tim Purdon, a former U.S. attorney for North Dakota and partner at the Minneapolis law firm Robins Kaplan. "The issue here is both officer safety and public safety."

The FBI has released few details stemming from its investigation into the shooting, including what sparked it. But Largo's death has renewed focus on the dangers that Indian Country's remote landscapes can pose for officers both within the Navajo Nation's chronically understaffed police department and on remote reservations from the Dakotas to the Southwest.

In Montana, there are fewer than 20 Bureau of Indian Affairs officers to serve the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, which spans an area of the Great Plains twice the size of Rhode Island, Tribal Chairman Floyd Azure said.

He called the situation "abysmal," saying the reservation is likely in need of more than twice as many officers than it has.

A high volume of domestic violence calls adds another layer of danger for officers on many reservations. Such calls are statistically considered the most deadly for police.

More than half of Native American women and nearly half of men surveyed by the National Institute of Justice for a report released last year said they had experienced physical violence by a partner.

The Navajo Nation, home to more than 175,000 people, has fewer than 250 patrol officers and investigators. The officers responded to more than 4,600 domestic violence calls in 2015, the most recently available figures.

The last three fatal shootings of Navajo officers, including Largo, happened while responding to reports of domestic disputes. The others included Officer Alex Yazzie in March 2015 near Red Valley, Arizona, and Sgt. Darrell Cervandez Curley in Kaibeto, Arizona, in 2011.

"For the Navajo Nation, they work twice as hard and twice the area with half the staff," Chief Francisco said.

He declined to comment directly on the facts of the case but said the area where Largo was shot Sunday is especially desolate, and the lack of cellphone service there has been a serious safety concern for authorities.

The town closest to the incident is Prewitt, New Mexico, a tiny, unincorporated community in McKinley County. The area is so remote, Francisco said, that sometimes officers' radio transmissions will fail.

"You'll look out and see a couple houses in different areas, but everything is so spread apart," he said. "It can be overwhelming when you drive through."

It remained unclear Wednesday whether another officer also had been called to the same domestic violence dispute as Largo.

A woman who came up on the scene used Largo's radio to call for help, the county sheriff's office said,

and the first authorities to arrive found him with a bullet wound in the forehead.

It wasn't yet known how much time elapsed between the shooting and when emergency responders arrived.

The Navajo Times obtained a report from the sheriff's office, one of the law enforcement agencies that initially responded to the shooting, saying that when deputies arrived, the driver of the pickup truck that Largo had stopped on the county road was handcuffed to the steering wheel.

The driver provided information about the suspect, and authorities found him hiding on a ridge nearby.

The FBI has not commented on the report or the suspect, except to say that they had a suspect in custody Sunday.

"Our officers put themselves in highly volatile situations every day in addressing domestic violence situations," Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye said earlier this week in response to Largo's death.

Last year, Begaye had asked U.S. House members to increase the Interior Department's public safety budget for Indian Country, as he testified about how an officer shortage on his reservation was to blame for increasing response times to crimes.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs is responsible for providing law enforcement on reservations that don't have their own police and provides federal funding for those that do.

On the Navajo Nation, there is roughly one officer for every 1,000 residents. The national average is double that rate.

Of the department's officers, Largo — a nearly five-year veteran of the force — was an especially active and passionate officer, the police chief said.

His funeral service is set for 11 a.m. Thursday in Rehoboth, New Mexico.

This report is one of a series of stories from the CJ Project, an initiative to broaden the news coverage of criminal justice issues affecting New Mexico's communities of color. Partners and collaborators in the project include the Santa Fe New Mexican, Associated Press, Asian American Journalists Association, Investigative Reporters and Editors, and National Council on Crime & Delinquency. Supporters include the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

This story has been corrected to show that the Minneapolis law firm Robins Kaplan was misspelled Kaplin.

Charges move forward against Hutterite colony in fatal crash

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A federal judge in South Dakota has rejected a request to dismiss charges against a Hutterite religious colony accused of negligence in a deadly traffic crash, which could send the case to trial later this year.

Judge Charles Kornmann ruled recently the Deerfield Hutterian Brethren Colony near Ipswich had a duty to supervise and control its vehicles, including one used by a 17-year-old member in the Feb. 9, 2014, crash that killed Vannah Decker, the Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2msnzBD>) reported.

The family of the 15-year-old girl sued the colony, alleging it was reckless and negligent by allowing Janos Stahl access to a GMC Jimmy. Many Hutterites, members of a Protestant sect dating to the Radical Reformation of the 16th century, live in commune-like colonies in rural areas of the western U.S. and Canada.

Stahl drove the Deerfield Hutterian-owned vehicle to meet Decker at the Plainview Colony about four miles away. The teen consumed two beers on his way to meet Decker and drank more as they drove back to Deerfield, according to authorities.

Stahl reached 97 mph before losing control of the vehicle and crashing. Decker was killed in the crash and Stahl served a year in the Edmunds County Jail for manslaughter.

The colony argued that Stahl was prohibited from driving the colony's vehicle on public roads. But Stahl and others testified unlicensed boys routinely drove vehicles outside of the colony.

"Like most boys on the colony, Janos taught himself to drive by driving vehicles owned by Deerfield Colony without a driver's license or permit beginning at the age of 12," Kornmann wrote. "When Janos

taught himself to drive, he was not required to ask for permission or ask for the keys to any particular vehicle, as the keys were always readily available to him."

The judge said in rejecting the defense request to dismiss the case that the possibility of injury increases when the vehicle keys and alcohol are "readily available."

Court records say there are about three dozen Hutterite colonies in South Dakota. One of the basic tenets of Hutterites' religion is communal living and sharing with others.

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

Man sentenced to 210 years in prison in SD double homicide

STURGIS, S.D. (AP) — A man from western South Dakota likely will spend the rest of his life in prison for killing his ex-girlfriend and his roommate.

Thirty-three-year-old Berton Toavs was sentenced Wednesday to 210 years in prison.

Toavs pleaded guilty to two counts of first-degree manslaughter in the shooting deaths of Eliza Edgins and Nathan Gann at Toavs' home in Faith last April. The Rapid City Journal (<http://bit.ly/2nbtAGz>) reports the offense was punishable by up to life in prison.

Toavs received 110 years for Edgins' death and 100 years for Gann's death, to be served back-to-back. Toavs will be eligible for parole only after serving 120 years, effectively making it a life sentence.

Toavs said he got angry with Edgins after she said she intended to leave the state with Gann that day.

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

Judge won't stop oil from flowing through disputed pipeline

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON, Associated Press**

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — A judge refused to head off the imminent flow of oil in the disputed Dakota Access pipeline, likely clearing the way for operations to begin next week.

U.S. District Judge James Boasberg in Washington, D.C., denied a request by the Standing Rock and Cheyenne River Sioux tribes to stop oil from flowing while the tribes appeal his decision last week allowing pipeline construction to finish.

"The critical factor here is Cheyenne River's lack of likelihood of success on the merits ... plaintiff does not have a strong case on appeal," Boasberg said in his ruling Tuesday.

Cheyenne River attorney Nicole Ducheneaux did not immediately respond to a request for comment Wednesday.

Texas-based pipeline developer Energy Transfer Partners is finishing up pipeline work beneath Lake Oahe, a Missouri River reservoir in North Dakota and the last piece of construction on the 1,200-mile, \$3.8 billion pipeline to move North Dakota oil to a distribution point in Illinois. The tribes maintain an oil pipeline under the lake they consider sacred violates their religious rights, but Boasberg says the argument was made too late and is of questionable merit.

The judge also said ETP would be "substantially harmed" by a delay, as it prepares to move oil through the pipeline as early as Monday.

Both ETP and the Army Corps of Engineers had objected to the tribes' latest attempt to halt the project, with Corps attorneys saying in court documents that President Donald Trump "has expressly determined that the pipeline is 'in the national interest.'"

The Corps last month granted ETP permission to lay pipe under the reservoir that it manages for the federal government, after Trump in January urged the project's completion after months of legal delays.

The court battle isn't over. Aside from the tribes' appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit on the religion argument, the tribes in their lawsuit before Boasberg are arguing for more environmental study and for the government to recognize the tribes' treaty rights to clean water.

The Corps on Tuesday filed its opposition to those requests, saying the agency's permission for the

Lake Oahe work “represents the culmination of over two years of detailed environmental analysis and extensive consultation with (the tribes).”

The pipeline saga also has endured for months outside of the courtroom, with about 750 arrests of protesters in southern North Dakota from August through February. Amnesty International USA on Wednesday said it has documented numerous instances of excessive force or intimidation by police and excessive criminal charges.

The organization in a letter asks Republican Gov. Doug Burgum and Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem to drop or consider dropping charges against protesters, review police practices and open independent investigations into several specific cases.

Police have defended their practices, which have included water sprays, tear gas and non-lethal ammunition such as rubber bullets. Police have said some protesters were violent and took part in riots, and that some targeted police both professionally and personally.

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

Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press

Rapid City Journal, Rapid City, March 9

No need for guns at state Capitol

In 1873, Dakota Territory Treasurer Edwin Stanton McCook was shot to death during a meeting at the territorial capitol in Yankton. McCook, described as an imposing figure, likely knew how to handle a gun. He was a Union general during the Civil War before moving west where nearly everyone was armed.

But during a heated debate about corruption and politics in a packed meeting room no one could stop a banker named Peter Wintermute from firing his handgun three times and killing one of the territory’s most prominent men.

Now 143 years later, a majority of South Dakota lawmakers believe they can do what McCook and others at the meeting couldn’t do that day — shoot someone to save a life.

After the Senate voted 19-15 this week to approve a bill that allows lawmakers and others to bring handguns into the state Capitol building, Neal Tapio, a Republican from Watertown, said the legislation is needed in this “dangerous, dangerous world” and that lawmakers “need to have some level of protection.”

House Bill 1156 now awaits Gov. Dugaard’s signature. It allows those with an enhanced gun permit, which can be obtained after two days of training, to bring concealed weapons to the floor of the Legislature and presumably to the gallery where spectators sit and look down on the lawmaking process.

This comes in the wake of complaints about Capitol security even though we can’t think of any incidents in recent history where it was reported that a lawmaker felt his or her life was threatened. However, that could change if dozens of people are armed in a chamber where passions can run hot as they did on the day when a fight between McCook and Wintermute turned into a deadly affair.

Is a place packed with armed lawmakers and spectators any less dangerous than whatever inspires fear in Sen. Tapio? Can any of these lawmakers promise their gun won’t accidentally discharge and wound or kill a student, a child, a mother, a father or another innocent bystander? Can they even promise they will hit their intended target?

Fortunately, Gov. Dugaard has already stated his intention to veto the bill and it looks like it will be difficult for lawmakers to override it, which no doubt will cause some consternation for legislators who apparently fear for their life while in Pierre.

If that is the case and lawmakers like Tapio remain sincerely concerned about their personal safety while working in the state Capitol building, we suggest they follow a well-established system that works well at courthouses across the state and nation — appropriate funds to purchase metal detectors that are placed at entrances to the Capitol and are manned by law enforcement.

If they choose to not pursue a security system that history has shown works well, it will become apparent that HB 1156 is about politics rather than public safety.

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American News, Aberdeen, March 15

Sisseton station unites community around radio

KXSW is the very definition of a "community radio" station: noncommercial, volunteer-powered and freeform.

But the designation is literal for the Roberts County frequency — and the people behind it. Broadcasting from the Sisseton Wahpeton College campus, KXSW helps bring a community together, on both sides of the microphone.

Station manager Tom Wilson has been on air since KXSW switched on in 2011. Under his guidance, the station has delivered an eclectic mix of rock, oldies, country, current hits and Native American music to the region.

