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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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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 at 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 21

Student Congress at GHS

School Lunch: Submarine, French fries, fruit, carrots and dip.

School Breakfast: French toast sticks, links,



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605-225-3078 ~ 1-800-658-3463

GROTON CITY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

March 20, 2017 - 7pm

Groton City Hall

- 1) 7pm Street Resurfacing Bids
- 2) Minutes
- 3) Bills
- 4) Garbage Routes Effective Mar 27
- 5) Approve Election Workers
- 6) Equalization

Gov. Daugaard Signs Budget Bills

PIERRE, S.D. – Gov. Dennis Daugaard today signed the budget bills, which revise the budget for Fiscal Year 2017 and set the budget for Fiscal Year 2018.

“I want to thank legislators and state budget staff for their work to keep South Dakota on a strong financial footing,” Gov. Daugaard said. “After several months of weak revenue, balancing the budget this year was no easy task. We are fortunate that despite the economic conditions, we were still able to provide modest increases to schools and providers.”

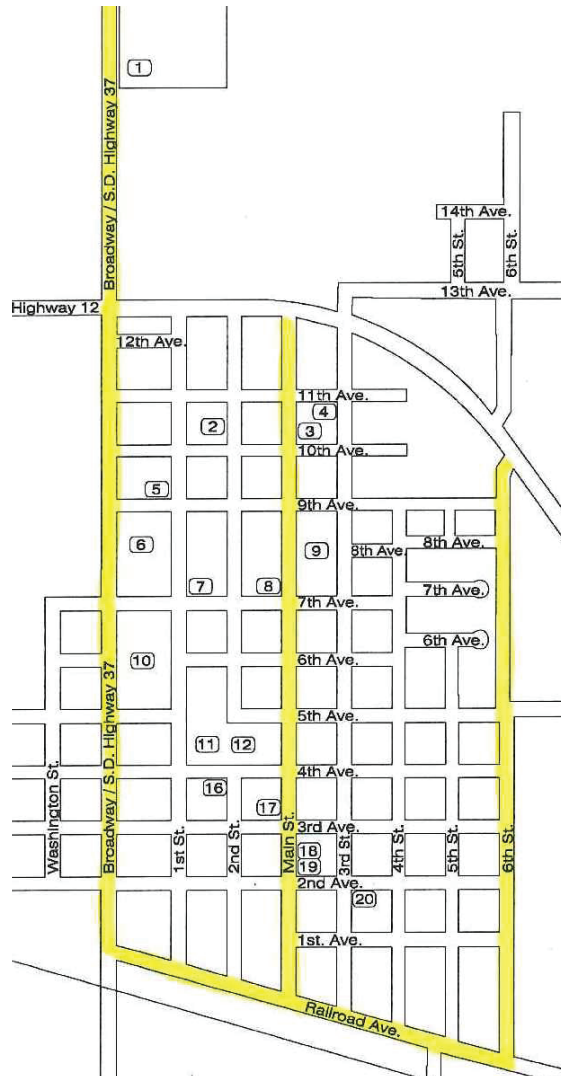
Including general, federal and other funds, the total budget for Fiscal Year 2018 is set at \$4.6 billion. The budget bill continues the Governor’s policy of achieving a structurally balanced budget, using one-time money to fund one-time expenses and ongoing dollars to fund ongoing expenses.

Senate Bill 178 provides for the following ongoing increases in FY2018:

- 0.3 percent for K-12 education,
- 0.3 percent for community support providers, and
- Funding to partially offset health insurance increases for state employees.

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EFFECTIVE MARCH 27TH, 2017 UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

**To Help Preserve Our Streets
GROTON Garbage Pickup Service
Will only be on Railroad Ave,
Main St, 6th St, & Hwy 37**

Residents of HRH Mobile Home Park need to take their garbage to Highway 37.

Residents north of 13th Avenue (Olson and Jacobson Development) need to bring their garbage to the Bus Barns.

Please bring your garbage bags & cans to these streets for Tuesday pickup
Thank you for your cooperation!!

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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

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.

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



GDI Living Fitness
25 Main St., Downtown Groton

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

What Can We Learn from the Tiny House Phenomenon?

By Nathaniel Sillin

You may not have seen one in your neighborhood yet, but the tiny house phenomenon has spread across the country. For some, the move is driven by a desire to downsize and live a minimalistic lifestyle. Others see it as a way to decrease their impact on the environment.

Economics are often a large part of the equation. Buying and maintaining a tiny home is relatively inexpensive, and the savings can help many people on their path towards financial freedom.

Tiny-home living (often shortened to tiny living) isn't for everyone. However, tiny living requires ingenuity and resourcefulness and we can all learn something from those who choose tiny.

Freedom from debt is priceless. Living within one's means is a foundational belief to many within the tiny living community. Between labor and materials, a tiny home could cost about \$20,000 to \$60,000 to build. By contrast, the U.S. Census Bureau found the median sale price for a new home in December 2016 was \$322,500.

The relatively low price gives you a chance to own a tiny home without having a mortgage that'll take three decades to pay off. The ongoing savings in the form of lower utility, tax and maintenance bills also make it easier to pay off non-housing debts, such as student loans, and live a debt-free life.

That being said, you can live in a larger home and still look for ways to lower your monthly expenses and fight lifestyle inflation (spending more as you make more money). A common tip is to allocate half of your next raise or bonus to your savings or use it to pay down debts. But why not challenge yourself and use your entire raise or bonus to build your net worth?

Make room for things that are important. Moving into a tiny home can require major downsizing, but some view that as a feature rather than a disadvantage. It's not about getting rid of things that aren't absolutely necessary, after all sometimes "unnecessary" decorations turn a house into a home. Rather, from furniture to clothing, you have to decide what's important to you and leave the rest behind.

It's easy to fill a large home with clutter and then attempt to clean every spring. Perhaps a better approach would be to take a tiny-home mindset to the store with you. Don't get bogged down by asking yourself if you can live without something – you can live without many things – instead, try to only spend money on things that add meaning and joy to your life.

You have more space than meets the eye. Watch a tour of a tiny home, and you'll see that great organization skills and original storage ideas are a must. Tables turn into benches and chairs double as shelves – everything seems to have at least two purposes.

How could a little imagination transform your home? Might a new shelving system and selling items that aren't important to you anymore give you more room? Inventiveness and thinking outside the box are keys to making the most of what you have.

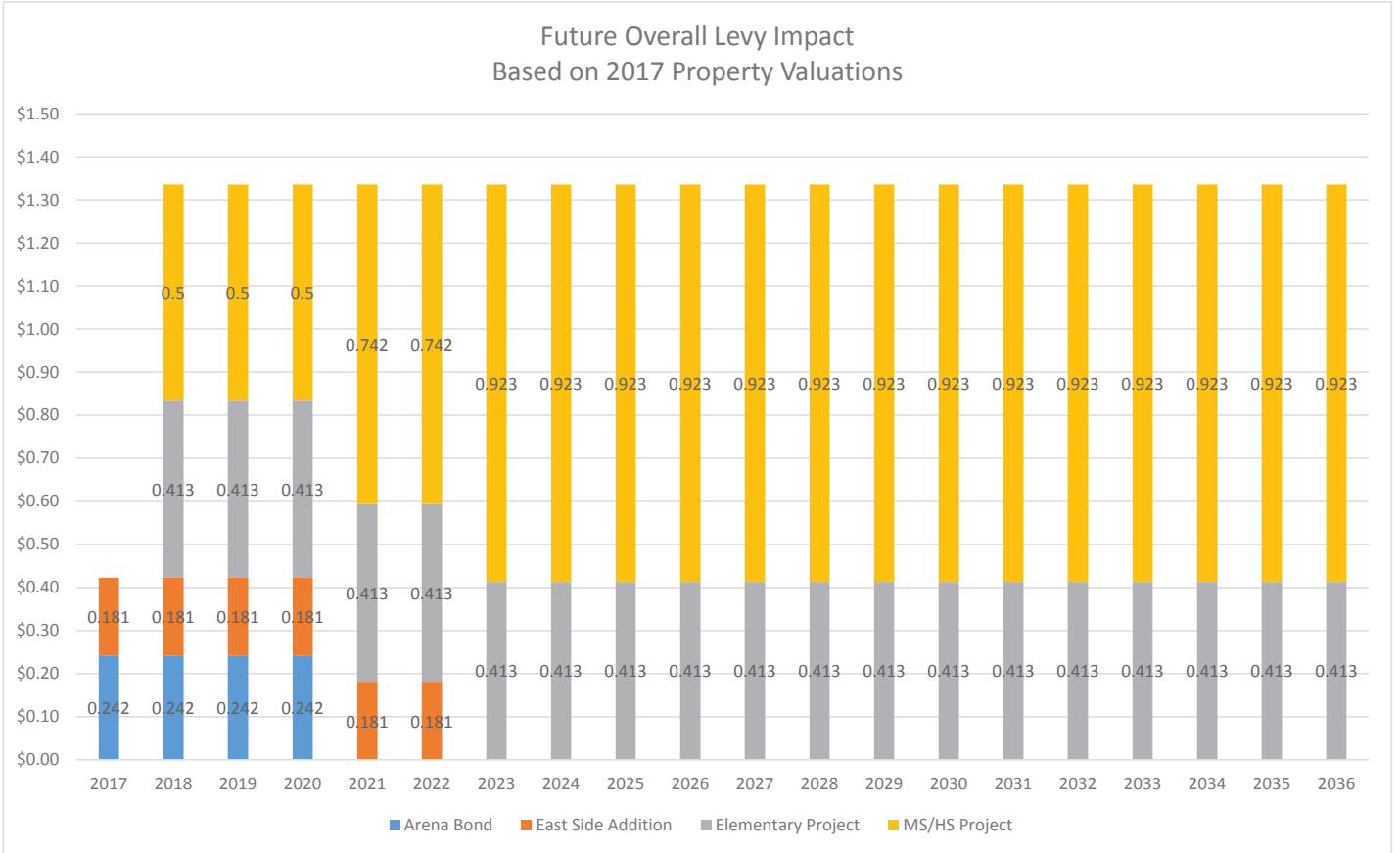
High-quality products are worth the investment. Many tiny-home owners are keenly aware of the waste they're putting back into the world. Some even choose to live in a tiny home because it'll reduce their ecological footprint. The savings that come from tiny living and this approach to life often lead to investments in long-lasting products rather than cheaper alternatives.

Quality over quantity is certainly a worthwhile mentality to adopt. Put it into practice by looking for companies that offer lifetime warranties on their products. You might be surprised to find that from socks to power tools there are dozens of manufacturers that uphold this promise.

How will you make use of these lessons? Simple living and conscious buying aren't exclusive traits of tiny-home owners. Regardless of the size of your home, you may find that incorporating these principles and practices save you time and money. Two valuable resources that should never be wasted.

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

Groton Area School Construction Projects Mil Levy



2017 Groton School District Valuation \$856,890,160
 2017 Groton Area School District Valuation \$1,237,752,540

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Today in Weather History

March 17, 1997: High winds of 30 to 50 mph, gusting to over 60 mph, occurred over much of north-east South Dakota through the morning and into the early afternoon hours. Several homes and businesses sustained some roof damage. In Aberdeen, the high winds tore a large piece of the roof off the bowling alley and also tore a piece of a roof off an appliance store. The wind damaged some power lines and connections in Aberdeen, including some traffic lights. In Aberdeen, the power was out for 2500 customers for a few hours in the morning. The wind also damaged two old farm buildings west of Aberdeen. One barn lost 75 percent of its roof. The second barn was pushed six inches off of its foundation suffering minor structural damage. The Edmunds County Highway Department Shop, under construction east of Ipswich, suffered much of damage as many rafters came down and the sidewall frame shifted. Finally, much small to medium-sized branches were brought down by the high winds. Some peak wind gusts across the area included 58 mph in Aberdeen and 63 mph in Watertown.

1892: A winter storm in southwestern and central Tennessee produced 26.3 inches of snow at Riddleton and 18.5 inches at Memphis. It was the deepest snow of record for those areas.

1906: The temperature at Snake River Wyoming dipped to 50 degrees below zero, a record for the U.S. for the month of March.




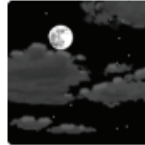



1906: A magnitude 7.1 earthquake caused significant damage in Taiwan. According to the Central Weather Bureau in China, this earthquake caused 1,258 deaths, 2,385 injuries, and destroyed over 6,000 homes.

1952: The ban on using the word "tornado" issued in 1886 ended on this date. In the 1880s, John P. Finley of the U.S. Army Signal Corps, then handling weather forecasting for the U.S., developed generalized forecasts on days tornadoes were most likely. But in 1886, the Army ended Finley's program and banned the word "tornado" from forecasts because the harm done by a tornado prediction would eventually be greater than that which results from the tornado itself?. The thinking was that people would be trampled in the panic if they heard a tornado was possible. The ban stayed in place after the Weather Bureau, now the National Weather Service, took over forecasting from the Army. A tornado that wrecked 52 large aircraft at Tinker Air Force Base, OK, on 3/20/1948, spurred Air Force meteorologists to begin working on ways to forecast tornadoes. The Weather Bureau also began looking for ways to improve tornado forecasting and established the Severe Local Storm Warning Center, which is now the Storm Prediction Center in Norman, OK. The ban on the word "tornado" fell on this date when the new center issued its first Tornado Watch.

1990: Showers and thunderstorms associated with a slow moving cold front produced torrential rains across parts of the southeastern U.S. over a two-day period. Flooding claimed the lives of at least 22 persons including thirteen in Alabama. Up to 16 inches of rain deluged southern Alabama with 10.63 inches reported at Mobile AL in 24 hours. The town of Elba AL was flooded with 6 to 12 feet of water causing more than 25 million dollars damage, and total flood damage across Alabama exceeded 100 million dollars. Twenty-six counties in the state were declared disaster areas.

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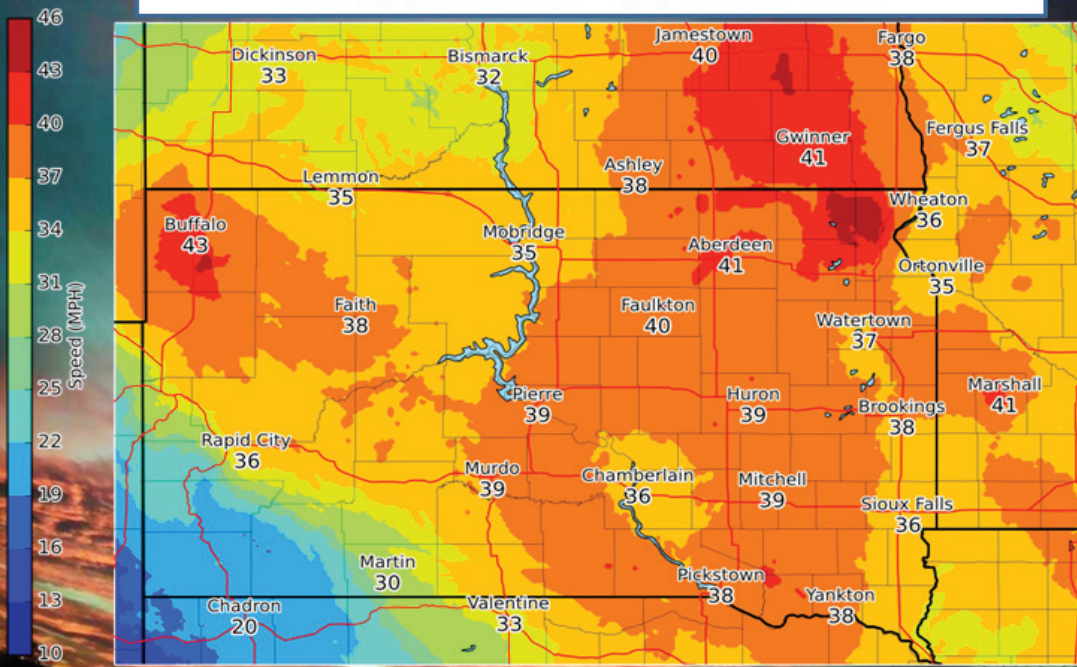
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Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
						
Increasing Clouds and Breezy	Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Chance Rain	Mostly Sunny
High: 38 °F	Low: 17 °F	High: 43 °F	Low: 34 °F	High: 60 °F	Low: 31 °F	High: 50 °F

The Warming Trend Continues Through The Weekend

Highest Forecast Wind Gusts Through Friday Evening

Valid: 03/17/2017 09:00 AM - 03/17/2017 09:00 PM CDT



National Weather Service
Aberdeen SD
03/17/2017 03:09 AM CDT

Follow Us:



weather.gov/aberndeen



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD



Updated: 3/17/2017 3:37 AM Central

Published on: 03/17/2017 at 3:40AM

It's going to become rather windy today. The trend of warmer temperatures each day through Sunday continues.