More importantly, Wilson has given a platform to people who might not have another outlet.

In a story last week in the American News, reporter Shannon Marvel told of Sisseton High School junior Sam Williams, who has been volunteering at KXSW for four years.

"It's really affected my life in a positive way," Williams said. "It's kept me out of trouble, it's kept me busy and it's something I love to do."

Wilson points to the show "Getting Real With Life on the Rez" as a particularly meaningful place for audiences to stop by — on the dial and in person.

Sure online streaming, satellite services and personalized playlists have taken over from the transistor radio days, but they still don't compare to the immediacy and reach a radio tower has over a community. KXSW, serving the Lake Traverse Reservation area, can give young people a sense of purpose and belonging, and teach them critical skills they can use through life.

The power of conversation and communication. Technical know-how. Problem-solving and troubleshooting. Creating on the fly. Developing an appreciation for music, language and storytelling.

Radio can be an outlet for kids' creativity and angst, fears and desire — and fuel their desire to rock out with their friends.

Wilson said he would like more young people to volunteer at the station, but says, "it's like the community is scared to be on the radio."

We can understand that fear.

But community radio, unlike commercial radio, is meant to be personal; the deejay isn't talking to the microphone, but talking to friends, families and neighbors. The informal nature is part of the charm; waiting to hear what the deejay does or says next can be thrilling or surprising or entertaining. And if someone makes a mistake, it can be easily laughed off, and is forgotten as quickly as the next record starts.

Wilson invites anyone — yes, anyone — to get involved with KXSW community radio. Give him a call at 605-698-3778.

And he invites anyone to listen to KXSW 89.9 FM. If you can't quite get it on your radio dial, listen anytime online from kxswrezn.net.

The Daily Republic, Mitchell, March 13

Transparency will be driving force behind Lake Mitchell restoration

It's Sunshine Week across the nation, a time to shine a light on government openness, and an even brighter light on the absence of transparency. And Sunshine Week couldn't have come at a better time for Mitchell.

Last week marked the kickoff of the Watershed Advisory Committee (WAC) and Technical Advisory Team (TAT) meetings as part of a \$73,725 preliminary study to improve the water quality at algae-ridden Lake Mitchell. But the meetings were held behind closed doors.

When The Daily Republic asked about the meetings, we were told the initial meetings would be held privately and a recap would be given during Tuesday's Lake Mitchell Advisory Committee meeting. What's concerning, however, is that the taxpayer-funded project cannot be properly accessed by those same taxpayers.

According to an email provided by Fyra Engineering to the city of Mitchell that was handed out at a

November Lake Mitchell Advisory Committee meeting, the WAC is meant to "Help educate and update the community about the project." But when no agenda is made public and the meeting is held behind closed doors, how can the public be educated about the project they themselves paid for?

The Lake Mitchell restoration project will have trouble being successful if the public isn't given every opportunity to be involved, particularly since the second and third phases of the restoration haven't been approved by the City Council. If the public isn't allowed to participate in meetings, it could be challenging to convince already skeptical Mitchell residents to commit city funds to a large-scale restoration effort.

We believe the city is taking a long-awaited step in the right direction regarding the cleanup of Lake Mitchell, and we hope the project moves forward with great success. But that success won't come without the city's support.

We hope the rest of the WAC and TAT meetings are public moving forward, and we encourage Fyra Engineering to share as many relevant details as possible throughout the initial phase of the restoration process. The more transparency there is on the project, the more likely it is that better days are yet to come for Lake Mitchell.

Sioux Falls hospital project aims to help treat Latino kids

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Sioux Falls hospital is teaming up with a children's hospital in Florida to conduct a genetic research project identifying health needs of Latino people.

The Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2nrxsou>) reports Sanford Health will work with Nicklaus Children's Hospital on a gene project designed to ultimately help with treatment and prevention of diseases.

Sanford genetic researcher Dr. Cornelius Boerkoel says researchers from both hospitals will sequence genes of about 1,000 Latino people for the project. Doctors will then use that information to target any unique genetic characteristics of Latinos. The genetic information can help determine patterns and identify rare diseases, which would improve care for children in the Latino community.

Sanford and benefactor T. Denny Sanford donated \$7 million for the project after a request from the children's hospital's namesake, former professional golfer Jack Nicklaus.

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

Trump budget: Defense spending a priority over agency money

By ANDREW TAYLOR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump unveiled a \$1.15 trillion budget on Thursday, a far-reaching overhaul of federal government spending that slashes many domestic programs to finance a significant increase in the military and make a down payment on a U.S.-Mexico border wall.

Thursday's budget proposal seeks to upend Washington with cuts to long-promised campaign targets like foreign aid and the Environmental Protection Agency as well as strong congressional favorites such as medical research, help for homeless veterans and community development grants.

"A budget that puts America first must make the safety of our people its number one priority — because without safety, there can be no prosperity," Trump said in a message accompanying his proposed budget that was titled "America First: A Budget Blueprint to Make America Great Again."

The \$54 billion boost for the military is the largest since President Ronald Reagan's Pentagon buildup in the 1980s, promising immediate money for troop readiness, the fight against Islamic State militants and procurement of new ships, fighter jets and other weapons. The 10 percent Pentagon boost is financed by \$54 billion in cuts to foreign aid and domestic agencies that had been protected by former President Barack Obama.

The budget goes after the frequent targets of the party's staunchest conservatives, eliminating the National Endowment for the Arts, legal aid for the poor, low-income heating assistance and the AmeriCorps national service program established by former President Bill Clinton.

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"This is a hard power budget, not a soft power budget," said White House budget director Mick Mulvaney. Such programs were the focus of lengthy battles dating to the GOP takeover of Congress in 1995 and have survived prior attempts to eliminate them. Lawmakers will have the final say on Trump's proposal in the arduous budget process, and many of the cuts will be deemed dead on arrival. Mulvaney acknowledged to reporters that passing the cuts could be an uphill struggle and said the administration would negotiate over replacement cuts.

"This is not a take-it-or-leave-it budget," Mulvaney said.

Law enforcement agencies like the FBI would be spared, while the border wall would receive an immediate \$1.4 billion infusion in the ongoing fiscal year, with another \$2.6 billion planned for the 2018 budget year starting Oct. 1.

Trump repeatedly claimed during the campaign that Mexico would pay for the wall when, in fact, U.S. taxpayers will foot the bill.

Twelve of the government's 15 Cabinet agencies would absorb cuts under the president's proposal. The biggest losers are Agriculture, Labor, State, and the Cabinet-level EPA. The Defense Department, Department of Homeland Security and Department of Veterans Affairs are the winners.

More than 3,000 EPA workers would lose their jobs and programs such as Obama's Clean Power Plan, which would tighten regulations on emissions from power plants seen as contributing to global warming, would be eliminated. Popular EPA grants for state and local drinking and wastewater projects would be preserved, however, even as research into climate change would be eliminated.

Trump's proposal covers only roughly one-fourth of the approximately \$4 trillion federal budget, the discretionary portion that Congress passes each year. It doesn't address taxes, Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, or make predictions about deficits and the economy. Those big-picture details are due in mid-May, and are sure to show large — probably permanent — budget deficits. Trump has vowed not to cut Social Security and Medicare and is dead set against raising taxes.

"The president's going to keep his promises" to leave Social Security and Medicare alone, Mulvaney said.

But the budget increases user fees, boosting the airline ticket tax by \$1 per one-way trip. It would also slash subsidies for the federal flood insurance program that's a linchpin for the real estate market, especially in coastal southern states and the Northeast.

The so-called "skinny budget" is indeed skimpy, glossing over cuts to many sensitive programs such as community health centers, national parks, and payments for rural schools, offering only a vague, two-page summary of most agencies, including the Pentagon, where allocating its additional billions is still a work in progress.

Trump's proposal is sure to land with a thud on Capitol Hill, and not just with opposition Democrats outraged over cuts to pet programs such as renewable energy, climate change research and rehabilitation of housing projects.

Republicans like Sen. Rob Portman of Ohio are irate over planned elimination of a program to restore the Great Lakes. Top Republicans like Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky and Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Corker of Tennessee are opposed to drastic cuts to foreign aid. And even GOP defense hawks like Armed Services Committee Chairman Mac Thornberry of Texas aren't satisfied with the \$54 billion increase for the military.

Before the two sides go to war over Trump's 2018 plan, they need to clean up more than \$1.1 trillion in unfinished agency budgets for the current year. A temporary catchall spending bill expires April 28; negotiations have barely started and could get hung up over Trump's request for the wall and additional border patrol and immigration enforcement agents, just for starters.

Some of the most politically sensitive domestic programs would be spared, including food aid for pregnant women and their children, housing vouchers for the poor, aid for special education and school districts for the poor, and federal aid to historically black colleges and universities.

But the National Institutes of Health would absorb a \$5.8 billion cut despite Trump's talk in a recent address to Congress of finding "cures to the illnesses that have always plagued us." Subsidies for airlines serving rural airports in Trump strongholds would be eliminated. It would also shut down Amtrak's money-losing long-distance routes and kill off a popular \$500 million per-year "TIGER Grant" program for highway projects created by Obama.

Tillerson says NKorea 'need not fear' United States

By MATTHEW PENNINGTON, Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson called on North Korea on Thursday to abandon its nuclear and ballistic missile programs, saying the isolated nation "need not fear" the United States.

Tillerson made that declaration after meeting Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida in Tokyo, where they discussed possible new approaches in dealing with Pyongyang.

He said 20 years of U.S. diplomatic and other efforts to get North Korea to denuclearize have failed, but gave no specifics about how the Trump administration, which is currently doing a policy review, would tackle the issue. Tillerson described the weapons programs as "dangerous and unlawful."

The former Exxon Mobil CEO is making his first trip to Asia as the top U.S. diplomat. Tensions are running high on the divided Korean Peninsula, and North Korea last week launched four missiles into seas off Japan and where the U.S. is currently conducting annual military drills with South Korea. Pyongyang views this as a rehearsal for invasion.

"North Korea and its people need not fear the United States or their neighbors in the region who seek only to live in peace with North Korea," the secretary of state told a news conference in Tokyo. "With this in mind, the United States calls on North Korea to abandon its nuclear and ballistic missile programs and refrain from any further provocation."

He later met separately with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

In Beijing, a North Korean diplomat said Thursday that Pyongyang must act in self-defense against the U.S.-South Korea military drills, which he said have brought the region to the brink of nuclear war. He said the drills were aimed at using atomic weapons for a pre-emptive strike against North Korea. Washington says the maneuvers are routine and defensive.

"The United States holds a joint military exercise every year to push the situation on the Korean Peninsula to a serious situation, and that is the source of the super tough measures we must take," Pak Myong Ho told reporters in a rare briefing at the North Korean Embassy in the Chinese capital. He spoke through a translator.

North Korea has accelerated its weapons development in violation of multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions and despite tough sanctions levied against it. Last year, the North conducted two nuclear test explosions and 24 ballistic missile tests. Experts say it could have a nuclear-tipped missile that could reach the United States within a few years.

Citing the continued North Korean missile launches this year, Tillerson said that "in the face of this ever-escalating threat it is clear that a different approach is required." He said his trip was intended to get input from other governments. Tillerson, who is traveling without the usual contingent of journalists who normally cover the secretary of state, will be in South Korea on Friday and then China on Saturday.

Both Tillerson and Kishida urged China to use its economic leverage with North Korea to push it to change course.

During last year's election campaign, presidential candidate Donald Trump called into question U.S. security alliances and called for Tokyo and Seoul to contribute more for their defense. Tillerson, however, stressed that cooperation with Japan and South Korea was "critical."

Kishida said the U.S. and Japan had an "unwavering bond." In a sign of that, Tillerson reiterated that a U.S.-Japan mutual defense treaty covers Japanese-administered islands in the East China Sea also claimed by China.

Japan and South Korea both host tens of thousands of U.S. troops. Washington has been urging its two allies to step up security cooperation despite their historically strained relations. This week, the three nations' navies have conducted missile defense information-sharing drills in the region.

Kishida described the trilateral cooperation as "indispensable." But he said the Japan-South Korea relationship has been strained over failure to implement a 2015 agreement in which Japan's government consented to compensate South Korean victims of sexual slavery inflicted by the Japanese military during World War II. In return, South Korea was to stop criticizing Japan on the issue.

Earlier this year, Japan withdrew its ambassador from South Korea after activists there erected a statue outside a Japanese consulate to commemorate the wartime victims, known as "comfort women."

Tillerson said he appreciated how "painful" it was to deal with such historical issues, but urged both sides to carry out the agreement and bring the matter to a rapid conclusion. He said it was important for all three nations to maintain a strong alliance "in which there is no space between us."

Associated Press writer Gillian Wong in Beijing contributed to this report.

Trump's planned reduction in refugees may hit Myanmar worst

By MARTHA MENDOZA and MEGHAN HOYER, Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Tin, her husband and five children have cleared years of refugee hurdles to come to the U.S.: blood tests, interviews, DNA and fingerprints, background checks. She has her one must-bring possession within reach, a well-worn Bible, and keeps their phone charged for the U.S. Embassy to call.

But the odds of that happening dropped precipitously.

President Donald Trump's 16-page redone travel ban "to keep the bad dudes out" aims to stop people from six Muslim countries from entering the U.S. this year and suspends refugees from arriving for 120 days. But the order also includes a sweeping 55 percent reduction in refugee visas overall, from a planned 110,000 to 50,000 this year. Trump's executive order had been set to take effect Thursday, but a federal judge put it on hold hours before it was to take effect.

Who are the 60,000 people who may have lost their chance to resettle in the U.S. by September? An Associated Press analysis of 10 years of refugee data suggests that their most common country of origin is not any of the six nations in the travel ban, but Myanmar, also known as Burma. Thousands, like Tin and her family, are Christians who were persecuted in their native country.

These are people who can't imagine living anywhere but the U.S.

"America is really our fatherland in terms of religion," said Tin. "They sent their missionaries to our country and taught us to be Christians. And now we had to escape. All we want is to be safe."

Christians face religious and political discrimination in predominantly Buddhist Myanmar. Its nascent democracy is heavily influenced by a military that ruled for half a century and remains at war with several ethnic groups, some of which are majority Christian.

Tin and her community fled Chin state, where Human Rights Watch says more than 90 percent of the residents were adhering to the tenets the American Baptist Church by 2009, pitting them against a military campaign to elevate Buddhism over all other religions.

Tin and others said that when they gathered for family prayers, people threw rocks at them. Soldiers busted into church services. They hid their precious Bibles for fear of attack.

Tin is one of more than 100,000 Christian Burmese refugees who fled the country of 51 million in recent years because of their beliefs. The family has been living out of suitcases in abject poverty in Malaysia ever since.

AP is only using single names of some individuals in this story out of concern for their security.

More than 160,000 Burmese, mostly Christian, have resettled in the U.S. in the past decade, more than any other nationality. They account for nearly 25 percent of new U.S. refugees since 2007.

In addition, hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims await resettlement after being forced to flee Myanmar or be killed. Rights groups say that soldiers have killed Rohingya, raped women and torched homes in waves of violence against them that began in 2012.

Trump's original order, and now his revamped "Executive Order Protecting The Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into The United States," both say that allowing more than 50,000 refugees into the U.S. this year "would be detrimental to the interests of the United States."

There have been isolated incidents of refugees later accused in terror-related plots. An Iraqi refugee who entered the U.S. in 2009, for instance, pleaded guilty in Houston in October to attempting to provide material support to the Islamic State group. Two Iraqi refugees who lived in Kentucky are now in prison after having been convicted in a plot to send sniper rifles, Stinger missiles and money to al-Qaida

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operatives waging an insurgency back home. And the man accused in the November car-and-knife incident that injured 11 people at Ohio State University was a refugee originally from Somalia who, as an adolescent, moved with his family to the United States in 2014 after living in Pakistan.

There have been no terror attacks by Burmese in the U.S.

The reduction interrupted work that had been underway by federal law enforcement agencies and nonprofits around the world to issue 110,000 refugee visas to the U.S. in 2017. That would have been the highest number in decades. It was an attempt to put a small dent in the record 65 million refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons worldwide.

Nearly 38,000 have been admitted so far. Another 72,000 were preparing to arrive, hopefully before the fiscal year ends in September. Under the executive order, just 12,000 more would be allowed in, and only after a four-month suspension on all refugee arrivals.

The U.S. defines refugees as people of "special humanitarian concern to the United States" who have been persecuted because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group.

An AP analysis found that nearly half the refugees who have arrived so far in fiscal year 2017 came from the seven majority Muslim countries named in the original executive order. Refugees from Syria, in particular, have arrived in greater numbers in the past twelve months. As they've taken up a greater number of resettlement visas, Burma's share has dropped from 26 percent of all spots in 2015 to just 8 percent of the refugee caseload so far this fiscal year.

For the Burmese to make up the same proportion of refugees as they did last year, they'd have to receive roughly one-third — more than 4,000 — of the remaining refugee visas. In the first five months of fiscal year 2017, 3,000 Burmese resettled in the U.S.

The AP also found that Burmese refugees may not be the only ones shut out by the visa change. Data from the State Department show that refugees from Bhutan and Afghanistan have made up a far smaller proportion of people admitted to the U.S. in 2017 than in previous years, and would need to secure thousands of the remaining visas to match last year's numbers.

"What we will see is that more and more people will be stuck in situations for even longer and literally be stranded," said Julia Mayerhofer, acting secretary general of the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network. "The human suffering of this will be tremendous."

Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis if the secretaries of State and Homeland Security agree.

"The United States is committed to assisting people of all ethnicities, religions and nationalities who are fleeing persecution, violence, and other drivers of displacement," said a State Department official in a statement issued on the condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to speak publicly.

The official said the fact that Trump didn't just set the limit at the number already admitted implies an openness to allow refugees into the U.S.

"The safety and security of the American people is our highest priority," he said.

Critics are concerned the policy may backfire.

"Barring these or other refugees into the U.S. will not make us safer, but it will make us less credible as a leading democracy and will fuel recruitment by terrorist organizations," said political sociologist David Cook-Martin, a Grinnell College professor who studies migration and citizenship policy.

U.S. policy toward refugees has been historically inconsistent. But Becca Heller, who directs a refugee assistance project at the New York-based Urban Justice Center, says recent acceptances have allowed America to lead by example in matters of global humanitarian concern.

"Restricting refugee resettlement sends an alarming message to our nation's international allies," she said.

About 210,000 refugees, largely Vietnamese and Cambodians, came to the U.S. in 1980, the most in any year. Refugee arrivals dropped to less than 30,000 for a few years after 9/11 prompted strict new immigration rules. But they have increased fairly steadily since 2004, when President George W. Bush began admitting thousands of Somalis who lost homes to war or tsunami.

Refugee admissions rose to 85,000 last year; 45 percent were Muslim, 40 percent Christian. Since

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Trump took office in January, more than 7,700 have been admitted, and the religious breakdown has remained the same.

Major Burmese resettlement in the U.S. began in Bush's last year, as they didn't have ties to anti-American terrorism, were easy to vet, and were subject to brutal military rule in their Texas-sized Southeast Asian country wedged between Thailand and Bangladesh.

The journeys of these refugees begin in some of the poorest places on earth: remote villages and towns in strife-ridden regions of Myanmar. Some pay human smugglers upwards of \$500 each for the two-week harrowing journey out.

Sang, 29, who learned English while studying for a theology degree, was put on a boat on the Myanmar coast with 18 people when he left seven years ago. The engine stopped mid-journey, he said, and they began taking on water in an area where refugee-laden vessels have capsized before.

"I thought, if we go down, no one in the world will ever know we existed," he said.

Reaching Thailand's shore, they hid in the jungle for days without food. Then, he said, they were squeezed into a car — he and another man shoved into the trunk — and driven for hours, starved for oxygen and terrified, to Malaysia. There, they were unceremoniously told to walk away.

His U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees card, he said, is his safety. It's his key to resettling in the United States, and he doesn't let it out of his sight.

At a cluttered desk in the cramped room that serves as a classroom by day and his home at night, Sang carefully read a copy of the executive order and then looked up, nodding slowly.

He said that while he agreed with the need to keep terrorists out of the U.S., "We are not terrorists, we are Christians. We will never be a problem in the United States. We will get educations, we will work hard. We only seek safety."

In Thailand, an estimated 100,000 Burmese live in refugee camps near the border the countries share. The Thai government refused The Associated Press' request to visit what they call "temporary shelters," saying they are a restricted area.

In Malaysia there are about 130,000 Burmese refugees awaiting resettlement, about half Christian, half Muslim. They mostly live in the poorest neighborhoods of Kuala Lumpur, where makeshift plywood walls divide an ordinary two-bedroom apartment into a half dozen tiny, stifling family units, a stark contrast to city's glimmering skyscrapers and posh shopping malls. They stay in the city for years, their meager belongings still in their baggage so they can be near U.N. offices and the U.S. Embassy if called in to get stamps on documents or meet with officials.

The fear and anxiety are constant, says Lidia, a 30-year-old single mother, holding back tears. She lives in a tiny, third-floor room with her 10-year-old daughter, Sarah, whose own suitcase pops open to reveal four teddy bears and a baby doll. These are Sarah's daily companions, as her mother works 60 hours a week washing dishes in a restaurant.

They had hoped to go to the U.S. this year. Relief comes Saturday night at worship services, when they sing and pray with their pastor, also a refugee, in a nearby church that loans out the space.

Malaysia hasn't signed the U.N. Convention on Refugees, so these people are living in the country illegally. Few are allowed to have jobs, though most work in a sub-official capacity. Their children cannot go to public schools, so volunteers, including refugees also waiting for visas, run their own education centers.

Earlier this week, Tin — the mother waiting for the embassy to call — dropped off her youngest son for a Saturday tutorial. A teacher wrote several words on the board, and asked students to come up with three descriptive phrases for each one.

Bauri Ram, 11, stared at his word, President.

"Donald Trump," someone had written. "Help other people."

His teacher nodded. A fan blew warm air around the room. Torn curtains fluttered. His classmates, on the floor, watched.

Bauri Ram picked up the blue marker. It squeaked as he formed his careful letters: "They help refugees."

Hoyer reported from Washington. Associated Press journalist Maureen Linke in Washington contributed

to this report.

US to confront trade partners at global finance meeting

By DAVID McHUGH and MARTIN CRUTSINGER, AP Business Writers

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) — U.S. President Donald Trump has vowed to get tough on trade partners like China, Mexico and Germany. Now his Treasury chief, Steven Mnuchin, will get his first opportunity to confront them all in one room.

The meeting of the 20 most powerful economies' finance ministers in Germany this week is likely to be dominated by talk about whether to commit to free trade, as previous meetings have — or implicitly accept that some countries may put up barriers, like tariffs, as Trump has promised.

The officials are also due to discuss their longstanding ban on manipulating currencies to gain economic advantage. Weakening a currency can help a country's exporters, but can also end up dumping its troubles with business costs and competitiveness on its trade partners.

The gathering Friday and Saturday in the southern German resort town of Baden-Baden will help set the tone for international commerce and finance and will give Mnuchin a chance to clarify what the U.S. position is.

The focus will be on the final statement issued jointly by the finance ministers on Saturday.