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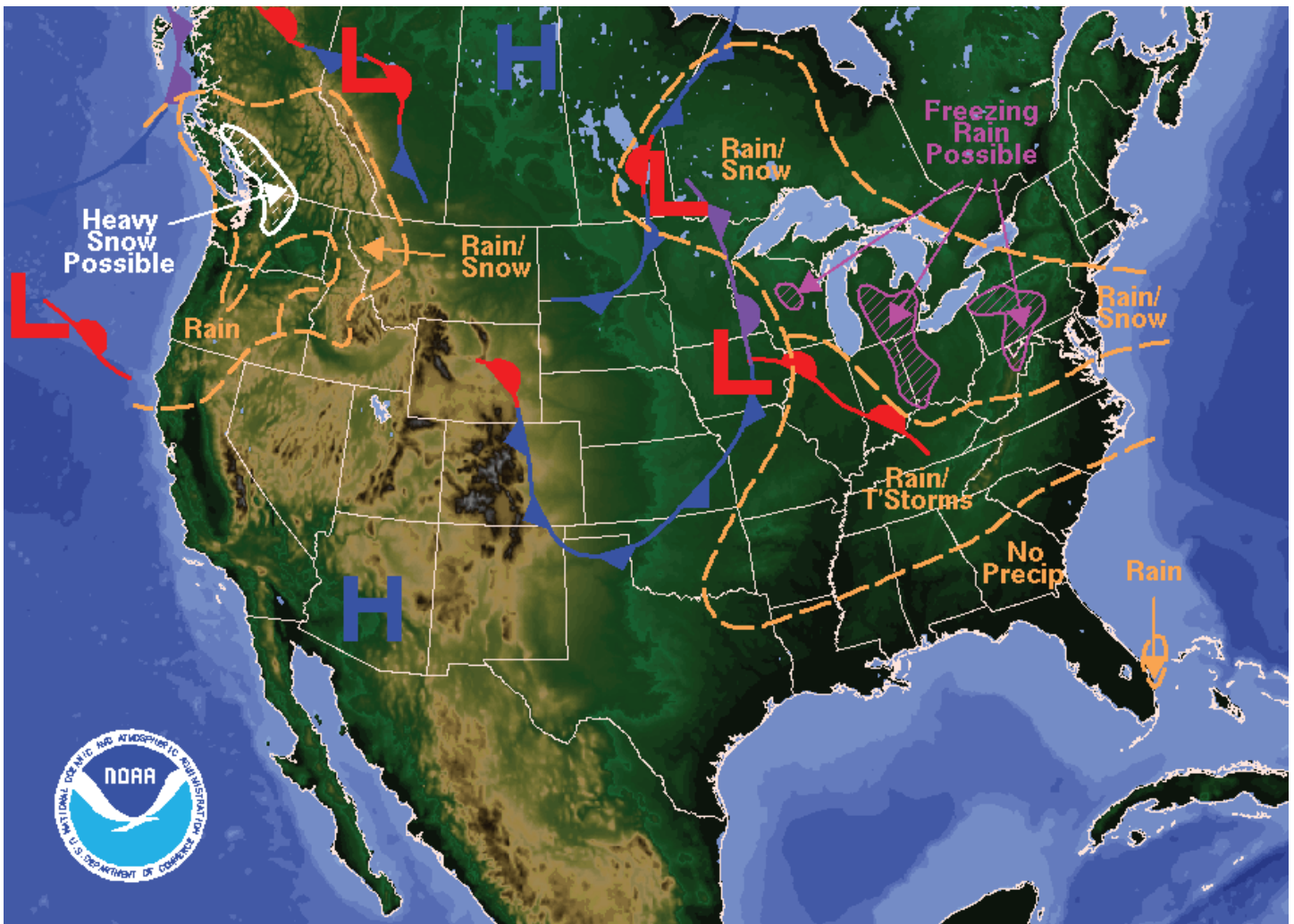
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 39.5 F at 4:19 PM
Low Outside Temp: 30.0 F at 11:01 PM
High Gust: 19.0 Mph at 9:09 AM
Snow: Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 77° in 2012
Record Low: -10 in 1906
Average High: 40°F
Average Low: 20°F
Average Precip in March.: 0.55
Precip to date in March.: 0.59
Average Precip to date: 1.57
Precip Year to Date: 0.59
Sunset Tonight: 7:42 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:39 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Fri, Mar 17, 2017, issued 4:35 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

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"BRED TO RUN"

On the wall behind the desk of a horse breeder is a picture of a new born colt. It appears to be only a few days old and seemed as though it was having a difficult time struggling to stand up. It looked weak and wobbly even though the mother is nearby watching carefully. But underneath the picture are three words engraved on a bronze plate, "Bred To Run."

Bred into the genes of the colt are qualities of strength and success, endurance and energy. And even though the colt is unsure and unsteady as it struggles to stand tall, the potential for greatness is inside.

So it is with the Christian. When we are born again, God implants within us His strength and stamina, His power and the potential for a life of victory over sin. He gives us a purpose in life, goals to achieve and a message to proclaim.

With all of its potential the colt is not ready to run. It must endure hours of training and miles of running and learn obedience to its master.

So it is with the Christian. God has given us all that we need to achieve greatness in serving Him. But the greatness will not come unless we discipline ourselves to "study and meditate on the Book of the Law continually – day and night – so that we may be sure to obey all that is written in it. Only then," Joshua says, "will we succeed!"

Prayer: Lord, we are so blessed to be called Your children and to be called to serve You. Help us to be strong, courageous and unafraid to run the race before us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Joshua 1:6-9 ...Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

News from the Associated Press

Thursday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS' BASKETBALL

State AA Tournament

First Round

Aberdeen Central 56, Brookings 52, OT

Pierre 76, Rapid City Stevens 75

Sioux Falls Lincoln 56, Huron 47, OT

Sioux Falls O'Gorman 61, Harrisburg 47

State A Tournament

First Round

Madison 56, Dakota Valley 47

Sioux Falls Christian 72, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 44

Tea Area 60, St. Thomas More 43

Tri-Valley 59, Chamberlain 47

State B Tournament

First Round

Bridgewater-Emery 67, Platte-Geddes 39

Parker 48, Langford 39

Sully Buttes 65, White River 52

Wolsey-Wessington 56, Harding County 35

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

State AA Tournament

First Round

Aberdeen Central 51, Brandon Valley 43

Harrisburg 64, Pierre 39

Rapid City Central 60, Rapid City Stevens 49

Sioux Falls O'Gorman 37, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 33

New Wyoming Catholic bishop named

CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP) — Roman Catholics in Wyoming have a new bishop.

Pope Francis announced Thursday the appointment of The Most Reverend Steven Biegler as the ninth bishop of Cheyenne.

According to a news release, Biegler will take over the Diocese of Cheyenne on June 5.

The 57-year-old Biegler is currently pastor of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Rapid City, South Dakota, as well as the vicar general for the Diocese of Rapid City.

Biegler is originally from Mobridge, South Dakota.

The Cheyenne Diocese has been without a bishop since last November.

Established in 1887, the Diocese of Cheyenne has over 54,000 Catholics, 37 parishes and 35 missions.

Trade group: GOP plan could cost 25K South Dakotans coverage

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A health care organization trade group said Thursday that congressional Republicans' health plan could cost thousands in South Dakota their insurance and leave the state without hundreds of millions of dollars in federal funding each year.

Scott A. Duke, president and CEO of the South Dakota Association of Healthcare Organizations, said in a statement that the organization anticipates roughly 25,000 people in South Dakota would likely lose health insurance by 2019 under the plan based on a preliminary analysis of the bill.

Duke also said South Dakota could see annual reductions of \$300 million in federal funding for the Medicaid health coverage program for low-income and disabled people.

The Congressional Budget Office said this week that the Republican legislation would reduce the ranks of the insured by 24 million in a decade, largely by cutting Medicaid recipients and people buying individual policies. South Dakota isn't one of the 31 states that expanded their Medicaid programs under former President Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act.

The CBO estimates don't look good in terms of impact on the uninsured in South Dakota or the country, said Shelly Ten Napel, CEO of Community HealthCare Association of the Dakotas.

"The overall impacts are not good. They erase the coverage gains we've seen over the years the Affordable Care Act has been enacted," she said.

In a letter to South Dakota U.S. Rep. Kristi Noem on Wednesday, Duke said that the group believes "thousands of South Dakotans could lose their coverage because of an inability to pay for insurance due to significantly reduced federal subsidies."

A South Dakota labor department spokeswoman said in an email that the state Division of Insurance isn't planning in the near future a specific cost analysis of the proposal's impacts in South Dakota.

Kim Malsam-Rysdon, a senior adviser to Gov. Dennis Daugaard, has said that state officials are analyzing the bill's potential impacts to Medicaid. Daugaard has said he doesn't like that the plan would require South Dakota to take on more financial risk under proposed funding changes for Medicaid.

But the Republican governor said that it's important to get control of the federal deficit, which he said would be difficult without overhauling entitlements including Medicaid. The CBO says the legislation would reduce budget deficits by \$337 billion over a decade.

Trump would end subsidies for rural airline service

By JOAN LOWY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump called Thursday for eliminating subsidized air service to rural communities, many of which supported his election last year after he promised to create jobs.

Trump's proposal, part of his budget plan, would sever an economic lifeline that enables rural communities to attract and keep businesses and jobs, officials in those communities said.

The program has long been a target of conservatives who say the subsidies are too expensive for the relatively small number of passengers served. Elimination of the program would save about \$175 million a year, according to the Trump administration.

"We do appreciate running government as efficiently as possible, those are our values ... (but) I would argue that this program is vital for rural America," said Laurie Gill, the Republican mayor of Pierre, South Dakota.

Trump's budget proposal cuts many domestic programs as the administration looks for money to increase the military, border control and veterans services while not expanding the deficit. The proposal is an early step in a lengthy budget process and it's not clear to what degree Congress will back his priorities.

The Essential Air Service program subsidizes airline flights to 111 communities in the 48 contiguous states that would otherwise have no scheduled service and which are at least 210 miles from the nearest hub airport, according to the Transportation Department. Trump got more than 50 percent of the vote in 86 of those communities, according to an Associated Press analysis of voting data.

About 60 communities in the deep-red state of Alaska also receive subsidized service.

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Without the subsidies, airlines would no longer service their communities, local officials said. In Pierre, that means people who live in the state capital would have to drive more than three hours to reach the nearest airport with scheduled flights, Gill said.

Hunting, one of the underpinnings of the local economy, might also suffer, she said. Hunters across the country are drawn to the state during pheasant season.

The program was created nearly 40 years ago to ensure air service to rural communities after the airlines were de-regulated and cut back less profitable routes.

Not all flights are full, the cost per passenger is high and some of the communities aren't that far from another airport with scheduled service, according to the administration. The Transportation Department has also made exceptions for some communities that are less than the required 210-mile distance.

That's not the case in Show Low in eastern Arizona near the White Mountains, said Glen Boyd, manager of the regional airport there. The program subsidizes flights to Phoenix, which is more than three hours away by car over roads that are often treacherous and snow-covered in the winter, he said.

The region is economically depressed, he said. A paper mill that was a large employer closed about two years ago. Another major employer, some coal-fired power plants, are in trouble and may close, he said.

One bright spot is tourism, especially skiing, fishing and hunting, but airline flights to bring those tourists to the region are critical, Boyd said. Without the subsidies, he said, the airport might be forced to close.

Elimination of the program is likely to run into opposition in the Senate, where lawmakers from rural states have helped keep it alive despite several previous attempts by budget-cutters to kill it.

Among other transportation programs serving rural communities targeted for elimination in Trump's proposal is Amtrak's long-distance trail service.

AP data journalist Justin Myers contributed to this report.

Follow Joan Lowy at http://twitter.com/AP_Joan_Lowy. Her work can be found at <http://bigstory.ap.org/content/joan-lowy>

Mathews helps Zags slowly pull away for 66-46 win over SD St

Jordan Mathews scored 16 points to help Gonzaga slowly pull away from South Dakota State for a 66-46 victory and avoid the first 1 vs. 16 upset in the history of the NCAA Tournament. It looked possible for a while. The champions of the Summit League led for the first 17 minutes of Thursday's game in the West region and stayed in range for most of the game.

By **EDDIE PELL**

AP National Writer

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — In a tournament made famous by the notion that anything can happen, one thing still has not: In 129 tries, no 16 seed has ever beaten a 1.

Oh, but South Dakota State sure did make it interesting for a while Thursday.

The Jackrabbits of the Summit League gnawed away at Gonzaga for the better part of 35 minutes before the Zags started looking like the No. 1 seed they are and pulled away for a 66-46 victory in the West region.

Jordan Mathews scored 16 points to lead the Bulldogs (33-1). No. 1 seeds are now 129-0 vs. 16s since the bracket was expanded to 64 teams in 1985.

"That 1-16 game, someone else can have that from here on out," said Gonzaga coach Mark Few, who also sweated out a six-point win over Southern as a No. 1 in 2013 — in the same arena, no less. "I've served my time in it. I'll go ahead and land somewhere else."

The Jackrabbits (18-17) weren't your typical 16. They came in with nine wins in their last 11 games. They beat Gonzaga to every loose ball at the start and led for the first 17 minutes, then kept it interesting deep into the second half.

"There's something about sports where you have a look in your eye and you look at your opponent and say, 'You're going to be in for a fight tonight,'" Jackrabbits coach T.J. Otzelberger said. "I thought

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we did that from start to finish.”

They hung in without a breakout game from Mike Daum. The nation’s second-leading scorer finished 7 for 16 from the floor with 17 points — more than eight below his average.

Daum did a nice job on Gonzaga’s 7-foot-1 center, Przemek Karnowski, holding him to four points over the first 32 minutes.

But Karnowski, who finished with 10 points, scored three straight buckets for the Bulldogs to help them expand the lead to 20 with 5 minutes left, and it was over.

Not before a bit of a scare, though.

“That was a confident, well-coached, tough team,” Few said. “They were one of those teams that came here on a roll.”

STOPPER: The Bulldogs draped 6-9 forward Johnathan Williams on Daum for most of the game, and he kept the South Dakota State big man in check. Williams finished with six points, 14 rebounds and two blocks, though his biggest contributions didn’t show up on the stat sheet. Williams said he got used to covering players like Daum from his years practicing against former Bulldog Kyle Wiltjer, who was an inside-outside shooter like Daum. “I just moved my feet, made him close out and tried to make it tough for him. But he’s a tough player,” Williams said.

PLAYING FOR BILLY: South Dakota State guard Michael Orris made this game a tribute to his older brother, Billy, who died in a motorcycle accident in 2015. Orris, who graduated from Northern Illinois, had another year of eligibility and extended his career with the Jackrabbits. Orris went out with a leg cramp in the second half but returned. He finished with four points and three assists. “It means the world to me,” Orris said of his first and only trip to the tournament. “It’s exactly what me and coach talked about and exactly what I wanted for my life and my last season.”

FRESHMAN CONTRIBUTION: While the Zags were struggling to find their footing in the first half, freshman Zach Collins kept them in it. Collins had nine of his 10 points in the first half.

‘D’ UP: Both teams walked away satisfied with their efforts on defense. This was only the fourth time this season Gonzaga has been held under 70 points and only the second time it shot worse than 40 percent (39.7). But South Dakota State only shot 31 percent, and one of its best 3-point shooters, Reed Tellinghuisen, went 1 for 10 behind the arc. “We knew on the defensive end we were doing our jobs, and eventually, the shots were going to fall,” Collins said.

UP NEXT: Gonzaga plays the winner of Thursday afternoon’s 8-9 matchup between Northwestern and Vanderbilt.

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

Recent ICE arrests in Minnesota are largest since election

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Officials from Immigration and Customs Enforcement have arrested 26 people in Minnesota, marking the largest ICE operation in the state since the Trump administration vowed to increase immigration enforcement.

The arrests are part of a broader operation that also resulted in 32 arrests in Nebraska, 23 in Iowa, four in North Dakota and one in South Dakota.

ICE says the operation was routine and targeted those with criminal convictions. It also targeted immigrants who illegally re-entered the U.S. after prior deportations and immigrants with orders for removal — both low priorities under the Obama administration.