Last year's gathering of the Group of 20 finance ministers in Chengdu, China, issued a statement opposing "all forms of protectionism." This time, such unequivocal language could be softened to refer to trade that is "open" and "fair," without the absolute opposition to import restrictions to benefit domestic workers.

Trump has repeatedly emphasized that the U.S. needs a tougher approach to trade that would put American workers and companies first. He has already pulled the U.S. out of the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement with Japan and other Pacific Rim countries and he has started the process to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement with Mexico and Canada, both of whom are G-20 members.

Additionally, Britain is preparing to pull out of the European Union and its free-trade zone that permits cross border business without import and export taxes, or tariffs, after voters chose to leave in a referendum last year.

"We are committed to open and fair trade," said a senior U.S. Treasury official this week, who briefed reporters only on condition of anonymity to discuss the U.S. position ahead of the talks. "That means a trading system that has a level playing field for our firms and our workers globally. We will be encouraging policies that lead to that level playing field."

The official would not comment on what language might be in the finance ministers' final statement this week.

He also did not want to discuss what changes if any the United States might be seeking to the G-20's statement on currency policy but said Mnuchin would press counterparts to live up to their commitments to refrain from manipulation. During the campaign, Trump said he planned to name China a currency manipulator right after he took office. But since taking office, he has not discussed the topic.

Federal Reserve chair Janet Yellen will join Mnuchin in representing the United States. Other prominent participants will be European Central Bank President Mario Draghi, China's finance minister, Xiao Jie, and the host finance minister, Wolfgang Schaeuble of Germany.

The G-20 is also due to discuss ways to strengthen the global economy and create more jobs. Other issues include international financial regulation and efforts to crack down on tax avoidance and evasion.

The summit is taking place with the global economy in relatively good shape: the International Monetary Fund predicts growth of 3.4 percent this year and 3.6 percent next year, compared with 3.1 percent last year.

Yet the election results in Britain and the U.S. have underlined discontent with trade and globalization and a sense among many that the benefits of a globalized economy — that is, fewer barriers to trade and business — do not reach enough people. Ahead of the summit, IMF head Christine Lagarde said

that it was clear that highly educated workers benefit more from globalization and called for the G-20 to focus on "greater efforts to equip lower-skilled workers with the tools they need to seek and find better-paying jobs." Those could include targeted job training and education.

The G-20 calls itself the premier forum for cooperation on international economic issues. Its members make up more than 80 percent of the world economy. The finance ministers' meeting will pave the way for a summit of national leaders in Hamburg, Germany, on July 7-8.

The G-20's decisions and statements are not legally binding on member countries. The group depends on the individual leaders' commitments to follow through back home, and the degrees and speed of compliance can vary.

Crutsinger contributed from Washington, DC.

Yahoo breach spotlights links between Russian spies, hackers

By HOWARD AMOS, Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — A U.S. indictment of two Russian intelligence agents and two hackers alleged to have stolen more than half a billion U.S. email accounts in 2014 has cast a spotlight on the intertwining of the Russian security services and the murky digital underworld.

The officers of the powerful FSB, Russia's Federal Security Service, are accused of employing cyber-criminals to access Yahoo's systems and steal data on millions of ordinary users as well as U.S. and Russian officials, Russian journalists and executives at large companies.

Interviews with security experts, hackers and people close to the Russian cybercriminal world suggest that the FSB's ties to cybercrime date back years and are mediated through a web of intermediaries and lubricated by blackmail and cash.

"There has been a lot of piggy-backing by the Russian state on the activities of Russian organized cybercriminal groups and scooping up the fruits of their activities," said Nigel Inkster, director of Future Conflict and Cyber Security at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London and a former British intelligence officer.

"The FSB know where these guys are and they know where they can find them," he said.

According to the indictment, FSB agents Igor Sushchin and Dmitry Dokuchaev ran two hackers during the Yahoo operation and paid them. The hackers were Aleksei Belan, a Russian national, and Karim Baratov, a Kazakh who lives in Canada. Belan also is alleged to have simultaneously used the data to run a spamming network to look for financial information for personal profit.

Dokuchaev, a 33-year-old major in the FSB's Information Security Center, was arrested in December as part of a treason case, Russian media have reported. The U.S. Justice Department would not confirm that account.

In 2011, Dokuchaev was identified by the pseudonym "Forb" in the Russian-language magazine Hacker. In a 2004 interview with the Russian newspaper Vedomosti, Forb boasted of making money from credit-card fraud and breaking into U.S. government websites. Little is known about the nature of the treason charge.

In announcing the indictment that included Dokuchaev and Sushchin, Acting Assistant Attorney General Mary McCord noted that their department was "the FBI's point of contact in Moscow for cybercrime matters."

"The involvement and direction of FSB officers with law enforcement responsibilities makes this conduct that much more egregious," she said.

President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the Kremlin learned about the indictments from the media and hasn't received any official information. He also reaffirmed Russia's denial of any official involvement in hacking.

"We have repeatedly said that there absolutely can't be any talk about any Russian agency's official involvement, including the FSB, in any illegal actions in cyberspace," he said.

The FSB press service had no immediate comment on the indictment, and the agency did not reply

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to earlier faxed questions about its broader contacts with hackers.

Along with Dokuchaev, at least three other men reportedly were arrested in the treason case, including Col. Sergei Mikhailov, the deputy head of the FSB's Information Security Center. Although details are sparse, that case has highlighted apparent links between the FSB and cybercrime.

Russia has long been known for its dynamic cybercriminal underworld, which is fueled by high technical standards and the opportunity for significant financial rewards.

That makes it a fertile recruiting ground for the intelligence services.

"It's all about outsourcing," said Andrei Soldatov, an expert on the Russian security services and co-author of "Red Web," a book about Kremlin attempts to control the internet.

Soldatov pointed to the Russian military operations in Ukraine that used local proxies and private contractors, describing it as a tactic helpful to Kremlin officials "because it allows them to deny responsibility."

The most talented Russian hackers work for groups that carry out big financial heists, said Alexander Gostev, chief security expert at Kaspersky Lab, a cybersecurity firm. This community is run by about 20 kingpins who have technical skills but are more notable for their management abilities and contact networks, he said.

"Any hacking group can be hired for an attack on whatever you want," Gostev said.

The FSB is the leading Russian intelligence agency engaged in cyber operations, but it competes with the military intelligence service, known as the GRU, and the Foreign Intelligence Service, or SVR, according to Mark Galeotti, an expert on the Russian security services and a senior researcher at the Institute of International Relations in Prague.

Rivalries between these groups mean they are constantly vying for the Kremlin's favor. "They are like a collection of cats wanting to bring the dead mouse to the master's kitchen," Galeotti said.

Outgoing U.S. President Barack Obama imposed sanctions in December on both the FSB and the GRU for their role in what U.S. intelligence services concluded was Russian interference in the 2016 election campaign.

The FSB is more aggressive than the military and foreign intelligence agencies, which run more traditional intelligence operations, according to Galeotti.

"The FSB are secret policemen who are used to operating with absolute impunity and they freely use heavy-handed tactics like blackmail," he said.

Russian programmer Dmitry Artimovich, who was convicted in 2013 of hacking offenses, said the FSB had made repeated attempts to recruit him.

The first time, he said, was via his cellmate when he was in prison awaiting trial. Artimovich said he refused the offer, preferring to spend time in prison.

"Why would I do it?" he said. "I served one and a half years. Now I am free and don't owe anyone anything. But if you agree to this, you can't go anywhere. You can't have any career growth. It's real dependency."

Since being released, Artimovich said he has been asked dozens of times to carry out hacking operations, offers he said are designed to tempt him to break the law and become vulnerable to FSB pressure. Artimovich shared screenshots of some of these proposals with The Associated Press, which were made via social networking sites.

Alexander Glazastikov, a member of a hacking group that blackmailed top Russian officials after stealing personal details, said earlier this year that the group, known as Humpty Dumpty, cooperated with the FSB. In exchange for protection, Humpty Dumpty handed the FSB compromising material from hacked email accounts.

Security analysts also highlight the case of Yevgeny Bogachyov, a Russian programmer with a \$3 million FBI bounty on his head. He is thought to be behind one of the most successful viruses, Zeus, which siphoned off hundreds of millions of dollars from bank accounts worldwide. U.S. officials have said that Bogachyov lives a luxurious life in a southern Russian resort on the Black Sea.

Bogachyov is one of the kingpins in Russia's cyber community, according to Kaspersky Lab's Gostev. "He is clearly not a programmer," Gostev said.

Since he was named publicly in 2010, Bogachyov has been linked to intelligence-gathering operations targeting the security services of Turkey, Georgia and Ukraine. Many experts assume his talents have

been utilized by Russian intelligence agencies.

Refugee family lands in US amid fight over travel ban

By **JULIE WATSON, MALAK HARB and ALLEN G. BREED, Associated Press**

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Just a week ago, Nadia Hanan Madalo and her family had received news that refugees like them have been waiting to hear: They had seats on a flight bound for the U.S. from Iraq, with an arrival just before the latest Trump administration travel ban was to take effect.

But until they set foot on American soil, they weren't sure.

All Madalo's family knew was that they couldn't go back to their Christian village. Islamic State fighters had invaded several years ago, and only devastation remains. Roads are filled with land mines. The town has been destroyed. And their family home was burned to the ground.

"Thank God we ran from there and come here," she told her brother in Arabic, who translated her words to English after Madalo, her husband and four children arrived to the San Diego airport Wednesday.

Tears streamed down her face as she gave him, her other siblings and mother long embraces.

As Madalo and her family flew to the U.S. on Wednesday, a federal judge in Hawaii put a hold on President Trump's newest ban — the latest development in a fight between the administration and the courts that has injected more uncertainty into the lives of refugees.

Resettlement agencies say more than 67,000 refugees were in the stages of being approved and allowed into the U.S. when Trump's January order halted travel for 90 days from seven majority-Muslim countries: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. The order also suspended the refugee program for 120 days.

After a federal court in California blocked the order in February, declaring it unconstitutional, thousands rushed to get in before the anticipated new order was issued. The Trump administration said the revised ban addresses the legal problems of the last one, and dropped Iraq from the list of countries.

U.S. District Judge Derrick Watson blocked the order, citing "questionable evidence supporting the government's national security motivation." Trump, who has said the order is necessary to prevent terrorists from entering the U.S., criticized the ruling, saying: "The danger is clear. The law is clear."

Madalo and her family were booked on a refugee flight leaving Wednesday after originally offered Thursday, the day the travel ban was to go into effect. The renewed order allowed refugees with booked tickets by the end of Thursday to still come into the country until the end of the month.

They felt lucky, after waiting for four years to get into the United States. Madalo's sister in Lebanon is among those still waiting for approval.

Before leaving, Madalo and her husband returned one last time to their village. The family had not been back in three years since IS fighters moved in. Government forces have since pushed the fighters out, but their home was in ruins — grim confirmation that they needed to leave.

Still, it was a difficult moment. Madalo's husband, Salim Tobiya Kato, cried for hours as he said goodbye to his siblings, not knowing when he would see them again.

"It's hard to leave my birthplace, where all my memories are, and where my parents are buried," he said.

At the same time, he looked forward to reuniting with his 21-year-old son who got into the U.S. a year earlier. Madalo was happy her family could stop fleeing. Their children had been struggling since they had left their village in 2014 and fled to Iraq's semi-autonomous northern Kurdish region where they attended an overcrowded school for the displaced.

Their final destination was the San Diego suburb of El Cajon, home to the nation's second largest population of Chaldeans, where her brother hosted a celebration with their mother, siblings and cousins.

But for every family celebrating a joyous reunion, thousands of other people remain in limbo. People such as Midya Alothman.