Brad Capoch works at Incarnation Catholic Church in Minneapolis, which caters to the Latino community. He tells the Star Tribune (<http://strib.mn/2mTSOrO>) that aside from the shift in priorities, the operation appeared similar to those under Obama’s administration.

Aberdeen woman looks to faith after escaping death

By KELDA J.L. PHARRIS, Aberdeen American News

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — Nancy Karlen is a thankful, faithful woman.

Her faith was made even stronger by not just a second, but third chance at life.

Just more than three years ago she was going about her usual grocery run at Ken's SuperFair Foods. It was late in the afternoon when she finished paying and turned to head out the door. She didn't make it. Her heart stopped. She went down. A store worker called 911.

That is when Karlen, who will turn 74 this month, started counting her blessings, which seemed to line up one after the other.

A young police officer on duty was nearby. He arrived and immediately started CPR.

"That young man showed up in two minutes," Karlen said as she spoke from her home on Wednesday. "They say, 'What a coincidence,' but I know it's something more than that. God was in charge.

"Then the paramedics came and did that big machine thing," she said. "It was remarkable as well."

Karlen was referring to an automatic chest compression system. The machine administers automated compressions on a person whose heart is stopped. It's powerful and can sometimes break or crack ribs. But Karlen escaped without injury.

That was on Feb. 28, 2014. And Karlen said one of the things on her "bucket list" was to share her serendipitous story.

The Aberdeen American News (<http://bit.ly/2m6xTDn>) reported that a heart team at Avera St. Luke's Hospital was about to leave at the end of their shift that day. But they heard the call and hung around the hospital.

"It was kind of unique that certain things had to happen," said Dean Karlen, Nancy's husband. "That officer had to be there. That ambulance had to be there. That heart team was there. Everything was lined up just right for us.

"They had me fully prepared that she might not make it," he said. "All our family lives right here in Aberdeen. That's quite a rude awakening in the middle of the afternoon."

But Nancy Karlen's fortunate run in the midst of dire circumstances wasn't over.

Some at the hospital were concerned that she could suffer a stroke if her organs were restarted too quickly. She said a man in the room had an idea that could ward off such potential problems.

He suggested that Nancy Karlen's body be cooled with ice so that her organs could slowly be brought back. The procedure worked, the proof being that Karlen is still alive.

Despite her efforts, Karlen said that she has not been able to find out the identity of the man who suggested the icing method.

She said she doesn't remember a lot of the incident or the days that followed. She remembers her adult grandchildren's recollection, though.

"All I remember, when I came to, I looked around and my adult grandchildren were all standing there, and I guess I told them, 'You are the most beautiful children I have ever seen,'" Karlen said.

What a moment it was for her to see her blessings laid out in front of her after such a harrowing experience.

Karlen said she didn't have a spiritual, near-death experience when her heart stopped. But she did 40 years ago, when she was 33.

That instance proved to be every bit as touch and go. She said she collapsed from hemorrhaging due to female-related complications.

It was her husband who saved her then, making a quick decision to take his wife, literally, in his arms. He carried her to an ambulance, which hauled them from a hospital in Winona, Minnesota, to a specialist in LaCrosse, Wisconsin.

Nancy Karlen said the last-ditch effort saved her life — for the first time.

"Then I had a spiritual rapture type thing — floating through the air and wanting to go to the warm light," Karlen said. "Then all of a sudden I could feel the spirit of my parents. The only thing I can think about. Dad died when I was 5, Mom died when I was 17, so it felt that death was consuming me.

"The spiritual experience was absolutely frightening to me in a way," she said. "Someone gave me the book 'Life After Death,' and we read that together. We both looked at each other and I said, 'Dean

that's everything I experienced."

"How people go through that, those experiences — without any faith — how frightening that must be," Dean Karlen said with disbelief. "But we had our faith."

The Karlens, married 56 years come June, have since added a great-grandchild to their family, something Nancy Karlen said gives her another reason to be alive. She said God isn't finished with her yet.

Now when she does her regular grocery runs to Ken's, she said she gets a lot of acknowledgement. "Everyone asks, 'How are you? You OK? Going to the doctor?'" she said. "It's like I have an adoptive family. It's like Cheers when I go into Ken's. Everybody knows your name."

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

Makerspace boosts Spearfish students' creativity

By MARK WATSON, Black Hills Pioneer

SPEARFISH, S.D. (AP) — Spearfish High School now has a space for students to let their creative minds grow.

This year Makerspace, or rather Makerspaces have been added thanks to a grant from the Spearfish Foundation for Public Education.

The Black Hills Pioneer (<http://bit.ly/2mNMjoS>) reports Makerspaces are spaces that allow hands-on learning.

"It's hard to define it as one space," said Emily Benvenga, the high school librarian. "Basically, it's activities that allow students to explore their own curiosities and to use more activity based learning."

Those activities include a green screen studio, KEVA planks, wooden blocks; a Raspberry Pi, a computer that has its inner workings visible; puzzles, a sewing machine, a craft-making station, a portable recording studio and more.

Benvenga sent a survey to students last year and asked them what they were interested in and what activities they were curious about. From there, she and Alisa Bentley, Creekside Elementary School's librarian, wrote and successfully gained a \$4,000 grant from the foundation.

The money was split evenly between the two schools.

"Some (items) are more popular than others. That's where the struggle lies with Makerspace," Benvenga said. "Last semester some things were used more than this semester."

For example, last semester, a group used the recording studio to make their own rap music. This semester, albeit early on, it has been used only several times.

The puzzle station is a popular spot as is the KEVA planks that allow students to build structures with wooden blocks.

"We want to make the library a space where their curiosities can grow," she said. "To get them to think a different way, and to use their hands."

Senior Chanley DeCook, took a break from his studies to build a tower Wednesday with the KEVA planks. He said these activities allow him to take a brief break from studies and let him explore areas he otherwise wouldn't have in classes.

"I was nervous to start it," Benvenga said. "As a teacher, it's kind of nerve wracking to give up control and let them explore and work with different activities rather than step-by-step, this-is-how-this-will-work activity. But it's been fun to see them jump in and work with things."

Bentley said Creekside uses the activities a little differently. Once a month, each of the classes go through the library as a group and take part in the Makerspace. The same activities, including KEVA planks, are popular at both schools.

Bentley said knitting has been a popular activity, more so than she thought it would be.

Both said they plan to re-apply for the grant to gain more activities.

Benvenga said she would like to get a 3-D printer for the library.

Benvenga said some of the activities allow more collaboration among students, such as the puzzle table.

"Often before school, people will come in and will stop in and go, 'Oh, that's not our normal group

that's there,' so they will join in, and there will be a mixing of grade levels."

The high school allows use during free times of the day or during Spartan Time.

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

Sioux Falls group to revitalize downtown homes

By PATRICK ANDERSON, Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Homes in Sioux Falls' oldest neighborhoods are getting a face-lift thanks to growing commitments from City Hall and a local nonprofit builder.

The Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2nJGgRC>) reports Affordable Housing Solutions plans to rebuild 10 homes this construction season, many of which are located along the blocks surrounding downtown.

It's a more ambitious target than ever before for the organization, which takes problem properties and injects them with new life, selling a newly built house to low-income families.

"You're able to leverage both neighborhood revitalization dollars and affordable housing dollars," said Wayne Wagner, housing development director for Affordable Housing Solutions.

The nonprofit revitalized three homes when Wagner first started in 2014 and has since steadily increased its yearly workload. This summer, Affordable Housing Solutions is tearing down old homes and putting in newly built replacements in the Pettigrew Heights, Cathedral and Whittier neighborhoods.

The group acts as a good neighbor, and plays an important role in addressing some of the blighted properties in the area, said Lura Roti, who lives in the Cathedral Historic District.

"This is a great place to live," Roti said. "If there's a home that's condemned and it's beyond reproach, that's when I feel Wayne's organization fills a void." Roti is a freelancer for Argus Leader Media.

The homes AHS revitalizes are sold to families earning less than 80 percent of the median income. Buyers can often be dual-income, with parents who are busy working and trying to provide for their children. Sometimes, it's still a struggle for them to afford an appropriate amount of space, Wagner said.

"We really see single family houses being workforce housing," Wagner said.

By revitalizing homes in the core, Wagner believes his group is setting an example for other private builders, who might be inspired to help spruce up the same neighborhoods.

It happened last year after his organization rebuilt two homes near the intersection of 16th Street and Spring Avenue. A private developer came in later and fixed up four houses on the same block, Wagner said.

"That's when you have momentum," Wagner said.

John Koch builds and revitalizes properties in some of the same neighborhoods as Affordable Housing Solutions. The owner of John Koch Construction does his best to honor the designs of the original building, fixing them up in a way that fits the neighborhood.

Revitalization is helping to draw more interest from young people who want to be close to the center of the city but don't have the income to pay rising rent costs downtown, Koch said.

"Living right downtown, say on Phillips Avenue, isn't necessarily affordable for a lot of people," Koch said. "I'm all of a sudden seeing a demand close, real close walking distance to downtown."

For each project, AHS does its best to make sure a newly rebuilt home fits in with the look and feel of the block, giving the neighborhood's newest addition as much curb appeal as possible, Wagner said.

"I really like the fact that they look around at the existing architecture and they do their best to build a home that complements it," Roti said.

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

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Residents look back on Mitchell explosion 10 years ago

By CAITLYNN PEETZ, The Daily Republic

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — Staring at the pile of rubble that was once his home, Dennis Burnham couldn't believe what he saw.

The remnants of Burnham's home — where he had lived for 22 years — was blown into neighboring yards and forced through windows, doors and walls. Much of what he owned was strewn into the Mitchell streets for him to find, like a twisted Easter egg hunt.

Firefighters to his left worked to put out flames and a breeze pushed insulation and pictures through the air while police officers escorted shocked, confused homeowners around the scene. Burnham remembers it like it happened yesterday.

Then he opens his eyes.

He's back to present-day, sitting in his home 10 years to the day after a natural gas explosion leveled his home and two others on the 1600 block of Bridle Drive in the east side of Mitchell. The explosion happened on March 8, 2007 at his next-door neighbor's house as the result of a cracked gas line, and caused visible damage to at least seven more nearby homes. The blast was felt throughout town, but no deaths or injuries were reported.

The Daily Republic (<http://bit.ly/2n3Lpa8>) reports the force of the blast launched debris hundreds of feet away, with firefighters at the time reporting to have found debris 300 feet away from Jeanne and Robert Lorenz's home and as far away as Eighth Avenue.

"It sounds silly, but I didn't care. The house, it's just a thing," Burnham said Wednesday. "As long as everyone's OK, that's all that matters. It went boom, we cleaned up and that was the end of it."

Robert Lorenz was at work at the time of the explosion. A decade later, he still remembers hearing what he thought at the time was a "sonic boom," and brushing it off as strange, but nothing to worry about.

Shortly after, he got a phone call from a friend, informing him a house on his block was on fire. So Lorenz took an early lunch to check out the action.

In the few minutes it took him to get from work to the scene, it never crossed his mind that it would be his life that would be turned upside down.

"I looked at (Burnham's) house and it was a mess. I looked at the gal on the other side's house and it looked like a mess, too," Lorenz said. "Then I'm standing there and I go, 'Where the (heck) is my house?'"

The destruction was unlike anything Mitchell Chief of Public Safety Lyndon Overweg had ever seen before, and he hasn't seen a similar scene since, though there have been a handful of explosions in the area in the past decade.

"I remember driving up there and seeing just total devastation — total destruction," Overweg said. "It was really something else that nobody got killed that day."

Nearly everything Lorenz and his wife, Jeanne, owned was destroyed in the explosion, sparing only a few charred photographs and chipped knickknacks that now sit in plastic totes in the couple's new home, rebuilt on the same lot.

Some aspects of his new home he likes better than the one blown away, but Lorenz said he sometimes is nostalgic about what he had. And the retiree is still working on the final touches of his and Jeanne's house, with just the basement left to be finished. A self-proclaimed handyman, Lorenz has done all of the rebuilding himself, with minimal outside help, so the 10-year project has taken on a special meaning. He anticipates the final, "small" details in the basement will be done soon.

And for the two men, the age-old sentiment that "time heals all wounds" has proven to be true. So much so, that sometimes they even forget the exact date the explosion happened, often having to call each other for confirmation.

Even still, Lorenz said he wanders the field behind his new home, in search of any remnants of what once was.

"I'm not walking around with a metal detector, but every once in a while, something comes up out of the ground," he said. "But, man, we were so lucky. It could have been so much worse."

And the longtime neighbors say they're some of the last to remain in the neighborhood, as many of the families who lived in the area at the time of the explosion have moved away. Sometimes, Burnham

said, people ask if he and the Lorenz family are still friends, or if the incident pushed them apart. The question always makes Burnham giggle.

"Why wouldn't we be," Burnham said. "If they had done that on purpose, blowing my house up, maybe not so much, but we're best friends to this day and do lots of stuff together. You have a lot of memories in your life; you can't fuss over all of them. It's just something you live through."

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

Xcel Energy announces new wind farms for Dakotas, Minnesota

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Xcel Energy unveiled a new phase of wind power construction Thursday that includes a huge wind farm in South Dakota and two others in Minnesota and North Dakota.

The utility's planned Crowned Ridge Wind Project in Codington, Deuel and Grant Counties of eastern South Dakota would have a capacity of 600 megawatts. It will be Xcel's largest-ever wind investment in the Upper Midwest, Chris Clark, the company's president for Minnesota and the Dakotas, told the Star Tribune (<http://strib.mn/2nwlOnZ>). It will have the same capacity as Xcel's planned Rush Creek farm in Colorado, which had been the company's largest single wind project.

The other new projects include a 100-megawatt wind farm in Morton and Mercer Counties of western North Dakota, and another 100-megawatt project in Pipestone County of southwestern Minnesota. All three will be owned by their developers, at least initially, with Xcel buying the power.

They are the latest phase in a plan that Minneapolis-based Xcel announced in September to increase its Upper Midwest wind capacity by 60 percent. In October, it announced plans for three new wind farms in Minnesota and one in North Dakota with a total 750 megawatts of capacity. Including the new plants, Xcel is investing \$2.5 billion in the initiative.

"This is some of the best priced wind power and it's a great value for our customers," Clark said. The new wind installations would produce power at a cost of 1.5 to 2.5 cents per kilowatt hour, which compares favorably to the 2.3 to 2.4 cents per kilowatt hour from Xcel's big coal-fired Sherco plant near Becker, Minnesota.

Information from: Star Tribune, <http://www.startribune.com>

Ex-Rapid City mental health hospital workers file complaints

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Multiple former employees of a Rapid City mental health hospital have filed federal complaints saying the facility was an unsafe work environment.

The ex-employees of Regional Behavioral Health Center alleged in their complaints to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration that the hospital's procedures and faculties made the center a dangerous place for employees to work, the Rapid City Journal (<http://bit.ly/2nrM0mQ>) reported.

Some of the complaints included employee abuse by patients, hospital overcapacity and unjust treatment toward patients.

Investigator Eric Brooks could not speak directly on the issue but said an on-site inspection took place in October. Hospital Chief Operating Officer Paulette Davidson says Regional Health is taking the administration's inspection of the facility "very seriously" and has worked with Brooks to make safety changes.

"Their perception is our reality; if they felt unsafe, we needed to address that, and we did," she said. Davidson said the hospital has been taking Brooks' recommendations into account, along with employees' concerns.

"We identified several areas we wanted to address," she said. "For example we increased our security presence, we have updated technology for security services and we are also in the process of improving the lighting in the parking lot at the campus." The technology includes an increase in security cameras.

The facility recently stirred controversy when it announced in February that it would "no longer admit

patients to the behavioral health facility who have neurodevelopmental/cognitive disorders such as dementia, Alzheimer's disease or Autism Spectrum Disorders." Rapid City Police Chief Karl Jegeris said the decision would drain his agency and isn't a good solution for patients.

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

US taxpayers might be on the hook for pipeline protest costs

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON, Associated Press**

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — North Dakota officials appear poised to go after the U.S. government — and thus U.S. taxpayers — to recoup more than \$38 million in state expenses related to months of protests against the Dakota Access pipeline, though a longstanding offer from the project's developer to pay up is still on the table.

One taxpayer watchdog group questions why the state isn't jumping at the offer from Dallas-based Energy Transfer Partners, a company worth billions of dollars.

"You take the money when you can get it," said Dustin Gawrylow, managing director of the North Dakota Watchdog Network, which keeps tabs on how public money is spent.