The Syrian refugee and her two siblings in Buffalo, New York, expected their parents and remaining siblings to arrive in February. They bought the ingredients for a feast, got their father's favorite strong coffee and made plans to pick up tulips in their mother's favorite colors — purple and pink.

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Then their Feb. 16 flight was cancelled without explanation. They were unable to rebook their flight before the start of the renewed ban.

"Maybe they can stand for two months, three months, and that's fine. OK. What's going to happen after that? I'm afraid about this. I'm scared about this," said Alothman, a Kurdish Muslim from Syria who works 24 hours a week for minimum wage at a Catholic clinic as a translator and receptionist.

The 16-page executive order calls for a 55 percent reduction in refugee visas overall. Instead of the planned 110,000 slated for this year, there would be just 50,000. By this week, nearly 38,000 will have already been admitted.

Madalo and her siblings understand the pain of waiting.

Their parents spent three years going through the vetting process before they got approved for a flight. Then it was cancelled. There were more delays as her father's health worsened. In 2015, as her parents traveled to the U.S., her father died.

Her brother, Gassan Kakooz, who came to the U.S. in 2008 as a refugee, buried his father in San Diego. In his apartment, he keeps a photo of him displayed high up, as if he is watching over the room.

Over the years, Kakooz has welcomed his siblings one by one, helping them to find homes and get jobs. He and his wife and children have become U.S. citizens, and have no plans to go back to Iraq. Now his youngest sister and her family were here too.

"I am so happy," he said. "I cannot tell you how happy I am."

Harb reported from Iraq. Breed reported from Raleigh, North Carolina.

House GOP health bill facing fresh House committee test

By ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House and Republican leaders are talking to rank-and-file lawmakers about revising the GOP health care overhaul, hoping to keep a rebellion by conservatives and moderates from snowballing and imperiling the party's showpiece legislation.

Four days after a congressional report projected the bill would pry coverage from millions of voters, signs of fraying GOP support for the legislation were showing. The measure would strike down much of former President Barack Obama's 2010 overhaul and reduce the federal role, including financing, for health care consumers and is opposed uniformly by Democrats.

In a fresh test of Republicans' willingness to embrace the legislation, the House Budget Committee was considering the measure Thursday. Republicans expressed confidence the bill would be approved, but the vote could be tight. The panel can't make significant changes but was expected to endorse non-binding, suggested changes to nail down votes.

The bill would eliminate the tax penalty that pressures people to buy coverage and the federal subsidies that let millions afford it, replacing them with tax credits that are bigger for older people. It would cut Medicaid, repeal the law's tax increases on higher earning Americans and require 30 percent higher premiums for consumers who let coverage lapse.

Overt GOP opposition grew after the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office projected Monday that the legislation would push 24 million Americans off coverage in a decade and shift out-of-pocket costs toward lower income, older people. Obama's law has provided coverage to around 20 million additional people.

House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., told reporters Wednesday that leaders could now make "some necessary improvements and refinements" to the legislation. But he declined to commit to bringing the measure to the House floor next week, a schedule Republican leaders have repeatedly said they intended to keep.

At a late rally in Nashville Wednesday, President Donald Trump said: "We're going to arbitrate, we're all going to get together, we're going to get something done."

Vice President Mike Pence met with House GOP lawmakers and pressed them to unite behind the

legislation.

"It's our job to get it out of here and get it to the Senate," Pence told Republicans, according to Rep. Dennis Ross, R-Fla. That would let Trump pressure "Democrats in these red states to come on board," Ross said, referring to Republican-leaning states where Democratic senators face re-election next year.

But insurgents still abound.

Conservatives want to end Obama's expansion of Medicaid to 11 million additional low-income people next year, not 2020 as the bill proposes. They say a GOP proposed tax credit to help people pay medical costs is too generous, and they want to terminate all of Obama's insurance requirements, including mandatory coverage of specified services like drug counseling.

Rep. Mark Meadows, R-N.C., head of the hard-line conservative House Freedom Caucus, continued pushing for changes. He claimed at least 21 members of his group would oppose the measure as written; the bill would fail if 22 Republicans join all Democrats in opposing it.

But underscoring the push-pull problem GOP leaders face in winning votes, moderates feel the tax credits are too stingy, especially for low earners and older people. They oppose accelerating the phase-out of the Medicaid expansion and are unhappy with long-term cuts the measure would inflict on the entire program.

Terminating the Medicaid expansion in 2020 and not 2018 "is sacrosanct to me," said moderate Rep. Tom MacArthur, R-N.J.

In a new complication, Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, said the measure lacked the votes to pass in the Senate, where Republicans hold a precarious 52-48 majority. That left House members angry over being asked to take a politically risky vote for legislation likely to be altered.

Moderates "don't like the idea of taking a vote in the House that may go nowhere in the Senate," said Rep. Charlie Dent, R-Pa.

Amid the maneuvering, a federal report said more than 12 million people have signed up for coverage this year under the very statute that Republicans want to repeal. That figure underscored the potential political impact of the GOP's next move.

Associated Press reporters Erica Werner, Darlene Superville and Kevin Freking contributed to this report.

Canadian prime minister, Ivanka Trump catch Broadway musical

By MARK KENNEDY, AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau — along with first daughter Ivanka Trump as a guest — welcomed a new musical that celebrates Canadian compassion and openness to international travelers following the Sept. 11 attacks.

Trudeau and Trump and some 120 ambassadors from around the world attended the show "Come From Away" on Wednesday night at the Gerald Schoenfeld Theatre, in a city where the bulk of the 3,000 people on 9/11 died.

The musical is set in the small Newfoundland town of Gander, which opened its arms and homes to some 7,000 airline passengers diverted there when the U.S. government shut down its airspace. In a matter of a few hours, the town was overwhelmed by 38 planeloads of travelers from dozens of countries and religions, yet locals went to work in their kitchens and cleaned up spare rooms.

In remarks before the show, Trudeau got on the stage and said he was pleased that, "the world gets to see what it is to lean on each other and be there for each other through the darkest times."

The show got a standing ovation, including from Trump, who sat near Trudeau, his wife and U.N. ambassador Nikki Haley. Also in attendance was Jean Chretien, a former Canadian prime minister, and the mayor of Gander. Trump was seen clapping along happily as the band played at the curtain call.

The actors did not make any changes to the script or acknowledge the special audience, but one afterward was still buzzing.

"When do we have the opportunity to share a story about kindness, gratitude and love that takes

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place in a country that is known for opening their hearts to people," said actor Rodney Hicks. "It just meant the world to all of us."

Trudeau, who champions global free trade and has welcomed 40,000 Syrian refugees, was celebrating the 150th anniversary of Canada's confederation and also hoped to reaffirm the special friendship between Canadians and Americans.

"Our friends are there for those tough times, when you lose a parent or a loved one, when you get knocked off your path at a difficult moment in your life. Where you go through difficult times, that's when you turn and you lean on your friends," he said. "That ultimately is what this story is all about — being there for each other."

In the show, a cast of a dozen play both residents and marooned passengers, telling true stories of generosity, compassion and acceptance, while fear and suspicion reigned in America. The show arrives just as a debate over immigration and open borders has reignited following the Trump administration's push for a ban on travelers from six predominantly Muslim nations.

Canadian husband-and-wife writing team Irene Sankoff and David Hein wrote the book, music and lyrics, and it was directed by Christopher Ashley, the artistic director of the La Jolla Playhouse. The musical veers its focus from weighty matters — a mother anxious about her missing firefighter son in New York — to more silly events, like a rowdy evening at a local bar where visitors are urged to kiss a cod.

Security at the theater was intense and theatergoers had to navigate through frozen snow drifts as well as black SUVs. But Trudeau seemed comfortable on the stage.

"I have to sort of personally say, on behalf of all Canadians, thank you for making us so welcome with the snow," he said. "It's a nice touch. You really went out of your way."

Trudeau's warm reception was in contrast to the ones that greeted two other world leaders who recently attended the Broadway smash "Hamilton" — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Vice President-elect Mike Pence. Both received more than a smattering of boos.

One woman in attendance on Wednesday was seeing "Come From Away" for the 58th time, having followed it as it made its way from California to Seattle to Washington, D.C., then Gander and now Broadway.

That was Beverley Bass, the first female captain at American Airlines, who was at the helm of Flight 49, going from Paris to Dallas-Fort Worth, when she ended up in Gander on 9/11. She was interviewed by the musical's creators for her story and is portrayed onstage by Jenn Colella.

After almost 60 performances, might she at some point just step in for Colella one night and play her own life? Bass laughed: "I can't sing and dance, so her role is safe from me," she said. Then she thought for a moment and added: "I guess she can't fly jets."

Online: <http://comefromaway.com>

Mark Kennedy on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/KennedyTwits>

Trump suffers second defeat as revised travel ban on hold

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER and GENE JOHNSON, Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — A federal judge blocked President Donald Trump's revised travel ban hours before it was to take effect, marking the second time courts have thwarted Trump's efforts to freeze immigration by refugees and citizens of some predominantly Muslim nations.

This time, the ruling came from a judge in Hawaii who rejected the government's claims that the travel ban is about national security, not discrimination. U.S. District Judge Derrick Watson also said Hawaii would suffer financially if the executive order constricted the flow of students and tourists to the state, and that Hawaii was likely to succeed on a claim that the ban violates First Amendment protections against religious discrimination.

Watson criticized what he called the "illogic" of the government's arguments and cited "significant and un rebutted evidence of religious animus" behind the travel ban. He also noted that while courts should

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not examine the “veiled psyche” and “secret motives” of government decision-makers, “the remarkable facts at issue here require no such impermissible inquiry.”

“For instance, there is nothing ‘veiled’ about this press release: ‘Donald J. Trump is calling for a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States,’” Watson wrote, referring to a statement Trump issued as a candidate.

Trump called the ruling an example of “unprecedented judicial overreach” and said his administration would appeal it to the U.S. Supreme Court. He also called his new travel ban a watered-down version of the first one, which he said he wished he could implement.

“We’re going to win. We’re going to keep our citizens safe,” the president said at a rally in Nashville. “The danger is clear. The law is clear. The need for my executive order is clear.”

If the administration seeks an emergency stay of Watson’s decision at the 9th Circuit, the matter would be heard by different judges from the three who ruled on the case last month. That’s because the panel of judges assigned to such cases rotates every month, said court spokesman David Madden.

The 9th Circuit on Wednesday declined to reconsider the 3-0 decision not to reinstate the original ban. In a dissent, five judges said they considered that decision incorrect and wanted it vacated.

“Whatever we, as individuals, may feel about the president or the executive order, the president’s decision was well within the powers of the presidency,” Judge Jay Bybee wrote for the five.

Watson issued his 43-page ruling less than two hours after hearing Hawaii’s request for a temporary restraining order to stop the ban from being put into practice.

The hearing was one of three held Wednesday in federal courts around the country. U.S. District Judge James Robart in Seattle, who blocked the initial travel ban last month, did not immediately rule on a request from an immigrant-rights group to block the revised version. Neither was there a ruling from U.S. District Judge Theodore Chuang in Maryland in a challenge brought by the American Civil Liberties Union and other groups.

In all, more than half a dozen states are trying to stop the ban. A case brought by Washington state argues that the new order harms residents, universities and businesses, especially tech companies such as Washington state-based Microsoft and Amazon, which rely on foreign workers. California, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York and Oregon have joined the claim.

Trump’s initial travel ban, issued on a Friday in late January, brought chaos and protests to airports around the country as travelers from seven nations — Somalia, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Libya and Yemen — were barred from entering even if they had prior permission to come to the U.S. The State Department canceled up to 60,000 visas, but later reversed that decision.

Robart ordered the government to stop enforcing the ban, which also suspended the nation’s acceptance of refugees from around the world, and a three-judge panel from the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals unanimously declined to reinstate the ban.

The administration subsequently rewrote the ban, emphasizing more of a national security rationale, dropping Iraq from the list of banned countries and spelling out some reasons that travelers from the listed nations might be granted waivers allowing them into the U.S. despite the policy. The new ban does not apply to travelers who already have visas.

Critics of the ban said the changes made it more palatable, but they still argued that it violated both the Constitution and federal immigration law, and they tweaked their lawsuits to target the revised order.

Watson is a 2012 appointee of President Barack Obama. He is the only Native Hawaiian currently sitting as a federal judge and the fourth in U.S. history. He received his law degree from Harvard in 1991.

In his order, he found little evidence the travel ban would aid national security, noting a point brought up by the state: that a draft report from the Department of Homeland Security found nationality to be an “unlikely indicator” of terrorism threats.

Watson made it clear that his decision applied nationwide, ruling that the ban could not be enforced at any U.S. borders or ports of entry or in the issuance of visas.

In the Hawaii case, the federal government said there was no need to issue an emergency restraining order because Hawaii officials offered only “generalized allegations” of harm.

Washington Attorney General Bob Ferguson, who filed the lawsuit that succeeded in blocking the first ban, cheered the Hawaii judge’s ruling.

"It's very exciting," Ferguson said. "At this point it's a team effort — multiple lawsuits and multiple states."

Johnson reported from Seattle. Associated Press Writer Ben Nuckols in Greenbelt, Maryland, and Sudhin Thanawala in San Francisco also contributed to this report.

Trump's allies melting away on wiretapping claims

By JULIE PACE, AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's explosive allegation that Barack Obama wiretapped his New York skyscraper during the presidential campaign has left him increasingly isolated, with allies on Capitol Hill and within his own administration offering no evidence to back him up.

On Wednesday, Attorney General Jeff Sessions said he had not given Trump any reason to believe he was wiretapped by President Obama. Republican Rep. Devin Nunes, chairman of the House intelligence committee, said he had seen no information to support the claim and then went further. He suggested the U.S. president's assertion, made in a series of March 4 tweets, should not be taken at face value.

"Are you going to take the tweets literally?" Nunes said. "If so, clearly the president was wrong."

Trump, in an interview Wednesday with Fox News, predicted there would be "some very interesting items coming to the forefront over the next two weeks." The president said he'd learned about the alleged wiretapping from news reports referencing intercepted communications, despite the fact that he and his advisers have publicly denounced stories about government agencies reviewing contacts between Trump associates and Russians.

Trump's allegations have put him in a potentially perilous position as congressional investigations into Russia's involvement in the 2016 election — and possible Russian contacts with Trump associates — ramp up. The FBI is also investigating.

If no evidence of wiretapping at Trump Tower emerges, his credibility would be newly damaged. If there is proof that the Obama administration approved monitoring of Trump or his associates, that would suggest the government had reason to be suspicious of their contacts with Russia and a judge had approved the surveillance.

The president, who appears to have made his allegation in a burst of anger, has asked lawmakers to investigate the claim. Lawmakers have since turned the question back toward the administration, asking the Justice Department to provide evidence of wiretapping activity.

The Justice Department missed a Monday deadline for providing the information to the House and was given a one-week extension.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., who heads the Judiciary Committee's crime and terrorism subcommittee, said the FBI will provide a classified briefing on the matter "at some time in the future." Graham has previously said he would use subpoena power to get information from the FBI about whether a warrant was issued allowing the Obama administration to tap Trump's phones during the campaign.

Longtime Trump adviser Roger Stone told The Associated Press Wednesday that he believes his own online exchanges with a Russian-linked hacker were obtained through a special warrant that allows the government to collect the communications of people suspected of being agents of a foreign nation. Stone communicated through Twitter direct messages with Guccifer 2.0, a hacker who has claimed responsibility for breaching the Democratic National Committee.

Stone said he was unaware at the time that U.S. officials believed the hacker had ties to Russia. He said he is willing to testify before any congressional committee that holds its hearings "in public and not behind closed doors."

The House intelligence committee will begin holding public hearings on Monday. Nunes said FBI Director James Comey and Adm. Mike Rogers, the director of the National Security Agency, will testify.

Ahead of the hearing, the committee sent a letter to the FBI, CIA and the National Security Agency requesting details by Friday about Americans who surfaced in intelligence collections last year.

Identities of Americans who show up in U.S. surveillance against foreign targets are generally con-

sealed, but can be unmasked by intelligence agencies in certain circumstances. Those include situations when the communications contain information that a crime has or is about to be committed, when the Americans' identity is necessary to understand the importance of the foreign intelligence collected or when the communication provides information that an American may be an agent of a foreign power.

Asked whether Trump's communications may have been swept up in surveillance, Nunes said it was "very possible."

Sessions, a staunch supporter of Trump during the campaign, recused himself earlier this month from the Russia investigations after it was revealed that he did not disclose his own contacts with Russia's ambassador to the United States. Asked Wednesday if he had ever briefed Trump on the investigation or given the president any reason to believe he had been wiretapped by the Obama administration, Sessions said, "The answer is no."

Trump has said little about his allegations against Obama, largely leaving it to White House aides to explain his inflammatory statements.

The White House appeared to be backing away from Trump's claims on Monday, with spokesman Sean Spicer saying the president was referring to general surveillance that may have been approved by the Obama administration. On Tuesday, Spicer said the president was "extremely confident" the Justice Department would provide evidence vindicating him.

Graham and Iowa Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley have both said they will hold up hearings for Rod Rosenstein, Trump's nominee to serve as deputy attorney general, unless they get more information from the FBI. Given Sessions' recusal, Rosenstein would take over responsibility for any probes touching the Trump campaign and Russia's election meddling if he's confirmed.

"It's just too bad that we have to go to this length," Grassley said.

AP writers Deb Riechmann, Sadie Gurman and Richard Lardner contributed to this report.

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

Trump budget slashes agency money to boost defense spending

By ANDREW TAYLOR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is unveiling a \$1.15 trillion budget, a far-reaching overhaul of federal government spending that slashes a dozen departments to finance a significant increase in the military and make a down payment on a U.S.-Mexico border wall.

Thursday's scheduled budget release will upend Washington with cuts to long-promised campaign targets like foreign aid and the Environmental Protection Agency as well as strong congressional favorites such as medical research, help for homeless veterans and community development grants.

"A budget that puts America first must make the safety of our people its number one priority — because without safety, there can be no prosperity," Trump said in a message accompanying his proposed budget that was titled "America First: A Budget Blueprint to Make America Great Again."

The \$54 billion boost for the military is the largest since President Ronald Reagan's Pentagon buildup in the 1980s, promising immediate money for troop readiness, the fight against Islamic State militants and procurement of new ships, fighter jets and other weapons. The 10 percent Pentagon boost is financed by \$54 billion in cuts to foreign aid and domestic agencies that had been protected by former President Barack Obama.

The budget goes after the frequent targets of the party's staunchest conservatives, eliminating the National Endowment for the Arts, legal aid for the poor, low-income heating assistance and the AmeriCorps national service program established by former President Bill Clinton.

Such programs were the focus of lengthy battles dating to the GOP takeover of Congress in 1995 and have survived prior attempts to eliminate them. Lawmakers will have the final say on Trump's proposal in the arduous budget process.

The budget is set for official release Thursday morning, but The Associated Press and other news outlets obtained the document in advance.

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Law enforcement agencies like the FBI would be spared, while the border wall would receive an immediate \$1.5 billion infusion in the ongoing fiscal year, with another \$2.6 billion planned for the 2018 budget year starting Oct. 1.

Trump repeatedly claimed during the campaign that Mexico would pay for the wall when, in fact, U.S. taxpayers will foot the bill.

Twelve of the government's 15 Cabinet agencies would absorb cuts under the president's proposal. The biggest losers are Agriculture, Labor, State and the Cabinet-level EPA. Defense, Homeland Security and Veterans Affairs are the winners.

More than 3,000 EPA workers would lose their jobs and programs such as Obama's Clean Power Plan, which would tighten regulations on emissions from power plants seen as contributing to global warming, would be eliminated. Popular EPA grants for state and local drinking and wastewater projects would be preserved, however.

Trump's proposal only covers roughly one-fourth of the approximately \$4 trillion federal budget, the discretionary portion that Congress passes each year. It doesn't address taxes, Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, or make predictions about deficits and the economy. Those big-picture details are due in mid-May, and are sure to show large — probably permanent — budget deficits. Trump has vowed not to cut Social Security and Medicare and is dead set against raising taxes.

"The president's going to keep his promises" to leave Social Security and Medicare alone, said White House Budget Director Mick Mulvaney.

Trump's proposal is sure to land with a thud on Capitol Hill, and not just with opposition Democrats outraged over cuts to pet programs such as renewable energy, climate change research and rehabilitation of housing projects.

Republicans like Sen. Rob Portman of Ohio are irate over planned elimination of a program to restore the Great Lakes. Top Republicans like Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky and Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Corker of Tennessee are opposed to drastic cuts to foreign aid. And even GOP defense hawks like Armed Services Committee Chairman Mac Thornberry of Texas aren't satisfied with the \$54 billion increase for the military.

Before the two sides go to war over Trump's 2018 plan, they need to clean up more than \$1.1 trillion in unfinished agency budgets for the current year. A temporary catchall spending bill expires April 28; negotiations have barely started and could get hung up over Trump's request for the wall and additional border patrol and immigration enforcement agents, just for starters.

Some of the most politically sensitive domestic programs would be spared, including food aid for pregnant women and their children, housing vouchers for the poor, aid for special education and school districts for the poor, and federal aid to historically black colleges and universities.

But the National Institutes of Health would absorb a \$5.8 billion cut despite Trump's talk in a recent address to Congress of finding "cures to the illnesses that have always plagued us." Subsidies for airlines serving rural airports in Trump strongholds would be eliminated. Also zeroed out would be funding for subsidies of Amtrak's money-losing long-distance routes, and a \$500 million per-year "TIGER Grant" program for highway projects created by Obama.

In a blow to endangered GOP Sen. Dean Heller of Nevada, Trump's budget seeks \$120 million to revive the mothballed Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository, which is hugely unpopular in his state and was largely killed by the efforts of Democratic former Sen. Harry Reid. Heller is up for re-election next year in a state that backed Democrat Hillary Clinton.

A look at the best to come in the NCAA Tournament

By JOHN MARSHALL, AP Basketball Writer

This year's NCAA Tournament has a chance to be just as good as 2016, when Kris Jenkins capped March Madness the most dramatic way possible with a buzzer-beating 3-pointer to win Villanova a title.

North Carolina fans may not have liked it, but it was the perfect end to a wild tournament filled with upsets and great games. Plus, the Tar Heels are a No. 1 seed again opposite Villanova on the other side

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of the 68-team field, setting up the chance for a championship game rematch on April 3.

And so the madness of March revs up all over again — a tournament loaded with great teams, players and marquee matchups.

A few things to look for:

TOP TEAMS

Villanova. The defending national champions are the top overall seed and on a roll. No need to start anywhere else.

Kansas. The Jayhawks may have had an early exit in the Big 12 Tournament, but they have one of the most talented rosters anywhere.

North Carolina. So good, even a loss to rival Duke in the ACC Tournament wasn't enough to knock them down from a No. 1 seed.

Gonzaga. Call them overrated all you want, these Zags are deep, athletic and probably the best team coach Mark Few has had in the Inland Northwest.

Arizona. Pac-12 Tournament and co-regular season champions have coach Sean Miller eyeing his first Final Four.

Duke. Blue Devils had their share of struggles, but appear to be peaking at the right time.