The matter might not be that simple. Common Cause, a nonpartisan group that promotes government accountability, says accepting money from a private-sector business in an industry it regulates would present the state with an ethical dilemma.

Pipeline opponents have long accused the state of being too cozy with ETP, and if the state takes the company's money "it certainly would lend credence to those arguments," said Joye Braun, a protest leader.

"For Energy Transfer to offer a donation, basically that's paying off the state for using state resources as personal security," she said.

Gawrylow said ETP's offer, while it would help the state, might be more marketing than generosity.

"They're not spending it out of the goodness of their heart. They're spending it to build goodwill in North Dakota" after months of upheaval, he said.

Work is wrapping up on the \$3.8 billion pipeline to move North Dakota oil 1,200 miles to a shipping point in Illinois, and oil could be flowing as early as Monday despite an ongoing legal challenge by Sioux tribes who fear the project could affect their water supply — a claim ETP rejects.

The saga has endured for months, with hundreds and sometimes thousands of pipeline opponents camping on federal land near the drill site and often clashing with police. About 750 arrests were made between early August and late February, when camps on property managed by the Corps were shut down in advance of spring flooding season.

State officials have not been clear on why they haven't accepted ETP's offer, first made in the fall.

"The governor hasn't said whether the state will or won't seek reimbursement from ETP, only that all options are on the table," Mike Nowatzki, spokesman for Republican Gov. Doug Burgum, said.

State Budget Director Pam Sharp told The Associated Press that nothing in state law would prevent North Dakota from accepting such a donation, and that it's happened before, though not in such a sizable amount. For example, smaller private donations have been made to the state-operated North Dakota Veterans Home, she said.

Both Nowatzki and ETP spokeswoman Vicki Granado said they weren't aware of any discussions between state officials and ETP. But, Nowatzki said, "the governor's office has been in discussions with both the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and White House officials to emphasize the state's position that federal reimbursement is warranted."

U.S. Sen. John Hoeven, a Republican from North Dakota, said his office also is working to get the Corps to reimburse protest-related state costs.

State Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem has publicly broached the idea of suing the federal government. He didn't respond to requests for comment.

The state Emergency Commission late last year approved borrowing \$17 million to cover the costs, and the first bill Burgum signed as governor after taking office in January authorized an additional \$8 million. But the cost has surpassed the approved total by \$13 million, and officials plan to ask the Leg-

islature for more money, state Emergency Services spokeswoman Cecily Fong said.

"I would be very surprised if the Legislature does not cover the full cost," said Republican state Rep. Jeff Delzer, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee.

Nowatzki said Burgum's chief concern "is ensuring that North Dakota taxpayers alone don't foot the bill."

Accepting money from ETP would be a risky way of doing that, according to Paul S. Ryan, vice president of litigation and public policy for Common Cause.

"One would reasonably question whether the state could in an unbiased way regulate ETP if it is receiving tens of millions of dollars in cold hard cash from ETP," he said.

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

B-52 bomber jets from Minot deployed to Middle East

MINOT, N.D. (AP) — The Minot Air Force Base is sending a number of B-52 bombers to the Middle East, the first time in 12 years that aircraft from the base have been deployed to support combat operations.

More than 400 members of the 5th Bomb Wing at Minot departed last week in support of Operation Inherent Resolve, the effort to combat Islamic State militants. The Air Base's 23rd Bomb Squadron will lead the bomb wing, flying combat operations out of the Middle East.

The B-52 Stratofortress aircraft is a long-range strategic bomber jet, which will take over day-to-day operations.

Col. Matthew Brooks, 5th Bomb Wing commander, says it's a historic deployment for the unit.

Syria fires missiles at Israeli jets following airstrikes

By IAN DEITCH, Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Syria fired missiles at Israeli warplanes early Friday after a series of Israeli airstrikes inside Syria — a rare military exchange between the two hostile neighbors that was confirmed by both sides.

The Israeli military said its aircraft struck several targets in Syria and were back in Israeli-controlled airspace when several anti-aircraft missiles were launched from Syria toward the Israeli jets.

Israeli aerial defense systems intercepted one of the missiles, the army said, without elaborating. It would not say whether any other missiles struck Israeli-held territory, but said the safety of Israeli civilians and Israeli aircraft was "not compromised."

The army said the incident set off sirens in Jewish settlement communities in the Jordan Valley, part of the West Bank.

The firing of missiles from Syria toward Israeli aircraft is extremely rare, though Israeli military officials reported a shoulder-fired missile a few months ago.

A Syrian military statement said four Israeli warplanes violated Syrian airspace — flying into Syria through Lebanese territory — and targeted a military position in central Syria.

Damascus said Syrian anti-aircraft systems confronted the planes and claimed one of the jets was shot down in Israeli-controlled territory and that another was hit. The Israeli military denied the allegation and there was no sign that any of the jets had been hit or downed.

The Syrian statement, in line with typical anti-Western rhetoric from Damascus, said the "blatant aggression" was an attempt by Israel to support "terrorist gangs" of the Islamic State group inside Syria and "deflect from the victories" of the Syrian army in the country's civil war, which this week entered its seventh year.

Israeli Channel 10 TV reported that Israel deployed its Arrow defense system for the first time against a real threat and hit an incoming missile, intercepting it before it exploded in Israel.

The station said the Israeli military had been on a mission to destroy a weapons convoy destined for the Lebanese Hezbollah group, which is backed by Iran and fights alongside Syrian government forces.

There was no immediate comment from Hezbollah.

Jordan, which borders both Israel and Syria, said parts of the missiles fell in its rural northern areas, including the Irbid district. The military said the debris was the result of the Israeli interception of missiles fired from Syria toward Israeli positions and bases.

Radwan Otoum, the Irbid governor, told the state news agency Petra that the missile parts caused only minor damage.

Umm Bilal al-Khatib, a local resident, said she heard an explosion and initially thought a gas cylinder had exploded. When she went outside she found a small crater and a 3-meter-long (10-foot) cylinder. She said her husband contacted Jordanian authorities, who removed the debris.

The Haaretz daily said the interception took place north of Jerusalem. However, the Arrow is designed to intercept long-range ballistic missiles high in the stratosphere, so it remained unclear why the system would have been used in this particular incident.

The Israeli military had no immediate comment on the reports.

The Arrow is part of what Israel calls its "multilayer missile defense" comprised of different systems meant to protect against short and long range threats, including the thousands of missiles possessed by Hezbollah in Lebanon and rockets used by Hamas and other Islamic militant groups in Gaza.

Israel has been largely unaffected by the Syrian civil war raging next door, suffering mostly sporadic incidents of spillover fire that Israel has generally dismissed as tactical errors by Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces. Israel has responded with limited reprisals on Syrian positions in response to the errant fire.

The Syrian conflict, which began in March 2011 as a popular uprising against Assad, eventually descended into a full-blown civil war with Syrian government forces fighting an array of rebel groups. The chaos has allowed al-Qaida's affiliate in Syria and the Islamic State group to expand their reach.

The skies over Syria are now crowded, with Russian and Syrian aircraft backing Assad's forces and a U.S.-led coalition striking Islamic State and al-Qaida targets.

Israel is widely believed to have carried out airstrikes on advanced weapons systems in Syria — including Russian-made anti-aircraft missiles and Iranian-made missiles — as well as Hezbollah positions, but it rarely confirms such operations.

Hezbollah is pledged to Israel's destruction and fought a monthlong war with the Jewish state in 2006.

Associated Press writers Zeina Karam in Beirut and Omar Akour in Amman, Jordan, contributed to this report.

Wheels spinning as GOP looks for traction on health bill

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR and ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Pulling in different directions, Republicans are striving to get traction for a health care overhaul in danger of being dragged down by intra-party differences.

Some GOP governors weighed in Thursday evening in a letter to congressional leaders saying the House bill gives them almost no new flexibility and lacks sufficient resources to protect the vulnerable. It landed as Republican moderates and conservatives in the House remained split, and senators expressed reservations. Democrats are united in fierce opposition.

President Donald Trump, whose administration initially embraced the House health care bill, has lately called it "very preliminary," adding that "we will take care of our people or I'm not signing it."

On Friday morning, Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price is scheduled to meet with the restive House Republican caucus and Trump will host a group of conservative House Republicans for Oval Office talks.

Although the House bill has cleared three committees, some lawmakers can visualize scenarios where things come apart. Rep. Bill Flores, R-Texas, said it's important to get the legislation passed before Congress leaves for a two-week spring recess next month.

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"That's never healthy to let something sit out there too long because pretty soon you have a carcass left," he said.

The House bill — called the American Health Care Act — would repeal major elements of former President Barack Obama's law, create a new, leaner system of tax credits for health insurance, and cap future federal spending on Medicaid for low-income people. It would also reverse tax increases on wealthy Americans used to finance Obama's Affordable Care Act.

Critics say it would make health insurance more expensive for individuals, especially older adults and those with modest incomes. An analysis by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office found 24 million people would lose their health insurance over a decade though the bill would also reduce the deficit.

In the Senate, meanwhile, Susan Collins, R-Maine, told the Portland Press Herald, "This is not a bill I could support in its current form." She joins Kentucky's Rand Paul and Utah's Mike Lee in opposing the legislation, while other Republicans, including Tom Cotton of Arkansas and Ted Cruz of Texas, have expressed deep misgivings. Collins' opposition leaves the bill short of the support it needs in the Senate unless it changes, since GOP leaders can only lose two votes.

In another warning signal, four GOP governors wrote congressional leaders Thursday saying the bill's approach to Medicaid would not work for states. Medicaid covers more than 70 million people, and its future is expected to be a central issue in the Senate.

"It provides almost no new flexibility for states, does not ensure the resources necessary to make sure no one is left out, and shifts significant new costs to states," wrote Govs. John Kasich of Ohio, Rick Snyder of Michigan, Brian Sandoval of Nevada, and Asa Hutchinson of Arkansas.

Saying they represent most GOP governors, the four submitted a nine-page proposal that gives states more options to overhaul Medicaid and modifies the shift to federal spending limits envisioned by the House. The governors said they support the goal of repealing "Obamacare" but want to avoid collateral damage.

Despite open turmoil, House Speaker Paul Ryan tried to strike an optimistic tone as he addressed reporters Thursday for his weekly press briefing.

"We feel like we're making great strides and great progress on getting a bill that can pass," Ryan said. A White House official said the plan is for a House floor vote next Thursday — the seven-year anniversary of the Obama law.

But Ryan did not commit to a timetable for passage, and he's acknowledged that the bill needs changes to pass. Only last week, Ryan was pledging action sometime next week by the House Rules Committee — the precursor to a floor vote — and confidently predicting the bill would have the votes to pass.

Instead, Ryan spent part of his news conference disputing suggestions that he and Trump are at odds over the health bill, rumblings that originate with Ryan's very reluctant support for Trump during the presidential campaign.

"There is no intrigue, palace intrigue, divisions between the principals ... there really is no schism whatsoever," Ryan insisted. "I'm excited at the fact that we have a president who likes closing deals."

But some conservatives, having ousted the last House speaker, were beginning to grumble openly about Ryan's leadership.

By many accounts Trump has been closely involved in negotiations on the health bill, including calling Budget Committee members ahead of Thursday's vote. He is seen as focused on delivering his "repeal and replace" promise but flexible on the fine print.

Failing to pass a bill while his party controls both the House and Senate would be a devastating blow to his party and the premise of his presidency — that he was a dealmaker the country needed.

Associated Press writers Ken Thomas and Erica Werner contributed.

Tillerson: Use of pre-emptive force an option with NKorea

By MATTHEW PENNINGTON and LEE JIN-MAN, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said Friday it may be necessary to take pre-emptive military action against North Korea if the threat from their weapons program reaches a level “that we believe requires action.”

Tillerson outlined a tougher strategy to confront North Korea’s nuclear threat after visiting the world’s most heavily armed border near the tense buffer zone between the rivals Koreans. He also closed the door on talks with Pyongyang unless it denuclearizes and gives up its weapons of mass destruction.

Asked about the possibility of using military force, Tillerson told a news conference in the South Korean capital, “all of the options are on the table.”

He said the U.S. does not want a military conflict, “but obviously if North Korea takes actions that threatens South Korean forces or our own forces that would be met with (an) appropriate response. If they elevate the threat of their weapons program to a level that we believe requires action that option is on the table.”

But he said that by taking other steps, including sanctions, the U.S. is hopeful that North Korea could be persuaded to take a different course before it reaches that point.

Past U.S. administrations have considered military force because of North Korea’s development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles to deliver them, but rarely has that option been expressed so explicitly.

North Korea has accelerated its weapons development, violating multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions and appearing undeterred by tough international sanctions. The North conducted two nuclear test explosions and 24 ballistic missile tests last year. Experts say it could have a nuclear-tipped missile capable of reaching the U.S. within a few years.

Tillerson met Friday with his South Korean counterpart Yun Byung-se and its acting president, Hwang Kyo-ahn on the second leg of a three-nation trip which began in Japan and will end in China. State Department officials have described it as a “listening tour” as the administration seeks a coherent North Korea policy, well-coordinated with its Asian partners.

Earlier Friday, Tillerson touched down by helicopter Friday at Camp Bonifas, U.S.-led U.N. base about 400 meters (438 yards) from the Demilitarized Zone, a Cold War vestige created after the Korean War ended in 1953. He then moved to the truce village of Panmunjom inside the DMZ, a cluster of blue huts where the Korean War armistice was signed.

Tillerson is the latest in a parade of senior U.S. officials to have their photos taken at the border. But it’s the first trip by the new Trump administration’s senior diplomat.

The DMZ, which is both a tourist trap and a potential flashpoint, is guarded on both sides with land mines, razor wire fence, tank traps and hundreds of thousands of combat-ready troops. More than a million mines are believed to be buried inside the DMZ. Land mine explosions in 2015 that Seoul blamed on Pyongyang maimed two South Korean soldiers and led the rivals to threaten each other with attacks.”

Hordes of tourists visit both sides, despite the lingering animosity. The Korean War ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty, which means the Korean Peninsula remains in a technical state of war.

President Donald Trump is seen as seeking to examine all options — including military ones — for halting the North’s weapons programs before Pyongyang becomes capable of threatening the U.S. mainland.

Tillerson declared an end to the policy “strategic patience” of the Obama administration, which held off negotiating with Pyongyang while tightening of sanctions but failed to prevent North Korea’s weapons development. Tillerson said U.S. was exploring “a new range of diplomatic, security and economic measures.”

Central to the U.S. review is China and its role in any bid to persuade Pyongyang to change course. China remains the North’s most powerful ally. Tillerson will meet with top Chinese officials including President Xi Jinping in Beijing this weekend.

While the U.S. and its allies in Seoul and Tokyo implore Beijing to press its economic leverage over North Korea, the Chinese have emphasized their desire to relaunch diplomatic talks.

Tillerson, however, said that “20 years of talks with North Korea have brought us to where we are today.” “It’s important that the leadership of North Korea realize that their current pathway of nuclear weap-

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ons and escalating threats will not lead to their objective of security and economic development. That pathway can only be achieved by denuclearizing, giving up their weapons of mass destruction, and only then will we be prepared to engage with them in talks," he said.

Six-nation aid-for-disarmament talks with North Korea, which were hosted by China, have in fact been stalled since 2009. The Obama administration refused to resume them unless the North re-committed to the goal of denuclearization, something that North Korea has shown little interest in doing.

Tillerson urged China and other countries to fully implement U.N. sanctions on North Korea.

He also accused China of economic retaliation against South Korea over the U.S. deployment of a missile defense system. He called that reaction "inappropriate and troubling" and said China should focus on the North Korean threat that makes the deployment necessary. China sees the system as a threat to its own security.

Last week, North Korea launched four missiles into seas off Japan, in an apparent reaction to major annual military drills the U.S. is currently conducting with South Korea. Pyongyang claims the drills are a rehearsal for invasion.

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

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

1. WORRIES ABOUT ESPIONAGE HAVE LONG HISTORY

U.S. intelligence agencies have been concerned for years about Moscow's efforts to infiltrate American society and government — long before Russian intelligence agencies stood accused of interfering in the U.S. presidential election.

2. GOP PULLING IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS ON 'OBAMACARE' FIX

Republicans strive to get traction for a health care overhaul that's in danger of being dragged down by differences within their own party.

3. TILLERSON GETS LOOK AT DMZ BETWEEN KOREAS

The U.S. secretary of state visits the world's most heavily armed border, greeting U.S. soldiers on guard near the tense buffer zone as soldiers from the North look on a few feet away.

4. WHY TRUMP MAY HAVE FENCE TO MEND

The president welcomes German Chancellor Merkel to the White House — after accusing her of "ruining" Germany by allowing an influx of refugees from Syria.

5. SYRIA AIMS RARE MISSILE ATTACK AT ISRAEL

Anti-aircraft missiles are launched into Israeli-controlled territory, following a series of Israeli airstrikes inside Syria.

6. SPENDING CUTS WOULD HIT TRUMP'S OWN BACKERS

Many of the domestic programs facing deep cuts in the president's budget proposal currently benefit his rural and lower-income supporters.

7. MARINES REACHING OUT TO MILLENNIALS

The corps, embarrassed by a nude photo scandal, is launching an ad campaign that portrays Marines as not only strong warriors but good citizens, the AP learns.

8. WHO'S POSITIONING ITSELF AS DETROIT OF THE FUTURE

Israel is emerging as a global leader in the field of driverless cars, as illustrated by Intel's more than \$15 billion acquisition of Israeli firm Mobileye this week.

9. ONE-OF-A-KIND WHALE-WATCHING EXCURSION

On the trip in the Dominican Republic, dozens of deaf students wore high-tech backpacks that turn whale songs into vibrations. They gasped and marveled at feeling the sounds for the first time.

10. WHICH UNDERDOGS CAME OUT ON TOP

There were two bracket upsets during the first full day of March Madness: No. 11 seed Xavier beat No. 6 seed Maryland and No. 12 Middle Tennessee State downed No. 5 Minnesota.

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Bound to happen: 1 vs 16 matchup inches closer to an upset

By EDDIE PELLIS, AP National Writer

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — It's going to happen. Maybe not Friday, when Kansas and North Carolina take their turn at trying to avoid history. But if not then, well, some year soon.

A No. 1 seed is going to lose to a No. 16, and with the direction college basketball is going of late, it may not even be considered that big of an upset.

"The extremes are scooting closer to the (middle), year in and year out," Gonzaga coach Mark Few said after his top-seeded Bulldogs slowly inched away for a 66-46 victory over South Dakota State on Thursday.

"When you look, statistically, at all these things, and say, 'The 1 seed did this or that,' that might have been back in the day. When you look at how close these games have been" lately, it's a different story, he said.

Well, technically, Few isn't right. In the first five years of the 64-team bracket, there were six games between 1s and 16s decided by single digits — none more excruciatingly memorable than Georgetown's 50-49 squeaker over Pete Carril's Princeton team back in 1989.

In the last five years, only four games have come down to single digits, including Gonzaga's too-close-for-comfort 64-58 win over Southern in 2013, the last time the Bulldogs were a 1 seed.

But there's more to these games than the final score, and Thursday's action — a pair of 20-point wins for the 1s — might have been Exhibits 1 and 1A.

Mount St. Mary's, fresh off a First Four win two nights earlier, looked more in sync and better prepared for one half against Villanova. Sparked by the guard play of Miles Wilson and Elijah Long, the Mountaineers had an 8-point lead early, and trailed by only 1 at the half before falling 76-56.

"I do think some of it was Mount St. Mary's. I really do," Villanova coach Jay Wright said about his team's slow start. "I think those guards are smaller and quicker than any guards we played against. It gave us trouble."

Every bit as telling was Gonzaga's win over South Dakota State, a team that, by almost any measure, had the wrong number next to its name coming into this tournament. Yes, the Jackrabbits were only 18-16, a fourth-place finisher in their less-than-powerhouse conference. But they had the nation's second-leading scorer in Mike Daum and had won nine of 11 coming into the tournament.

Few said they looked better in person than they did on film — and after a grinder of a win, he's certainly more familiar with Daum and the Jackrabbits than members of the NCAA selection committee whose job it was to seed them.

"Really organized," Few said of the Jackrabbits. "They have an elite-level player that can get 30 on anybody in this tournament. And then their toughness. We got to the first timeout, I was like, 'All right, this is going to be a war.'"

There figure to be more like this.

Parity is, quite simply, as much a part of college hoops these days as brackets and one-and-dones. It helps get the George Masons and VCUs of the world to the Final Four; eventually it figures to play into a 16 finally knocking off a 1.

Asked to explain it all a few years ago, when Wichita State made a surprise run to the Final Four, Bill Raftery of CBS said AAU and summer leagues have leveled the playing field by making everyone familiar to everyone.

"The kids all know one another, so they're not in the least bit in awe of an opponent," he said. "You get Wichita State playing Louisville and they don't really give a damn. It's just another team to them."

On Friday, two more 16 seeds get a chance to bust the bracket, even if it might not shock the world.

Coming off a First-Four victory Wednesday over North Carolina Central, UC Davis plays its second-ever NCAA Tournament game, this time against Kansas.

Texas Southern brings the worst 3-point-shooting and defensive-rebounding stats in the 64-team field into a game against North Carolina.

If things go to form, No. 1s will move to 132-0 lifetime in the 1-16 matchup.

If they don't — well, nobody will say they didn't see it coming.

"Someone can have that from here on out," Few said of the top seeding. "I've served my time. I'll go ahead and land somewhere else."

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

Florida gov. takes case from anti-death penalty prosecutor

By **MIKE SCHNEIDER, Associated Press**

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Florida's governor has rebuked Orlando's top prosecutor and transferred from her authority a case involving the slaying of a police officer after she announced her opposition to the death penalty.

Signaling he wants the killing of Orlando Police Lt. Debra Clayton to be prosecuted as a capital case, Republican Gov. Rick Scott transferred the first-degree murder case of suspect Markeith Loyd out of the office of State Attorney Aramis Ayala. The case was reassigned to another prosecutor in a nearby district.

Ayala's unusual stance against capital punishment surprised and angered many, including her city's police chief. But the prosecutor stood firm, saying she concluded after a review that there's no evidence that executing criminals improves public safety.

"I have given this issue extensive, painstaking thought and consideration," Ayala said at a news conference Thursday. "What has become abundantly clear through this process is that while I do have discretion to pursue death sentences, I have determined that doing so is not in the best interests of this community or in the best interests of justice."

Scott immediately asked the prosecutor to recuse herself from the case, but she refused.

Under Florida law, a governor can only suspend an elected official for "malfeasance, misfeasance, neglect of duty, habitual drunkenness, incompetence, or permanent inability to perform official duties." But the law does allow a governor to reassign a particular case for "good and sufficient" reasons.

Scott issued a statement that Ayala "has made it clear that she will not fight for justice and that is why I am using my executive authority to immediately reassign the case."

Ayala said she would abide by the governor's order.

Ayala was elected last fall in a judicial district that has shifted from moderately conservative to liberal over two decades.

No other Florida prosecutor in recent memory has opted out of seeking the death penalty, said Buddy Jacobs, general counsel for the Florida Prosecuting Attorneys Association for more than four decades.

Ayala's decision drew condemnation from some law enforcement leaders but also praise from some civil liberties groups.

Orlando Police Chief John Mina said he was "extremely upset." He said Loyd should face the death penalty if convicted of killing Clayton and his pregnant ex-girlfriend, Sade Dixon.

Loyd faces two first-degree murder counts and other charges in the deaths of Sade and Clayton. Authorities have said the ex-girlfriend Dixon was fatally shot at her home in December and that Clayton was gunned down Jan. 9 outside a Wal-Mart while attempting to capture Loyd.

"The heinous crimes that he committed in our community are the very reason that we have the death penalty as an option under the law," Mina's statement said.

Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi called the prosecutor's decision "a blatant neglect of duty" that sends a dangerous message to residents and visitors.

But Adora Obi Nweze, of the Florida state conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, called it a step in the right direction.

"Ending use of the death penalty in Orange County is a step toward restoring a measure of trust and integrity in our criminal justice system," she said.

Legal challenges in the past year brought executions to a halt in Florida. The U.S. Supreme Court declared the state's sentencing law unconstitutional because it gave judges too much power to make the ultimate decision. State lawmakers responded with a new law that capital punishment be decided by split juries, with at least a 10-2 vote. The state Supreme Court struck that down, ordering unanimous jury decisions.

Ayala announced her categorical opposition only days after Scott signed a bill complying with the court requirements.

AP writers Gary Fineout and Curt Anderson contributed to this report.

Trump's campaign insults complicate Merkel's visit

By KEN THOMAS and JILL COLVIN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — If President Donald Trump wanted a close working relationship with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, he had a funny way of showing it during his presidential campaign.

Trump, who will welcome Merkel to the White House on Friday, spent much of 2016 bashing the chancellor, accusing her of "ruining" Germany for allowing an influx of refugees from Syria.

"You watch what happens to Angela Merkel, who I always thought of as a very good leader until she did this. I don't know what went wrong with her," said then-candidate Trump at an August rally in Virginia. "What went wrong? Angela, what happened?"

Trump may not ask the same question directly to Merkel as the leaders of the Western world's most influential countries meet face-to-face for the first time. A snowstorm forced them to postpone their plans for a meeting on Tuesday. The itinerary includes discussions on strengthening NATO, fighting the Islamic State group and resolving Ukraine's conflict, all matters that require close cooperation between the U.S. and Germany, the White House said ahead of the visit. The meeting will be capped with a joint news conference.

Beyond the issues, the sit-down could be a restart of a relationship complicated by Trump's rhetoric on the campaign trail.

Then, Trump seemed to care little about the potentially awkward ramifications were he to win. He invoked Merkel as a foil at his rallies, accusing his campaign rival, Hillary Clinton, of wanting to be "America's Angela Merkel." He lashed out at Time magazine when it named Merkel "Person of the Year" in 2015 instead of him.

Still, Trump found ways to voice his respect. When a television station in September asked him to name a world leader he admired, he cited Merkel.

In his meetings with world leaders since the inauguration, Trump has adopted a more diplomatic public persona. He recently spent a weekend bonding with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, golfing and dining with Abe at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida. He has cultivated a closer friendship with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whom he has known for years.

But Merkel is used to an altogether different type of American leader, having shared a strong bond with President Barack Obama. She was the last of Obama's key European allies still in power when he left office. And as the leader of Europe's biggest economy and most stable government, Merkel emerged in recent years as the leading voice for a continent struggling with slow growth, identity issues and increased security threats after a string of terrorist attacks.

Reflecting their connection, Obama and his wife called Merkel and her husband on the day before Trump's inauguration to thank her for "her strong, courageous and steady leadership." It was Obama's final call with a foreign leader, his advisers said.

Merkel's first major encounter with Trump comes as she seeks a fourth term as chancellor in elections later this year. She has acknowledged the contest could be difficult and has stressed a need for stability after Britain's decision to leave the European Union.

She reportedly has studied Trump's speeches and policies in advance of her trip, eager to find areas for cooperation. Steven Keil, a fellow with The German Marshall Fund of the United States, said Merkel has little reason to dwell on Trump's past comments.

"Merkel is extremely pragmatic in her approach here, but she's also going to have some situations in which it will be tough for her to give too much," Keil said.

Trump has rattled European leaders with his "America first" mantra. He also backed Brexit and is skeptical of multilateral trade agreements. Merkel is expected to reiterate her belief that a strong EU

remains in America's strategic and economic interests, a message she shared last month in Munich with Vice President Mike Pence.

She also is expected to bring with her a trade delegation that includes top executives of BMW and Siemens, employers of tens of thousands of Americans. Many live in Southern states that Trump won in the U.S. election.

Military matters may be testy. Trump declared NATO "obsolete" before telling European leaders the alliance remains important. But he is expected to reiterate calls for NATO members to meet a minimum commitment for defense spending. Only the U.S. and four other members currently reach the benchmark of spending 2 percent of GDP on defense. Germany lags significantly behind.

"This is not a meeting to go through the list," said Heather Conley, senior vice president for Europe at the Center for Strategic & International Studies. "It's actually a really important meeting to set up the tone for the relationship in itself."

Conley said for all the lingering issues, Trump and Merkel's encounter held the promise of creating "a modus vivendi for these two leaders to really create a more stable framework for this critical relationship."

On Twitter follow Ken Thomas at <https://twitter.com/KThomasDC> and <https://twitter.com/colvinj>

Long before new hacks, US worried by Russian spying efforts

By ERIC TUCKER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Years before Russian intelligence agencies stood accused of interfering in the U.S. presidential election and of orchestrating a massive Yahoo data breach, there was lingerie model Anna Chapman and her band of "Illegals" — Russian spies who assumed false identities and lived as deep-cover agents in middle-class America.

The busting-up of that spy ring, along with the arrest two years ago of a Russian spy who posed as a Manhattan banker and this week's announcement of an indictment of Russian agents in the Yahoo email hack, underscore long-running efforts by the American authorities to closely monitor and occasionally interrupt the Kremlin's intelligence-gathering operations.

Though allegations of meddling in the political process represent a stunning new flare-up in relations between the two countries, U.S. intelligence agencies for years have been concerned by Russian efforts to infiltrate American society and government.

"What we have seen as far as the arrests is really only scratching the surface of the real Russian activity here," said Scott Stewart, vice president of tactical analysis at the Texas-based Stratfor intelligence firm.

Many counterintelligence investigations can last for years without resulting in criminal charges, preventing the public from having a complete grasp of evidence collected or tactics that are used.

But a few sensational Justice Department prosecutions in the last decade have pulled back the curtain on Russian efforts to recruit university students, gather information on the stock market and on sanctions, sway public opinion and cultivate well-placed contacts. And recent hacking allegations make clear that old-fashioned spying techniques have now been augmented by cyber expertise that can in some cases accomplish similar goals.

"They want to understand how the White House is going to work, and how Washington will respond to what Russians are doing in Europe and the Middle East," said Steven Pifer, a senior fellow at the liberal-oriented Brookings Institution and a former foreign service officer focused on Russia.

It's not surprising that once the public understands the capabilities and motives of Russian intelligence "that there's a great deal of concern about their ability to gather intelligence and use it to influence real-world events," said Adam Fee, who was lead attorney in the 2015 prosecution of Evgeny Buryakov, who posed as a banker in New York while spying on the U.S. for the Russian Federation.

"It's interesting to see an area you worked on splash in the forefront of the national consciousness," Fee said.

Public interest in counterintelligence operations spiked with the U.S. assessment in January that Rus-

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sian intelligence agencies were responsible for the hacking of Democratic email accounts and for sharing that information with WikiLeaks, the anti-secrecy website, with the goal of aiding the Trump campaign.

That interference remains under federal investigation, but some experts see parallels between those cyberattacks and prior Russian espionage efforts.

Alarming to American authorities, Russian hackers have engaged in more conventional crimes, such as stealing credit and debit card account information, and have in some cases piggy-backed off Russian intelligence services. The Justice Department this week announced charges against two Russian intelligence agents, and two hired hackers, accused in a 2014 breach of at least 500 million Yahoo user accounts.

"I view cyber as merely being a new tool of espionage to pursue the same goals of espionage — whether that's recruiting, stealing information, it's basically the same things they've always done," Stewart said. "It's just a new tool to accomplish those tasks."

Probably the most notable prosecution is the 2010 case of "The Illegals" — a ring of Russian sleeper spies who burrowed into workaday America instead of more customary positions inside Russian embassies and military missions.

Tasked with developing contacts with government policymakers, the Russians took civilian positions in cities throughout the country and in some cases lived as husband and wife and raised children. A long-running FBI investigation called "Operation Ghost Stories" revealed how the secret agents relied on specially coded radio transmissions, invisible ink and furtive cash drops as they patiently worked to develop sources and send information back to Russia.

Once captured, 10 spies charged with acting as foreign agents were swapped for four Russians who'd been imprisoned for spying for the West. An 11th suspect accused of delivering money and equipment to the secret agents was freed by a court in Cyprus and later vanished.

Chapman herself became a model and corporate spokeswoman upon her return to Russia, the saga said to have been an inspiration for the hit FX show "The Americans."

The motive was different than last year's election hack, said Glen Kopp, a prosecutor in the case.

What's similar, he added, is "the obsession with seeing the world as us versus them."

More recently, Buryakov was sentenced to two and a half years in prison for his spying efforts, which in addition to working to gain information about the New York Stock Exchange, also included an attempt to shape political opinion.

He admitted to working to sway union opinion about a Canadian company's planned deal to build aircraft in Russia — efforts known among experts as "active measures." That political engagement in some ways resembles what U.S. officials say was a Russian effort to use an email hack to politically harm Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton.

"What I see in the cyberattacks last year, it's a modernized version of those active measures," Pifer said.

Counterintelligence concerns faded in the post-Cold War era as the Soviet Union splintered and as counterterrorism fears from the Middle East rose to the forefront. But more recent events have brought renewed focus on Russia, Pifer said.