TOP PLAYERS

Frank Mason III, Kansas. Leader and go-to player for a program that won its 13th straight Big 12 title.

Josh Hart, Villanova. Does it all, already has one national title.

Lonzo Ball, UCLA. One-and-done star plays with poise and flair, led the nation in assists (7.7), could be the No. 1 overall NBA pick.

Caleb Swanigan, Purdue. Double-double machine is doing things that haven't been done in the Big Ten for decades.

Nigel Williams-Goss, Gonzaga. Steady, clutch, engine that makes the Zags go.

Monte Morris, Iowa State. Led the nation with a 6-to-1 assist-to-turnover ratio — and no else was even close.

MUST-WATCH GAMES

Northwestern vs. Vanderbilt, West Region, Thursday in Salt Lake City. The Wildcats waited 78 years to play in the NCAA Tournament and the Commodores want to spoil it.

UNC-Wilmington vs. Virginia, East Region, Thursday in Orlando, Florida. The Seahawks were 10th nationally with 85.2 points per game. The Cavaliers barely give that up in two games.

Michigan vs. Oklahoma State, Midwest Region, Friday in Indianapolis. Two of the nation's best in offensive efficiency will put the ball in the basket.

Iona vs. Oregon, Midwest Region, Friday in Sacramento. The cameras may need to stay on wide angles to keep track of these frenetic teams.

Dayton vs. Wichita State, South Region, Friday in Indianapolis. Two mid-majors looking to make a major run through the bracket.

Kentucky vs. UCLA, South Region final. Here's hoping they get that far. The first game in Las Vegas was epic.

MID-MAJOR STARS

Mike Daum, South Dakota State. The Summit League player of the year is the top scorer in the NCAA Tournament at 25.3 points per game.

Junior Robinson, Mount Saint Mary's. The smallest player in the bracket — 5-foot-5 — plays big. He had 23 points and the go-ahead jumper in the Mountaineers' 67-66 First Four win over New Orleans.

Keon Johnson, Winthrop. Another little guy — he's 5-7 — who can score in bunches. The Big South player of the year averages 22.5 points per game.

Jimmy Hall, Kent State. He declared for the NBA draft last season before changing his mind. It worked out for the Golden Flashes; he leads them with 18.9 points, 10.5 rebounds, 2.6 assists and 1.4 blocks

per game.

JaCorey Williams, Middle Tennessee. Arkansas transfer was the Conference-USA player of the year after averaging 17.3 points and 7.3 rebounds.

NUMBERS

5-1 — Odds Kansas will win the national title, according to MGM Resorts International. Other casinos disagree, listing North Carolina as the favorite. Some even opened giving No. 2 seed Duke the best odds before switching to the Tar Heels.

9 — ACC teams in the field, most of any conference.

13.1 — Rebounding average of Seton Hall's Angel Delgado, best in the field.

32-1 — Best record in the field, by Gonzaga.

79.9 percent — Free-throw percentage by Notre Dame, highest of the 68 teams.

90.3 — Scoring average of UCLA, leading the nation.

2,900 — Approximate miles of the longest road trip in the tournament, by Rhode Island to Sacramento, California, for games in the East Regional.

10.4 billion — Amount in dollars expected to be bet on this year's tournament, about \$1.2 billion more than last season.

For more AP college basketball coverage: <http://collegebasketball.ap.org> and http://twitter.com/AP_Top25

Trump announces challenge to Obama-era fuel standards

By JILL COLVIN, Associated Press

YPSILANTI, Mich. (AP) — President Donald Trump announced Wednesday that his administration will re-examine federal requirements governing the fuel efficiency of cars and trucks, moving forcefully against Obama-era environmental regulations that Trump says are stifling economic growth.

Trump revealed his plans during a speech at an automotive testing center near Detroit, where he also met with auto company executives and workers.

"This is going to be a new era for American jobs and job creation," Trump said at a round-table meeting.

The EPA under Obama had promulgated a rule for cars and trucks requiring a fleet-wide average of 36 mpg in real-world driving by 2025.

Trump's decision, while having no immediate effect, requires the Environmental Protection Agency to determine no later than April 2018 whether the 2022-2025 standards established are appropriate. If the EPA determines they are not appropriate, the agency will submit a new proposal next year.

"My administration will work tirelessly to eliminate the industry-killing regulations, to lower the job-crushing taxes and to ensure a level playing field for all American companies and workers," Trump said at the American Center for Mobility, which produced B-24 bombers during World War II and is being converted into an automotive testing and product development facility.

Trump's announcement is expected to set the stage for weaker fuel efficiency standards as well as drawn-out legal battles with environmental groups and states such as California that adopted their own tough tailpipe standards for drivers.

"These standards are costly for automakers and the American people," said EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt. He promised a "thorough review" that will "help ensure this national program is good for consumers and good for the environment

California Gov. Jerry Brown accused Trump and Pruitt of trying to weaken auto-emission standards in what he called "an unconscionable gift to polluters."

Brown and New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman announced their states are intervening in a lawsuit challenging the EPA rule. New York is among more than a dozen, mostly Northeastern states that have adopted California standards.

The Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers — which represents a dozen major car manufacturers including General Motors, Ford, Fiat Chrysler and Toyota — praised Trump's action. It said he was creating an

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opportunity for federal and state officials to "reach a thoughtful and coordinated outcome predicated on the best and most current data."

Environmental groups said Trump and his team appeared intent on easing gas-mileage requirements set by Obama.

"If they succeed we'll pay more at the pump, depend more on oil from bad countries, drive up the trade deficit and pollute our kids' atmosphere," said Dan Becker, director of the Safe Climate Campaign.

As a practical matter, Trump's announcement will target the Obama administration's January decision to lock in strict gas mileage requirements for cars and light trucks, ending a review process before the Democrat left office.

Back in 2012, the Obama administration set fuel-economy regulations for model years 2017-2025 and agreed to complete a midterm evaluation by 2018. But seven days before Obama left office, the EPA decided to keep the stringent requirements it had set in place for model years 2022 to 2025. The industry balked at the decision, insisting it was rushed through to beat the change in administrations.

Trump said he's putting that midterm review back on track, so officials can spend another year studying the issue before setting new standards in 2018.

In Michigan, Trump delivered a campaign-style speech in which he railed against big trade agreements, specifically NAFTA and the recent Trans-Pacific Partnership, laying out in stark terms his view of how the pacts had hurt the U.S. auto industry and its workers.

Trump said he had kept his promise to withdraw the U.S. from the TPP, an agreement that former President Barack Obama pursued with 11 other Pacific Rim nations. Trump also wants to renegotiate NAFTA, which includes Canada and Mexico, but he did not mention those plans in Wednesday's remarks.

"The assault on the American auto industry is over," he declared.

While the administration has not said explicitly it wants to weaken the standards, a senior White House official said the Obama-era EPA had ignored reams of data cited by the automotive industry. The official spoke on condition of anonymity at a White House briefing in order to outline the action, despite the president's criticism of the use of unnamed sources.

The auto alliance last month urged Pruitt to relax the standards, saying they will drive up car costs, price customers out of the market and depress the industry. Obama's EPA had argued the costs to consumers were mitigated by gas savings and that the rules would decrease greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming.

Trump told the auto executives that while he's attuned to concerns about the environment, he doesn't want to stifle jobs.

"We want you to make great cars. And if it takes an extra thimble full of fuel, we don't want that to stop making it," he said.

After the speech, Trump flew to Nashville, Tennessee, where he laid a wreath at Andrew Jackson's tomb to mark the 250th anniversary of the former president's birth, and toured the Hermitage, Jackson's home. Trump has drawn comparisons between himself and Jackson, a fellow populist outsider.

At a raucous rally with hundreds of supporters waving placards, Trump touched on everything from a federal court's ruling Wednesday against his revised travel ban to the joint effort with House Republicans to replace the Obama-era health care law to how much he wants to cut taxes.

"We're keeping our promises," said Trump, noting that he's more than halfway through the 100-day measure by which new presidents are judged. "And we have just gotten started. Wait till you see what's coming, folks."

On the flight back to Washington, he said he hoped to hold rallies "every two weeks. I mean, these are great people."

Associated Press writers Tom Krisher in Detroit and Matthew Daly and Darlene Superville in Washington contributed to this report.

Follow Jill Colvin: <https://twitter.com/colvinj>

APNewsBreak: Sex assault reports up at Navy, Army academies

By LOLITA C. BALDOR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Reports of sexual assaults increased at two of the three military academies last year and an anonymous survey suggests sexual misconduct rose across the board at the schools, The Associated Press has learned.

The new data underscore the challenge in stemming bad behavior by young people at the military college campuses, despite a slew of programs designed to prevent assaults, help victims and encourage them to come forward. The difficulties in some ways mirror those the larger military is struggling with amid revelations about Marines and other service members sharing nude photos on websites.

Assault reports rose at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, and the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, while dropping at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado. The Air Force decline was sharp, going to 32 last year from 49 in 2015, contributing to an overall decrease in the overall number of reported assaults at the academies. The total reported cases fell to 86 from 91 in 2015, according to details obtained by The Associated Press.

Pentagon and military officials believe more people are reporting sexual assaults, which they see as a positive trend because it suggests students have more confidence in the system and greater willingness to seek help.

But the anonymous survey results suggest more assaults and crime occurring. They showed more than 12 percent of women and nearly 2 percent of men saying they experienced unwanted sexual contact.

In that survey, the largest increases in sexual misconduct were also at the Navy and Army academies. A vast majority of students said they didn't file a report on the assault because they didn't consider it serious enough. Many women said they took steps to avoid the perpetrator, while more than a third of the men said they confronted the person.

Senior defense officials expressed disappointment. They were particularly concerned that more men and women said they experienced unwanted sexual contact. The rate two years ago was about 8 percent of women and 1 percent of men.

"This is almost a new population of folks every four years and that makes it a little bit more difficult for the messages to build up and gather momentum," said Nate Galbreath, deputy director of the Pentagon's sexual assault prevention office.

Officials struggled to identify a reason. They said some blame may fall on student leaders and how much they are willing to emphasize and enforce sexual assault prevention programs among peers.

"Unless the students have a bit of accountability on their own, unless they take the charge themselves, (senior) leadership can really only take them so far," said Elizabeth Van Winkle, who is currently the assistant defense secretary for readiness. "If the students aren't taking the charge themselves, you won't make as much headway in this population."

Galbreath said sexual assault prevention instruction may be getting lost amid the many messages about social behavior, including not drinking and driving, or texting and driving.

The Pentagon, he said, is encouraging the academies to increase the amount of time they spend talking about how future leaders must foster a climate of dignity and respect. He said students should know that enforcing good conduct is something they will need to do as officers when they graduate and lead troops in combat.

In recent months, military leaders have met to try and find what Galbreath called the "holy grail of prevention."

One example, he said, would involving taking more to the students about when and how to intervene when they see a bad situation developing. Such scenarios include when they are in a bar drinking or in a workplace in which a boss is the problem.

"What we want those folks to do at the academies is to find those things that seem to really be hallmark situations and help people be better scouts and identify those precursors earlier and also give them a wider range of things that they might be able to do to intervene," Galbreath said.

Galbreath and Van Winkle said drinking remains a major concern, factoring in about 60 percent of incidents women cite and nearly half of those men cite. They said the academies have been putting

alcohol programs in place, including some that require students to take a class before turning 21.

Sexual harassment reports filed by students dropped at all three academies.

The overall total fell to 10 last year from 28 in 2015. The anonymous survey showed roughly half of the women and slightly more than 10 percent of men saying they were sexually harassed, near the same level as the previous survey. The surveys are conducted every two years.