The cyber realm, he said, "creates possibilities for the Russians to do things that they couldn't do before."

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

Many Trump voters would feel program cuts in budget proposal

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and JOSH BOAK, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The closure of a regional airport could force residents of a small town in upper Michigan to drive eight hours to catch a flight. The elimination of funding to keep the Great Lakes clean could hurt business at a waterside Ohio boating club. Cuts to the nation's flood insurance program could mean greater losses after a storm for homeowners on Florida's Gulf Coast.

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In his first budget blueprint since taking office, President Donald Trump held to his promise to build up the U.S. military while slashing domestic spending — even for programs that benefit the rural and lower-income Americans who voted for him last November.

“Some people might think it’s a betrayal,” said Eric Waara, the Republican city manager of the 7,000-person town of Houghton on Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, who said he hoped the proposal was just a negotiating tactic. “I think that we all hope it’s the first small step until something better.”

Houghton sits more than 200 miles from a major highway and for many residents the Houghton County Memorial Airport is their connection to the outside world. Trump’s proposed elimination of the Transportation Department’s Essential Air Service program, or EAS, could force the airport to close or dramatically curtail service, leaving residents with a four-hour drive to Green Bay, Wisconsin, or eight hours to Chicago to catch a flight, Waara said. The administration said it would save \$175 million a year.

Trump carried Houghton County with more than 54 percent of the vote as he became the first Republican to win Michigan since 1988. He got more than 50 percent of the vote in 86 of the 111 communities served by EAS, according to an Associated Press analysis of voting data.

The proposed \$1.15 trillion budget distills much of Trump’s sweeping campaign rhetoric into a set of hard choices and cold priorities. Trump is calling on Congress to boost defense spending by \$54 billion, a move popular with many Republicans. A wall along the border with Mexico, a core campaign promise, would receive \$4 billion to start construction.

Trump’s campaign promises to gut ineffective programs and shrink a bloated bureaucracy translated into a plan that cuts environmental protections programs, community development funding, housing vouchers, scientific research, a commission to create economic opportunities in Appalachia and other programs.

Funding for popular social services like Meals on Wheels, which provides food to the elderly, and after-school programs for children, also are on the chopping block. The outline — the start of negotiations with Congress — leaves untouched Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid spending.

“Rural America stepped up to the plate behind the president in his last election, and we’re wholeheartedly behind him. We need to make sure that rural America at least gets its fair share,” said Alabama Rep. Robert Aderholt, the Republican chairman of the House agriculture appropriations subcommittee. Aderholt, who represents one of the highest Trump voting congressional districts in the country, said he’s generally supportive of less federal spending but has concerns about cuts that would hurt several rural development programs.

“It doesn’t really reflect President Trump’s support for rural communities,” he said.

Trump administration officials said the proposal supports a desire to give states more flexibility and to protect taxpayers from seeing their dollars wasted.

“You’re only focusing on half of the equation, right?” Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney said when asked about the cuts. “You’re focusing on recipients of the money. We’re trying to focus on both the recipients of the money and the folks who give us the money in the first place.”

The budget proposal offered the promise of increased spending and services in some parts of Trump Country. The plan calls for a \$500 million increase in spending to counter opioid epidemic, an acute problem in many rural communities. It proposes an additional \$4.4 billion for veterans health care, including money to extend a program that allows eligible veterans to seek care from a private doctor outside the VA network.

Trump’s proposed military buildup could be an economic boon to military contractors and military communities. In the areas surrounding Fayetteville, North Carolina, what’s good for Fort Bragg is good for the community.

“We can’t help but look upon the budget favorably,” said Robert Van Geons, head of Fayetteville-Cumberland County Economic Development Corp. Two of the counties that make up the sprawling Fort Bragg delivered more than 60 percent of its votes for Trump.

Others saw economic worries in the proposal. The blueprint would cut almost all the \$300 million in funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, raising concern among some in the Ohio counties along Lake Erie.

The initiative was started to help limit invasive species such as the Asian carp, among other threats.

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It was meant to reduce dangers such as the outbreak of bacteria in 2014 that contaminated drinking water for nearly 500,000 people living around Toledo. Trump's budget plan says that these programs should be the responsibility of state and local governments.

At Catawba Island Club, a lakeside club with hundreds of boat slips, a golf course and 100 year-round employees in Ohio's Ottawa County, President Jim Stouffer said a rise in pollution could hurt his business. "Our reason for being is our members being able to get out on the water," Stouffer said.

Trump won the county by 57 percent of the vote on his way to carrying Ohio.

The budget plan would also cut \$190 million for mapping flood hazards for the National Flood Insurance Program, as well as grants to fund projects that would reduce damage from natural disasters. Without accurate maps of floodplains and the engineering projects funded by these grants, the costs from flood losses and natural disasters could be even higher for homeowners, businesses and taxpayers, said Don Griffin, a vice president at the Property Casualty Insurers Association of America.

The three states with the most flood insurance policies, according to the government, are Florida, Texas and Louisiana, all of which supported Trump.

Lemire reported from New York. Associated Press writers Mary Clare Jalonick and Joan Lowy contributed to this report.

Follow Lemire on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/@JonLemire> and Boak at <http://twitter.com/@JoshBoak>

AP FACT CHECK: Who needs a wall? Trump says border is strong

By ALICIA A. CALDWELL and CALVIN WOODWARD, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump says the border with Mexico is already "getting extremely strong" and would-be illegal crossers are giving up because they think, "we can't get in." All without the wall he promises to build, or any reported boost in deportations, or any surge in patrol agents.

The boast was one of a number at a Tennessee rally Wednesday night that did not track with the facts. A look at some:

TRUMP: "And by the way, aren't our borders getting extremely strong? ... We've already experienced an unprecedented 40 percent reduction in illegal immigration on our southern border, 61 percent — 61 percent since Inauguration Day. Sixty-one percent; think about it. And now people are saying we're not going to go there anymore 'cause we can't get in, so it's going to get better and better."

THE FACTS: There's not much evidence yet that Trump is driving down illegal immigration. It's true that the number of border arrests dropped about 44 percent from January to February. But it's too early to know if that will hold or what prompted it. Monthly and seasonal fluctuations are common.

Trump hasn't expanded the ranks of the Border Patrol or any other immigration or border-security agency. His orders haven't yet changed the way the Border Patrol operates and so far there is no evidence that more people are being deported. The wall he's promised to build isn't up.

The number of border arrests is the primary measure of the flow of illegal immigration at the border, though an imperfect one. If fewer people are arrested, that's taken to mean fewer people are trying. Over recent decades, presidents have tried to have it both ways. They cite low arrest numbers to illustrate how their policies are dissuading people from crossing illegally. When arrest numbers are high, they say that's because they're being aggressive in enforcing the border.

TRUMP: Speaking of the appeals court that on Wednesday overturned his latest action limiting immigration from six Muslim-majority countries, "That 9th Circuit — you have to see. Take a look at how many times they have been overturned with their terrible decisions. Take a look."

THE FACTS: Other appeals courts have seen their decisions overturned at a higher rate than the 9th Circuit.

In the most recent full term, the Supreme Court reversed eight of the 11 cases it heard from the San Francisco-based court. But the Atlanta-based 11th Circuit went 0 for 3 — that is, the Supreme Court

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reversed all three cases it heard from there. And over the past five years, five federal appeals courts were reversed at a higher rate than the 9th Circuit.

The 9th Circuit is by far the largest of the 13 federal courts of appeals. In raw numbers, more cases are heard and reversed from the 9th Circuit year in and year out. But as a percentage of cases the Supreme Court hears, the liberal-leaning circuit fares somewhat better, according to statistical compilations by the legal website Scotusblog. The very act of the Supreme Court's agreeing to hear a case means the odds are it will be overturned; the high court reverses about two-thirds of the cases it hears.

TRUMP: "Even liberal democratic lawyer Alan Dershowitz, good lawyer, just said that we would win this case before the Supreme Court of the United States."

THE FACTS: Not exactly. Dershowitz predicted Trump would win a Supreme Court showdown over his immigration action if the court focuses heavily on the law that gives him broad authority on the matter. If the court takes Trump's campaign statements into account, though, Dershowitz told CNN, "he will lose."

Many experts think the case would be close because the president does have a lot of leeway in immigration. But if a policy is seen as having a religious test, that could run afoul of the First Amendment in the eyes of the justices. In the campaign, Trump openly called for keeping Muslim visitors out of the country. As president, his executive action is not explicitly against Muslims but would apply to people coming from six countries with mainly Muslim populations.

TRUMP: Speaking of the request in his new budget for a \$54 billion increase for the Pentagon, "Our budget calls for one of the single largest increases in defense spending history in this country."

THE FACTS: Trump's proposed increase, 10 percent higher than the Defense Department's current budget, is large, but a long way from the highest boost ever. In just the past 40 years, there have been eight years with larger increases in percentage terms than the one he's now proposing.

In the early 1980s, for example, defense spending was increased dramatically as the Cold War with the Soviet Union intensified. The 1981 Pentagon budget saw a nearly 25 percent increase.

And the proposed expansion pales in comparison with earlier times. Military spending consumed 43 percent of the economy in 1944, during World War II, and 15 percent in 1952, during the Korean War. It was 3.3 percent in 2015, says the World Bank.

TRUMP: "I've already authorized the construction of the long-stalled and delayed Keystone and Dakota Access pipeline. I've also directed that new pipelines must be constructed with American steel. They want to build them here, they use our steel. We believe in two simple rules. Buy American and hire American."

THE FACTS: His executive action calls for U.S. steel and pipes to be used "to the maximum extent possible and to the extent permitted by law." With all that wiggle room, it's not a guarantee of U.S. content. It's also not the final word on the matter — the memorandum gives the commerce secretary until July to deliver a plan supporting the initiative.

TRUMP: "We are going to repeal and replace horrible, disastrous Obamacare. If we leave Obamacare in place, millions and millions of people will be forced off their plans" as insurers flee the market. "It's a catastrophic situation. And there's nothing to compare anything to because Obamacare won't be around for a year or two. It's — it's gone."

THE FACTS: President Barack Obama's health care law has problems, including premium increases and decisions by some insurers to leave the marketplace. But Trump's dire characterization is overblown in the eyes of many, including the Congressional Budget Office, which this week described the market for individual policies in most places as "stable." It said the market also would be likely to remain stable under the proposed GOP replacement legislation.

Associated Press writers Mark Sherman and Jim Drinkard contributed to this report.

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Travel ban rulings highlight trouble posed by Trump record

By GENE JOHNSON and SUDHIN THANAWALA, Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Federal law gives the president broad authority over immigration. Jimmy Carter used it to deny some Iranians entry to the U.S. during the hostage crisis, Ronald Reagan to bar Cubans who didn't already have relatives here and President Obama to keep out North Korean officials.

So why does President Donald Trump keep running into legal trouble with his efforts to freeze immigration by refugees and citizens of some predominantly Muslim nations?

When federal courts in Hawaii and Maryland blocked Trump's revised travel ban from taking effect, the judges spelled out their major concern: the unusual record of statements by the president and his advisers suggesting the executive order's real purpose was to discriminate against Muslims, in violation of the Constitution's ban on officially favoring or disfavoring any religion.

As the legal fight moves into the appeals courts, two key issues will be the extent of the president's broad immigration powers — and whether Trump's own record stymies his plans.

THE RULINGS

Neither U.S. District Judge Theodore Chuang in Maryland nor Judge Derrick Watson bought the administration's reasoning that the travel ban is about national security.

"The history of public statements continues to provide a convincing case that the purpose of the second executive order remains the realization of the long-envisioned Muslim ban," Chuang wrote.

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 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,'" he wrote, referring to a statement Trump issued as a candidate.

But the scope of the rulings differed. In a challenge brought by Hawaii, Watson blocked the federal government from enforcing its ban on travel from six mostly Muslim countries and its suspension of the nation's refugee program. Chuang only blocked the six-nation travel ban, saying it wasn't clear that the suspension of the refugee program was similarly motivated by religious bias.

A federal judge in Seattle on Thursday ruled that his order blocking Trump's original travel ban does not apply to the revised executive order because there are enough differences between the two.

Judge James Robart noted that Washington and several other states have also asked him to block the revised ban. He said he would rule on that request at a later date.

APPEALS COMING

Speaking Wednesday evening at a rally in Nashville, Tennessee, Trump called the ruling in Hawaii 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. "The danger is clear. The law is clear. The need for my executive order is clear."

White House spokesman Sean Spicer said Thursday that the Justice Department was exploring its options, but that it expected to file an appeal of the Maryland ruling with the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals and to seek clarification of the Hawaii order before appealing to the 9th Circuit. That circuit is where a three-judge panel unanimously declined to reinstate Trump's original travel ban when it was put on hold by a Seattle Judge last month.

Despite the legal victories for critics of the ban, it's far from clear that they will continue to win. A different panel of judges in the 9th Circuit will probably hear the appeal of Hawaii's case. And on Wednesday, five judges signed a dissent criticizing the court's decision not to reconsider and throw out the panel's ruling on the original travel ban.

"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.

THE PRESIDENT'S AUTHORITY

In 1952, with the nation fearful of communist infiltration, Congress gave the president the authority under the Immigration and Nationality Act to take action:

"Whenever the president finds that the entry of any aliens or of any class of aliens into the United States would be detrimental to the interests of the United States, he may ... suspend the entry of all aliens or any class of aliens as immigrants or nonimmigrants, or impose on the entry of aliens any restrictions he may deem to be appropriate," the law says.

That power has been invoked dozens of times. But legal experts say those examples were more limited than what Trump has sought.

Citing a report that reviewed White House administrations going back to Reagan, Chuang noted in his ruling that no president has issued a ban on the entry "of all citizens from more than one country at the same time, much less six nations all at once."

Chuang found that the travel ban likely violated another aspect of federal immigration law, barring discrimination on the basis of nationality in the issuance of immigrant visas. That law was passed in 1965 as part of an effort to end longstanding immigration quotas that had been criticized as racist.

Ultimately, the cases will come down to the ways in which that law and the Constitution constrain the president's authority.

"That's the tug of war that is going to play out and, I suspect, go before the Supreme Court," said Ted Ruthizer, a former president of the American Immigration Lawyers Association. "I think it will be a very seminal decision as to what are the limitations on the executive's powers."

Thanawala reported from San Francisco. Associated Press writers Ben Nuckols in Greenbelt, Maryland; Sarah Brumfield and Jill Colvin in Washington, D.C.; and Jennifer Sinco Kelleher in Honolulu contributed to this report.

Tillerson gets a look at NKorea at the DMZ between Koreas

By LEE JIN-MAN, Associated Press

CAMP BONIFAS, South Korea (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on Friday visited the world's most heavily armed border, greeting U.S. soldiers on guard near the tense buffer zone between rivals North and South Korea.

Tillerson touched down by helicopter at Camp Bonifas, a U.S. base about 400 meters (438 yards) from the Demilitarized Zone, a Cold War vestige created after the Korean War ended in 1953. He planned to then move to the truce village of Panmunjom inside the DMZ, a cluster of blue huts where the Korean War armistice was signed.

Tillerson is the latest in a parade of senior U.S. officials to have their photos taken at the border. But it's the first trip by the new Trump administration's senior diplomat as he makes a tour of Japan, South Korea and China.

Speaking in Tokyo, Tillerson earlier vowed a tougher strategy to confront North Korea's nuclear threat. But he offered no details about what would comprise the "different approach" to North Korea the U.S. will pursue. He pointedly noted that 20 years of "diplomatic and other efforts" had failed to dissuade the isolated communist government from developing its nuclear program, which he called an "ever-escalating threat."

The DMZ, which is both a tourist trap and a potential flashpoint, is guarded on both sides with land mines, razor wire fence, tank traps and hundreds of thousands of combat-ready troops. More than a million mines are believed to be buried inside the DMZ. Land mine explosions in 2015 that Seoul blamed on Pyongyang maimed two South Korean soldiers and led the rivals to threaten each other with attacks.

Hordes of tourists visit both sides, despite the lingering animosity. The Korean War ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty, which means the Korean Peninsula remains in a technical state of war.

President Donald Trump is seen as seeking to examine all options — including military ones — for halt-

ing the North's weapons programs before Pyongyang becomes capable of developing a nuclear-tipped missile that could reach the U.S. mainland.

Central to the U.S. review is China and its role in any bid to persuade Pyongyang to change course. China remains the North's most powerful ally.

While the U.S. and its allies in Seoul and Tokyo implore Beijing to press its economic leverage over North Korea, the Chinese have emphasized their desire to relaunch diplomatic talks — a non-starter for the U.S. under current conditions.

The U.S. and China also disagree over U.S. deployment of a missile defense system to South Korea. The U.S. says it's a system focused on North Korea. China sees it as a threat to its own security.

State Department officials have described Tillerson's effort this week as a "listening tour" as the administration seeks a coherent North Korea policy, well-coordinated with its Asian partners.

Last week, North Korea launched four missiles into seas off Japan, in an apparent reaction to major annual military drills the U.S. is currently conducting with South Korea. Pyongyang claims the drills are a rehearsal for invasion.

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

North Korea has accelerated its weapons development, violating multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions and appearing undeterred by tough international sanctions. The North conducted two nuclear test explosions and 24 ballistic missile tests last year. Experts say it could have a nuclear-tipped missile capable of reaching the U.S. within a few years.

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."

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.

Fast-acting paramedic rescues baby from submerged SUV

By JIM SALTER, Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — A fast-acting paramedic dove into the frigid water of an Illinois lake where a SUV was submerged on Thursday and found an infant floating inside, then administered CPR on the hood and swam the child to shore, authorities said. The baby is expected to make a full recovery.

The infant was one of seven siblings who survived a tragic chain of events that left one person dead in a house fire and second body recovered from the lake where the baby was found.

It all began at 5:15 a.m. in Glen Carbon, Illinois, when fire broke out at a home owned by Cristy Lynn Campbell. An adult died in the fire but six children, siblings ranging up to age 14, escaped. Glen Carbon is about 30 miles east of St. Louis.

Sheriff John Lakin said the person killed has not been identified, but Campbell's estranged husband and the father of the children, Justin Campbell, has not been accounted for.

Some of the children ran to a nearby Wal-Mart, others to a home in the neighborhood. The kids at the Wal-Mart asked an arriving worker to call 911, Lakin said.

Cristy Campbell was not in the home when firefighters arrived nor was the couple's seventh child, a 3-month-old boy.

At 5:31 a.m., a motorist passing near Silver Lake in Highland, Illinois, about 16 miles from the home, saw a car heading down a hill toward the water and called 911, Lakin said.

Highland paramedic Todd Zobrist arrived quickly, jumped into the 46-degree water and swam 50 to 75 feet to the SUV, where he found a baby floating inside the car. He pulled the baby by the arm to the hood of the SUV, where he began CPR, then swam with the child to shore.

The child, initially unresponsive, is expected to recover and could be released Friday from a hospital in St. Charles, Missouri, Lakin said.

"Today was a tragic day all the way around because of both scenes," Lakin said. "Fortunately, there is something good that can come of this."

Highland Emergency Medical Services chief Brian Wilson said Zobrist's actions were heroic.

"He definitely saved the child's life," Wilson said.

After finding the baby, authorities began searching the water. A body was pulled from the lake around 11:15 a.m. While the body has not been identified, Lakin said police are no longer searching for Cristy Campbell.

Court records showed that Cristy Campbell and Justin Campbell, 37, had a volatile relationship.

In 2005, before they were married, Justin Campbell was charged with domestic abuse for allegedly attacking Cristy Campbell, then known as Cristy Brueggemann, by slapping her in the head when she was pregnant. He was sentenced in March 2006 to probation and fined \$500.

Despite the violence they wed on Nov. 3, 2006. She filed for legal separation in September 2010, but the matter was dismissed two months later.

In April 2012, Cristy Campbell obtained an emergency protection order against her husband and filed for divorce, alleging in court papers that he "abuses me on a weekly basis," including punching and choking her.

"He has told me that I'm a no good wife," Campbell wrote in her application for the protection order.

The divorce was granted in February 2013.

Lakin said Glen Carbon police have answered several calls to Campbell's home, including some "domestic-related situations," but he declined to elaborate.

"The Glen Carbon Police Department was aware of that house," Lakin said.

Authorities said the children are with Illinois authorities and will be placed with relatives.

Associated Press writer Jim Suhr in Kansas City, Missouri, contributed to this report.

French school shooting: 4 shot, 10 hurt, student arrested

By **ELAINE GANLEY** and **SYLVIE CORBET**, Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — A 16-year-old student who had troubled relations with his peers opened fire at a high school in southern France on Thursday, wounding three other students and the principal who tried to intervene, officials said.

Police moved into the Alexis de Tocqueville school in the town of Grasse — the country's picturesque perfume capital — and quickly arrested the still-armed suspect, identified by the Interior Ministry spokesman as Killian Barbey.

The government minister for victims' affairs, Juliette Meadel, told BFM television there were 4 people shot — three students and the high school principal — and 10 other victims.

The Grasse prosecutor said some of the victims were suffering from "emotional shock." None of the injuries was considered life threatening.

Prosecutor Fabienne Atzori said the young man — armed with a rifle, several pistols and a small grenade — entered a classroom then left, "not finding the person or people he was searching for."

"The motivation of the student appears linked to bad relations with other students in this high school in which it appears he had some difficulty integrating," Atzori said.

She said there was no reason to suspect the shootings were terrorism-related, "whatever the origin of the terrorist enterprise." A national police official said earlier there did not appear to be any other suspects.

Investigators were now trying to find out where did the suspect get the arms, she said.

Officials variously gave 16 and 17 as the age of the suspect. His Facebook page indicates he is 16.

After the suspect started shooting, students alerted the principle, who was wounded while "courageously" intervening, the prosecutor said. Some students only discovered shrapnel in their bodies once home, she said.

Education Minister Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, who visited the school Thursday, called it "the crazy act

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of a fragile young man fascinated by firearms ... We just missed the worst."

The suspect's Facebook is filled with violent or gory images.

During the attack, some students hid at the school and others were evacuated. A police helicopter circled overhead in what is normally a relatively quiet corner of France.

Police cordoned off the area and worried residents gathered outside in the town, which is 40 kilometers (25 miles) from the southern city of Nice, site of last year's Bastille Day terror attack that killed 86 people.

The president of the region, Christian Estrosi, said the principal suffered an arm wound and told him that after being alerted to the presence of the armed student, "he tried to interpose ... to try to calm him, and unfortunately he didn't succeed."

Student Charlotte Camel, 18, told The Associated Press she was in the school library when "a teacher ran into the room shouting, 'There's someone with a gun, go hide!' That's what we did from the very beginning."

"We all very much panicked. I thought a lot about the other students in my class who were in class and I wondered if they were ok. I thought about my friends and the teachers too," Camel said.

The attack came amid France's state of emergency, a response to a string of deadly Islamic extremist attacks over the past two years.

While no terrorism link has been identified, "all this justifies the state of emergency," President Francois Hollande said, adding that it would remain in place until July 15, as planned.

The government sent out an alert warning of an attack after police reported that shots were fired, but later lifted it. The alert is part of a system implemented by the government after the deadly November 2015 attacks in Paris.

Angela Charlton and Lori Hinnant in Paris, Alexander Turnbull in Grasse, and Raphael Satter in London contributed.

White House resists GOP pressure, stands by wiretap claim

By EILEEN SULLIVAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House on Thursday stood by President Donald Trump's unproven accusations that his predecessor wiretapped his New York skyscraper, despite growing bipartisan agreement that there's no evidence to back up the claim and mounting pressure to retract the statement.

Angrily defending the president's statement, White House spokesman Sean Spicer told reporters Trump "stands by" the four tweets that sparked a firestorm that has threatened Trump's credibility with lawmakers. Spicer denounced reporters for taking the president's words too literally and suggested lawmakers were basing their assessments on incomplete information.

Spicer's comments were a rebuttal to the top two members of the Senate intelligence committee, who released a statement earlier Thursday declaring there is no indication that Trump Tower was "the subject of surveillance" by the U.S. government before or after the 2016 election. Spicer suggested the statement from Sens. Richard Burr, R-N.C., and Mark Warner, D-Va., was made without a full review of the evidence or, incorrectly, a briefing from the Justice Department.

"They are not findings," he said.

The standoff between the White House and lawmakers came four days before FBI Director James Comey is slated to testify before Congress, when he will inevitably be asked whether the president's accusations are accurate. The White House's refusal to back down raised the stakes for Comey's appearance before the intelligence committee on Monday.

Trump tweeted earlier this month that President Barack Obama "was tapping my phones in October" and compared the incident to "Nixon/Watergate" and "McCarthyism."

Trump, in an interview Wednesday with Fox News, 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 said there would be "some very interesting items coming to the forefront over the next two

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weeks.”

In the two weeks since the tweets, the White House has tried to soften the statement, but not disavowed it.

Spicer on Thursday asserted that Trump meant to broadly refer to “surveillance,” rather than a phone wiretap.

“The president’s already been very clear that he didn’t mean specifically wiretapping,” he said.

In an attempt to bolster his case, the spokesman spent nearly 10 minutes angrily reading from news reports which he said pointed to possible evidence of surveillance. The list included a report from The New York Times, which Trump has dubbed “fake news,” as well as conservative commentary, a little-known blog and several reports based on anonymous sources, which Trump has said cannot be believed.

Among the items he quoted from was a transcript of a recent appearance by Fox News analyst Andrew Napolitano on the network, in which Napolitano suggested GCHQ, the British intelligence agency, had helped with the alleged tapping. Obama, he claimed, “went outside the chain of command” so there were “no American fingerprints on this.”

The agency, which rarely comments on allegations about intelligence matters, flatly denied the claim, responding with a statement calling the allegations “nonsense.”

“They are utterly ridiculous and should be ignored,” read the statement, which was issued on condition that it be attributed to an anonymous spokesperson to protect the identity of agency staff.

It was not immediately clear what prompted the senators’ statements Thursday.

Burr and Warner were among eight senior congressional leaders briefed by Comey on March 10. A Senate aide, who requested anonymity to discuss the senators’ private briefings, said Spicer was incorrect in claiming Burr and Warner had not been briefed on the matter.

“Based on the information available to us, we see no indications that Trump Tower was the subject of surveillance by any element of the United States government either before or after Election Day 2016,” Burr and Warner said in a one-sentence joint statement Thursday afternoon.

The phrasing of the statement left open the possibility that tenants or employees working in the tower may have been monitored. In response to Trump’s claims and a request from the House intelligence committee, the Justice Department is doing its own review of whether Trump or any of his associates were the subject of surveillance. The department is slated to provide a response to the committee by Monday.

Burr and Warner are leading one of three congressional investigations into Russia’s interference in the 2016 election, including whether Trump associates were in contact with the Kremlin.

The senators joined a growing, bipartisan group of lawmakers who have publicly disputed Trump’s accusation in the lead up to Comey’s testimony.

Earlier Thursday, House Speaker Paul Ryan of Wisconsin pushed back on the accusations as well.

“We’ve cleared that up,” Ryan said, adding that he’d received a briefing and seen no evidence of Trump’s wiretap claims.

But the issue is unlikely to pass as quickly as some Republicans hope.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., said Thursday that he still believes the FBI or Justice Department should comment publicly in “a simple statement that goes to the heart of the matter — without jeopardizing classified information.”

“I believe such a statement would serve the public well, and I fear that without an official answer this issue will continue to linger,” Graham said in a statement.

On Wednesday, Attorney General Jeff Sessions said he had not given Trump any reason to believe he was wiretapped by 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 should not be taken at face value.

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

Associated Press writers Catherine Lucey and Jill Colvin contributed to this report.

Trump calls for privatizing air traffic control operations

By JOAN LOWY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is calling for privatizing the nation's air traffic control operations in his budget proposal, a top priority of the airline industry.

The proposal says spinning off air traffic operations from the Federal Aviation Administration and placing them under an "independent, non-governmental organization" would make the system "more efficient and innovative while maintaining safety."

There are about 50,000 airline and other aircraft flights a day in the United States. Both sides of the privatization debate say the system is one of the most complex and safest in the world. The FAA would continue to provide safety oversight of the system under a congressional privatization plan.

Airlines have been lobbying vigorously for the change, saying the FAA's NextGen program to modernize the air traffic system is taking too long and has produced too few benefits. Industry officials say that privatization would remove air traffic operations from the uncertainties of the annual congressional budget process, which have hindered the FAA's ability to make long-term procurement commitments.

"Our system is safe, but it is outdated and not as efficient as it should or could be," said Nick Calio, president of Airlines for America.

The National Air Traffic Controllers Association, the union that represents the FAA's 14,000 controllers, backed an unsuccessful congressional attempt at privatization last year. The union said it will evaluate Trump's plan. Union officials have complained that the FAA has been unable to resolve chronic controller understaffing at some of the nation's busiest facilities, and they say they've become discouraged by the modernization effort's slow progress.

But FAA Administrator Michael Huerta told an aviation industry conference earlier this month that the agency has made "tremendous progress" over the past decade in updating its computers and other equipment in order to move from a radar-based to a satellite-based control system. The modernization program has already delivered \$2.7 billion in benefits to airlines and other users of the system, and the FAA expects to produce another \$13 billion in benefits by 2020, he said.

Opponents say the process of transferring air traffic control operations from the FAA to a corporation could take years and be disruptive.

"Air traffic control privatization will not benefit the flying public and it definitely will not benefit taxpayers who will be on the hook for bailing out the private ATC corporation if it fails," said Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore.

Airlines have an important ally in Rep. Bill Shuster, R-Pa., the House transportation committee chairman. The committee approved an aviation bill sponsored by Shuster last year that would have removed air traffic operations from the FAA and placed them under the control of a private, nonprofit corporation. The bill would also have protected the controllers' wages and benefits and continued their union representation.

Opposition to the bill from other powerful House committee chairmen who oppose ceding Congress' oversight of the air traffic system to a private entity prevented Shuster from bringing the bill before the entire House for a vote. Lobbying groups representing business aircraft operators, private pilots and small and medium-sized airports also oppose privatization. They say they fear airlines will dominate the corporation's board and that they'll be asked to pay more to support the system while facing reduced services.

Shuster received \$148,499 in airline industry campaign contributions in the 2016 election, making him the industry's top recipient in the House, according to the political money tracking site Opensecrets.org. Shuster was also an early House backer of Trump's presidential campaign, and campaigned with him in Pennsylvania three times. Since the election, he has pressed Trump and White House officials to back privatization.

In 1981, President Ronald Reagan fired the nation's air traffic controllers after they went on strike. The current privatization debate is unrelated to that labor dispute.

Follow Joan Lowy at http://twitter.com/AP_Joan_Lowy. Her work can be found at <http://bigstory.ap.org/content/joan-lowy>

New York court to determine if chimp is legally a person

By VERENA DOBNIK, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Should a chimpanzee be treated as a person with legal rights?

That's what attorney Steven Wise tried to convince a state appeals court in Manhattan on Thursday. Wise, who represents the Florida-based Nonhuman Rights Project animal advocacy group, argued that two chimps named Tommy and Kiko should be freed from cages to live in a mammoth-sized outdoor sanctuary in Florida.

The Boston lawyer has been trying for years, unsuccessfully, to get courts to grant the New York chimps habeas corpus in order to, he says, free them from unlawful imprisonment.

He says that if the judges agree, the apes — which didn't appear in court — would be sent to live with others of their species on one of 13 islands amid a lake in Fort Pierce, Florida, that comprise the Save the Chimps sanctuary.

A five-judge panel will issue its ruling in the coming days or weeks.

Kiko's keeper, Carmen Presti, says he's not giving him up.

He and his wife rescued the deaf chimp 23 years ago from a life of performing at state fairs and in the television movie "Tarzan in Manhattan." Kiko is believed to have lost his hearing when he was beaten by a trainer, and has medical problems requiring constant attention.

"If he's taken away, he could die without his family to give him the special care he needs, and to bring him into the house to play," says Presti, of Niagara Falls, New York, where he runs the nonprofit Primate Sanctuary, whose rescue animals are part of a youth educational program.

Tommy was caged at a trailer lot in Gloversville, outside Albany.

His keeper, Patrick Lavery, calls the various lawsuits "a ridiculous thing." He told The Associated Press that he had temporarily cared for Tommy to spare him from being euthanized, then donated him to an out-of-state facility in September 2015.

Wise's Coral Springs, Florida-based Nonhuman Rights Project has a history of litigation over chimps that started in 2013, when a lawsuit on behalf of Kiko was first filed in state Supreme Court in Niagara Falls and in Fulton County on behalf of Tommy. The same year, another suit named Hercules and Leo — chimps being used for anatomical research at Stony Brook University on Long Island. They're now at a Louisiana research facility, Wise says.