Vice Adm. Ted Carter, superintendent at the Naval Academy said the latest increase shows they have more work to do.

"This kind of toxic behavior cannot be tolerated," he said "This is a challenging effort considering the fact that 25 percent of the Brigade turns over every year through graduation and the arrival of a new class every summer."

10 Things to Know for Thursday

By The Associated Press

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

1. TRUMP'S REVISED TRAVEL BAN PUT ON HOLD

President Trump calls decision by a federal judge in Hawaii an 'unprecedented judicial overreach.'

2. DUTCH LEADER HOLDS OFF ANTI-ISLAM CHALLENGER IN ELECTIONS

Prime Minister Mark Rutte's party claimed a dominating victory over the party of Geert Wilders in parliamentary elections seen as test for far-right populism in Europe.

3. WHAT CUTS ARE EXPECTED IN TRUMP'S FIRST BUDGET

The Environmental Protection Agency and the State Department face steep cuts while military spending will increase significantly.

4. WHO HAS BEEN CHARGED IN DEVASTATING YAHOO BREACH

Two Russian intelligence agents and a pair of hired hackers are charged in the scheme that targeted the email accounts of Russian and U.S. government officials, Russian journalists and employees of private businesses.

5. WHY ONLY STOPPING GLOBAL WARMING WILL SAVE CORAL REEFS

A study of Australia's Great Barrier Reef finds that reducing pollution and curbing overfishing won't prevent the severe bleaching that is killing coral at catastrophic rates.

6. TRUMP INCREASINGLY ISOLATED IN HIS OBAMA WIRETAPPING CLAIM

Attorney General Jeff Sessions says he had not given Trump any reason to believe he was wiretapped by Obama, while Republican Rep. Devin Nunes, chairman of the House intelligence committee, says he has seen no information to support the claim.

7. SUICIDE BOMBING IN SYRIA'S CAPITAL KILLS 30 PEOPLE

The attacks reflect a renewed effort by militants to use insurgent tactics against President Bashar Assad's forces in a bid to recover lost momentum as the civil war enters its seventh year.

8. REPORTS OF SEXUAL ASSAULTS UP AT TWO OF THREE MILITARY ACADEMIES

Assault reports rose at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, and the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, while dropping at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado, according to details obtained by the AP.

9. A NEW WAY TO PAY BAR TABS WITHOUT CREDIT CARDS

An upgrade being rolled out this summer to Mastercard's mobile payments service will let people open, manage and close their tabs at participating bars and taverns completely through their phones.

10. CUONZO MARTIN RESIGNS FROM CAL TO TAKE JOB AT MISSOURI

He's headed back to the place he knows so well, a big attraction to lure him away from Berkeley after three seasons.

GOP leaders acknowledge health bill changes, may delay vote

By ALAN FRAM and RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Their health care overhaul imperiled from all sides, the White House and top House Republicans acknowledged Wednesday they would make changes to the legislation in hopes of nailing down votes and pushing the party's showpiece legislation through the chamber soon.

House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., declined to commit to bringing the measure to the House floor next week, a fresh indication of uncertainty. Republican leaders have repeatedly said that was their schedule, but opposition mushroomed after a congressional report concluded this week that the measure would strip 24 million people of coverage in a decade.

Ryan told reporters that GOP leaders could now make "some necessary improvements and refinements" to the legislation, reflecting an urgency to buttress support. The measure would strike down much of former President Barack Obama's 2010 overhaul and reduce the federal role, including financing, for health care consumers and is opposed uniformly by Democrats.

"We're going to arbitrate, we're all going to get together, we're going to get something done," President Donald Trump promised a crowd at a rally in Nashville.

At an all-hands meeting Wednesday evening of House GOP lawmakers, Vice President Mike Pence and party leaders urged their rank-and-file to unite behind the legislation.

"It's our job to get it out of here and get it to the Senate," Pence told the Republicans, according to Rep. Dennis Ross, R-Fla. That would let Trump pressure "Democrats in these red states to come on board," Ross said, referring to Republican-leaning states where Democratic senators face re-election next year.

Health secretary Tom Price was using phone calls to lobby Republican governors, some of whom — with home-state GOP members of Congress — oppose the bill's phase out of Obama's expansion of Medicaid to 11 million additional lower-income Americans.

Amid the maneuvering, a government report said more than 12 million people have signed up for coverage this year under the very statute that President Donald Trump and congressional Republicans want to repeal. That figure underscored the potential political impact of the GOP's next move.

Pence met repeatedly with House Republicans but rebels still abounded. Conservatives were unhappy the measure doesn't erase enough of Obama's law while at the other end of the party's spectrum, moderates were upset the bill would strip millions of health coverage.

"Oh heck, yes," said one conservative leader, Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, asked if the GOP legislation needed changes to win his support.

Conservatives want to end Obama's expansion of Medicaid to 11 million additional low-income people next year, not 2020 as the bill proposes. They say a GOP proposed tax credit to help people pay medical costs is too generous, and they want to terminate all of Obama's insurance requirements, including mandatory coverage of specified services like drug counseling.

Underscoring the push-pull problem GOP leaders face in winning votes, moderates feel the tax credits are too stingy, especially for low earners and older people. They oppose accelerating the phaseout of the Medicaid expansion and are unhappy with long-term cuts the measure would inflict on the entire program.

Terminating the Medicaid expansion in 2020 and not 2018 "is sacrosanct to me," said moderate Rep. Tom MacArthur, R-N.J.

In a new complication, Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, said the measure lacked the votes to pass in the Senate, where Republicans hold a precarious 52-48 majority. That left House members angry over being asked to take a politically risky vote for legislation likely to be altered.

Moderates "don't like the idea of taking a vote in the House that may go nowhere in the Senate," said Rep. Charlie Dent, R-Pa.

The bill would enfeeble Obama's individual mandate, the requirement that Americans buy coverage, by abolishing the tax fine on violators. It would end subsidies that help low-income people with high insurance premiums the most and replace them with tax credits that are bigger for older people. It would cut Medicaid, repeal the law's tax increases on higher earning Americans and require 30 percent

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higher premiums for consumers who let coverage lapse.

GOP support became scarcer when the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office projected the legislation would push 24 million Americans off coverage in a decade and shift out-of-pocket costs toward lower income, older people. That surpasses the 20 million who've gained Medicaid or insurance coverage under Obama's law.

Hundreds of conservative activists rallied outside the Capitol in sub-freezing weather to call on congressional leaders and Trump to abandon the GOP bill and fully repeal Obama's law. The rally was organized by FreedomWorks, a conservative group backed by the billionaire Koch brothers.

The 2017 government sign-up numbers missed Obama's target of 13.8 million people. Experts said the figures undercut Republican claims that the health law's insurance markets are teetering toward collapse.

AP writers Erica Werner, Kevin Freking, Stephen Ohlemacher, Richard Lardner and Darlene Superville in Washington, Jill Colvin in Nashville, David Pitt in Des Moines and Alison Noon in Carson City, Nevada, contributed to this report.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, March 16, the 75th day of 2017. There are 290 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 16, 1802, President Thomas Jefferson signed a measure authorizing the establishment of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York.

On this date:

In A.D. 37, Roman emperor Tiberius died; he was succeeded by Caligula.

In 1517, the 12th and final session of the Fifth Lateran Council of the Catholic Church took place in Rome, almost five years after the council began.

In 1751, James Madison, fourth president of the United States, was born in Port Conway, Virginia.

In 1792, Sweden's King Gustav III was shot and mortally wounded during a masquerade party by a former member of his regiment (he died 13 days later).

In 1926, rocket science pioneer Robert H. Goddard successfully tested the first liquid-fueled rocket at his Aunt Effie's farm in Auburn, Massachusetts.

In 1935, Adolf Hitler decided to break the military terms set by the Treaty of Versailles (vehr-SY') by ordering the rearming of Germany.

In 1945, during World War II, American forces declared they had secured Iwo Jima, although pockets of Japanese resistance remained.

In 1968, during the Vietnam War, the My Lai (mee ly) Massacre of Vietnamese civilians was carried out by U.S. Army troops; estimates of the death toll vary between 347 and 504.

In 1974, the Grand Ole Opry House opened in Nashville with a concert attended by President Richard Nixon and his wife, Pat.

In 1987, Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis announced his candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination.

In 1991, a plane carrying seven members of country singer Reba McEntire's band and her tour manager crashed into Otay Mountain in southern California, killing all on board. U.S. skaters Kristi Yamaguchi, Tonya Harding and Nancy Kerrigan swept the World Figure Skating Championships in Munich, Germany.

In 2003, American activist Rachel Corrie, 23, was crushed to death by an Israeli military bulldozer while trying to block demolition of a Palestinian home in the Gaza Strip.

Ten years ago: Former CIA operative Valerie Plame told a House committee that White House and State Department officials had "carelessly and recklessly" blown her cover in a politically motivated smear of her husband, former Ambassador Joseph Wilson, for publicly disputing President George W. Bush's assertion that Saddam Hussein was on the brink of acquiring a nuclear bomb. Menu Foods, a

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major manufacturer of dog and cat food sold under Wal-Mart, Safeway, Kroger and other store brands, recalled 60 million containers of wet pet food after reports of kidney failure and deaths.

Five years ago: A jury in New Brunswick, New Jersey, convicted former Rutgers University student Dharun Ravi (dah-ROON' RAH'-vee) in the webcam spying episode that ended in the suicide of his gay roommate, Tyler Clementi. (Ravi served 20 days in jail for invasion of privacy, bias intimidation and other counts.) Actor George Clooney and his father, Nick Clooney, were arrested outside the embassy of Sudan in Washington during a protest that accused Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir of provoking a humanitarian crisis in his own country.

One year ago: President Barack Obama nominated Merrick Garland to take the seat of Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, who had died the previous month; Republicans pledged to leave the seat empty until after the presidential election and said they wouldn't even hold confirmation hearings. Washington, D.C.'s subway system began an unprecedented 29-hour safety shutdown, inconveniencing hundreds of thousands of people. Frank Sinatra Jr., 72, who carried on his famous father's legacy with his own music career, died while on tour in Daytona Beach, Florida.

Today's Birthdays: Comedian-director Jerry Lewis is 91. Country singer Ray Walker (The Jordanaires) is 83. Movie director Bernardo Bertolucci is 76. Game show host Chuck Woolery is 76. Singer-songwriter Jerry Jeff Walker is 75. Country singer Robin Williams is 70. Actor Erik Estrada is 68. Actor Victor Garber is 68. Actress Kate Nelligan is 66. Country singer Ray Benson (Asleep at the Wheel) is 66. Bluegrass musician Tim O'Brien (Hot Rize; Earls of Leicester) is 63. Rock singer-musician Nancy Wilson (Heart) is 63. World Golf Hall of Famer Hollis Stacy is 63. Actress Isabelle Huppert is 62. Actor Clifton Powell is 61. Rapper-actor Flavor Flav (Public Enemy) is 58. Rock musician Jimmy DeGrasso is 54. Actor Jerome Flynn is 54. Folk singer Patty Griffin is 53. Movie director Gore Verbinski is 53. Country singer Tracy Bonham is 50. Actress Lauren Graham is 50. Actor Judah Friedlander (FREED'-lan-duhr) is 48. Actor Alan Tudyk (TOO'-dihk) is 46. Actor Tim Kang is 44. Rhythm-and-blues singer Blu Cantrell is 41. Actress Brooke Burns is 39. Actor Brett Davern (TV: "Awkward") is 34. Actress Alexandra Daddario is 31. Rhythm and blues singer Jhene Aiko is 29. Rock musician Wolfgang Van Halen is 26.

Thought for Today: "Until we lose ourselves there is no hope of finding ourselves." — Henry Miller, American author (1891-1980).