In 2014, an Albany appellate court ruled that Tommy was not legally a person because chimps cannot have duties and responsibilities. In a court brief, primate pioneer Jane Goodall countered by saying chimps do carry out duties and responsibilities in animal family settings and that apes have complex cognitive abilities allowing them to make choices.

However, legal personhood does not mean animals are expected to perform daily human tasks. It's a technical term that ensures legal entities — in this case, chimps — have basic rights.

Presti is not taking any direct legal action, but does have his own view of the latest case.

"Albert Einstein said insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results," Presti said in a telephone interview, with a chuckle.

On Thursday, the judges peppered the attorney with questions: Why does he persist in filing lawsuits and challenging so many court decisions? Is there a precedent in the U.S. for making a chimp a "legal person?" (apparently not) Or does one have to practically create a new law for that purpose? Does habeas corpus mean moving chimps from one facility to another, or just giving them what Wise calls "absolute freedom"? (In that case, he said later tongue-in-cheek, they could end up, say, in Times Square and get killed.)

"All of our arguments are really grounded on fundamental ideas of justice," Wise said after the 15-minute court session. "The reasons that humans should have rights are the reasons that nonhumans should have rights."

He remains doggedly hopeful — especially after an Argentinean judge ruled in November that chimps in fact have habeas corpus rights. "We will win, in the end," he said.

The Primate Sanctuary: <http://theprimatesanctuary.com>

Follow Verena Dobnik on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/VerenaChirps>

Trump's budget boosts military but cuts GOP, Dem favorites

By ANDREW TAYLOR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's new \$1.15 trillion budget would reshape America's government with the broad, conservative strokes he promised as a candidate, ordering generous increases for the military, slashing domestic programs and riling both fellow Republicans and Democrats by going after favored programs.

The president's initial budget proposal, submitted to Congress on Thursday, would boost defense spending by \$54 billion, the largest increase since Ronald Reagan's military buildup of the 1980s. That means deep cuts elsewhere — the environment, agriculture, the arts — but Trump said that's imperative to take on the Islamic State group and others in a dangerous world.

"To keep Americans safe, we have made the tough choices that have been put off for too long," he declared in a statement titled "America First" that accompanied the budget.

Or, as Budget Director Mick Mulvaney said, "This is a hard power budget, not a soft power budget."

It's not entirely in line with Trump's campaign pledges.

It would make a big down payment on the U.S.-Mexico border wall, which Trump repeatedly promised the Mexicans would pay for. American taxpayers will, at least for now. Thursday's proposal calls for an immediate \$1.4 billion infusion with an additional \$2.6 billion planned for the 2018 budget year starting Oct. 1.

Parts of Trump's spending plan for the next fiscal year angered both congressional Democrats and Republicans who will have the final say on it.

While it targets Democratic priorities like housing, community development and the environment, it also would slash GOP sacred cows like aid to rural schools and subsidized airline service to Trump strongholds, and it would raise fees on participants in the federal flood insurance program.

The budget pursues frequent targets of the GOP'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 President Bill Clinton.

But Midwestern Republicans including Sen. Rob Portman of Ohio were upset by cuts to the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Southern Republicans like Rep. Hal Rogers of Kentucky lashed out at cuts he called "draconian, careless and counterproductive."

One target of the budget is the Appalachian Regional Commission, which helps communities in the region.

Trump's proposal covers only roughly one-fourth of the approximately \$4 trillion total federal budget. This is the discretionary portion that Congress passes each year, not addressing taxes, Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

Nor does it make predictions about deficits and the economy. Those big-picture details are due in 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.

As for Thursday's proposal, Republicans praised the president for beefing up the Pentagon, but they were far less enthusiastic about accepting Trump's recipe for doing so without adding to the nation's \$20 trillion debt.

"While we support more funding for our military and defense, we must maintain support for our farmers and ranchers," said North Dakota Republican John Hoeven, blasting a 21 percent cut to the Agriculture Department's budget.

The proposed budget would close numerous county offices that help farmers and rural residents navigate farm subsidy and rural development programs. Rural development and water projects would also bear cuts.

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"I just want to make sure that rural America, who was very supportive to Trump, doesn't have to take a disproportionately high cut," said Rep. Robert Aderholt, R-Ala.

Budget Director Mulvaney acknowledged that passing the cuts could be an uphill struggle and said the administration would negotiate.

"This is not a take-it-or-leave-it budget," he acknowledged.

Many of Trump's GOP allies on Capitol Hill gave it only grudging praise, if any.

"Congress has the power of the purse," reminded House Appropriations Committee Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen of New Jersey. "I look forward to reviewing this," said House Speaker Paul Ryan of Wisconsin.

"Many of the reductions and eliminations proposed in the President's 'skinny budget' are draconian, careless and counterproductive," said Rep. Harold Rogers, R-Ky.

Law enforcement agencies like the FBI would be spared. In addition to the billions for the border wall, there is a request for \$1.2 billion for the current budget year for additional border patrol and immigration control agents.

More than 3,000 EPA workers would lose their jobs and programs such as Barack 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.

Before the two sides go to war over Trump's 2018 plan, they need to deal with 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 in the new proposal, 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.

Critics seized on difficult-to-defend cuts to programs such as Meals on Wheels, which delivers food to elderly shut-ins.

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. The plan would also shut down some money-losing long-distance Amtrak routes and kill off a popular \$500 million per-year "TIGER Grant" program for highway projects created by Obama.

Gov. reassigns case after prosecutor refuses death penalty

By MIKE SCHNEIDER, Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Florida's governor took a case involving the killing of a police officer out of the hands of its prosecutor Thursday, hours after she announced that her office would no longer seek the death penalty in any cases.

The unusual and firm stance against capital punishment by State Attorney Aramis Ayala in Orlando surprised and angered many law enforcement officials, including the city's police chief, who believed suspect Markeith Loyd should face the possibility of execution. Civil liberties groups, though, praised Ayala's position.

Sending a clear signal that he wanted Loyd prosecuted in a capital case, Gov. Rick Scott signed an order to transfer Loyd's first-degree murder to State Attorney Brad King in a neighboring district northwest of Orlando.

Loyd is charged with killing his pregnant ex-girlfriend and Orlando Police Lt. Debra Clayton.

Ayala said she would follow the governor's order.

Ayala said she made the decision after conducting a review and concluding that there is no evidence to show that imposing the death penalty improves public safety for citizens or law enforcement. She added that such cases are costly and drag on for years.

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Ayala was elected last fall in a judicial district that has grown from being moderately conservative to liberal over the past two decades.

"I have given this issue extensive, painstaking thought and consideration," Ayala said at a news conference. "What has become abundantly clear through this process is that while I do have discretion to pursue death sentences, I have determined that doing so is not in the best interests of this community or in the best interests of justice."

Buddy Jacobs, who has been general counsel for the Florida Prosecuting Attorneys Association for more than four decades, said no other prosecutor in recent memory has opted out of seeking the death penalty.

After Ayala announced her decision, Scott asked her to recuse herself from the case, but she refused. The reassignment applies only to Loyd's case and not Ayala's other duties since under Florida law, a governor can only suspend an elected official for "malfeasance, misfeasance, neglect of duty, habitual drunkenness, incompetence, or permanent inability to perform official duties."

Florida law allows a governor to reassign a case for "good and sufficient" reasons.

"She has made it clear that she will not fight for justice and that is why I am using my executive authority to immediately reassign the case," Scott said in a statement.

Ayala's decision ignited condemnation from some law enforcement leaders.

Orlando Police Chief John Mina said in a statement that he was "extremely upset."

"The heinous crimes that he (Loyd) committed in our community are the very reason that we have the death penalty as an option under the law," Mina said.

Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi called the decision "a blatant neglect of duty," saying it sends a dangerous message to residents and visitors.

But Adora Obi Nweze of the Florida state conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, said it was a step in the right direction.

"Ending use of the death penalty in Orange County is a step toward restoring a measure of trust and integrity in our criminal justice system," she said.

A spokeswoman for the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, Tasha Jamerson, said the national association doesn't keep track of prosecutors who opt out of seeking the death penalty.

Ayala's decision comes just days after Scott signed a bill requiring a unanimous jury recommendation before the death penalty can be imposed.

The legislation was aimed at restarting death penalty cases, after questions about Florida's death penalty law during the past year brought executions to a halt.

The U.S. Supreme Court in January 2016 declared the state's death penalty sentencing law unconstitutional because it gave too much power to judges to make the ultimate decision.

The Legislature responded by overhauling the law to let the death penalty be imposed by at least a 10-2 jury vote.

In October, however, the state Supreme Court voted 5-2 to strike down the new law and require unanimous jury decisions for capital punishment.

AP writers Gary Fineout and Curt Anderson contributed to this report.

Google hopes to improve search quality with 'offensive' flag

By BARBARA ORTUTAY, AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Google is trying to improve the quality of its search results by directing review teams to flag content that might come across as upsetting or offensive.

With the change, content with racial slurs could now get flagged under a new category called "upsetting-offensive." So could content that promotes hate or violence against a specific group of people based on gender, race or other criteria.

While flagging something doesn't directly affect the search results themselves, it's used to tweak the company's software so that better content ranks higher. This approach might, for instance, push down

content that is inaccurate or has other questionable attributes, thereby giving prominence to trustworthy sources.

The review teams — comprised of contractors known as “quality raters” — already comb through websites and other content to flag questionable items such as pornography. Google added “upsetting-offensive” in its latest guidelines for quality raters. Google declined to comment on the changes, which were reported in the blog Search Engine Land and elsewhere.

The guidelines, which run 160 pages, are an interesting look into how Google ranks the quality of its search results. For instance, it gives examples of “high-quality” pages, such as the home page of a newspaper that has “won seven Pulitzer Prize awards,” and “low-quality” pages, such as an article that includes “many grammar and punctuation errors.”

The guidelines cite an example of “Holocaust history” as a search query. A resulting website listing “Top 10 reasons why the holocaust didn’t happen” would get flagged.

The new “upsetting-offensive” flag instructs quality raters to “flag to all web results that contain upsetting or offensive content from the perspective of users in your locale, even if the result satisfies the user intent.” So even if the results are what the person searched for, such as white supremacist websites, they could still get flagged. But it doesn’t mean the results won’t show up at all when someone searches for them.

Winners and losers in Trump’s first budget plan

By CALVIN WOODWARD, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Military spending would get the biggest boost in President Donald Trump’s proposed budget. Environmental programs, medical research, Amtrak and an array of international and cultural programs — from Appalachia to the arts — would take big hits, among the many parts of the government he’d put on a crash diet.

The budget proposal out Thursday is a White House wish list; it’ll be up to Congress to decide where money goes. If Trump gets his way, there will be more losers than winners among government departments and programs.

Some programs would tread water: WIC grants — money to states for health care and nutrition for low-income women, infants and children — are one example. Money for state grants for water infrastructure projects would be held level as well. The plan would keep money flowing to the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, a leading global effort to provide treatment for victims of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, mainly in Africa.

Some programs would lose everything: Trump proposes to eliminate money for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the national endowments for arts and humanities and more than a dozen other independent agencies financed by the government.

A sampling:

WINNERS

—The Pentagon. Trump proposes a 10 percent increase in the massive defense budget, with an extra \$52 billion going to accelerate the war against the Islamic State group and address insufficient weapons stocks, personnel gaps, deferred maintenance and cyber vulnerabilities. An additional \$2 billion would go to nuclear weapons.

—Veterans Affairs. Up 5.9 percent. That’s an additional \$4.4 billion, driven by ever-growing health care costs. The plan would allocate \$3.5 billion to extend an expiring Veterans Choice program, which allows eligible veterans to seek care from a private doctor outside the VA network.

—Homeland Security. Up 6.8 percent. That’s \$2.8 billion more. Most of the increase, \$2.6 billion, would be to help kick-start Trump’s promised border wall. The president has repeatedly said Mexico would pay for the wall; Mexican officials are adamant that they won’t. Trump also wants an extra \$1.5 billion for more immigration jails and deportations, and \$314 million to hire 1,500 immigration enforcement and border patrol agents.

—The National Nuclear Security Administration, which oversees the maintenance and safety of the

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nuclear arsenal and its research labs. The agency would grow by 11.3 percent, or \$1.4 billion, so that it takes up more than half the Energy Department's budget, which would shrink overall.

—Opioid prevention and treatment: a proposed \$500 million increase in the Health and Human Services Department to counter the epidemic and more money for the Justice Department to combat the problem.

—School choice: \$1.4 billion more to expand school choice programs, bringing spending in that area to \$20 billion, even as the Education Department's overall budget would be cut by \$9 billion, or 13 percent.

LOSERS:

—EPA, facing a 31.4 percent cut, or \$2.6 billion. The plan would cut 3,200 jobs at the agency, eliminate a new plan for tighter regulations on power plants, and "zero out" programs to clean up the Great Lakes and the Chesapeake Bay. EPA climate change research would be eliminated. Grants for state and local drinking and wastewater projects would be preserved.

—Health and Human Services, facing a \$12.6 billion cut, or 16.2 percent. The plan would cut \$5.8 billion from the nearly \$32 billion National Institutes of Health, the nation's premier medical research agency, bringing its total to \$25.9 billion. It's not clear what research on diseases or disorders would lose the most money, although the budget plan specifically calls for elimination of a division that focuses on global health. Already, the NIH's budget hasn't kept pace with inflation over the last decade, making it dramatically harder for scientists around the country to win money for research projects into potential new treatments or better understanding of disease.

—State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development. Down 31 percent, or \$17 billion. Foreign aid would be reduced, as would money to the U.N. and to multilateral development banks including the World Bank. Some foreign military grants would be shifted to loans. Money would be cut off to the U.N. Green Climate Fund, which helps developing nations reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and to other U.N. climate change programs

—Labor Department. A more than 20 percent cut, or \$2.5 billion. To be eliminated: a \$434 million program that has helped more than 1 million people 55 and older find jobs, according to the department. The blueprint says the Senior Community Service Employment Program is inefficient and unproven.

—Agriculture Department. A nearly 21 percent cut, or \$4.7 billion, achieved in part by cutting land acquisition in the National Forest System, rural water infrastructure and statistical capabilities at the department. Trump also proposes reduced staff in county USDA offices, an idea that fell flat in Congress when President Barack Obama proposed a similar reduction.

—Transportation Department. Trump proposes a cut of nearly 13 percent, or \$2.4 billion. Amtrak, local transit agencies, and rural communities that depend on federal subsidies to obtain scheduled airline service would take the brunt. Trump would eliminate subsidies for Amtrak long-distance train routes, which would most likely mean the end of those routes since they are generally not profitable. Money for the Federal Transit Administration grant program for new light rail and subway construction would be eliminated except for multi-year projects the government has already committed to help fund.

—Internal Revenue Service: After years of cuts, the IRS budget would be cut again — by \$239 million from this year's spending levels. The IRS budget is down about \$1 billion from its height in 2010. Since then, the agency has lost more than 17,000 employees. As a result, the chances of getting audited have rarely been so low.

—Commerce Department. A 16 percent or \$1.5 billion cut. The plan would eliminate more than \$250 million in National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration grants, including a program that helps coastal communities adapt to climate change, deal with invasive species and maintain healthy water and fisheries. Also on the chopping block: the Economic Development Administration, which provides federal dollars to foster job creation and attract private investment; and the Minority Business Development Agency, which is dedicated to helping minority-owned business get off the ground and grow. The Trump administration says the two agencies duplicate work done elsewhere.

—School programs: The plan would eliminate two programs worth \$3.6 billion that provide money for teacher preparation and after-school programs.

—Independent agencies supported by tax dollars. If Trump prevails, a hefty contingent of entities would lose all federal money and be shut. Among them, the Public Broadcasting Corporation, the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Chemical Safety Board, the United States Institute of Peace, the

National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Corporation for National Community Service and the African Development Foundation. That foundation was established by Congress and provides seed money and other support to enterprises in some 20 countries on that continent.

Associated Press writers Andrew Taylor, Lauran Neergaard, Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar, Stephen Ohlemacher, Joan Lowy, Laurie Kellman, Mary Clare Jalonick, Kevin Freking, Alicia A. Caldwell and Evan Berland contributed to this report.

USA gymnastics president resigns amid abuse scandal

By WILL GRAVES and EDDIE PELLIS, AP Sports Writers

Steve Penny resigned as president of USA Gymnastics on Thursday following intensified pressure on the organization for its handling of sex abuse cases.

The resignation came a week after the United States Olympic Committee's board recommended to USA Gymnastics chairman Paul Parilla that Penny should step down. Penny offered his resignation during a previously scheduled board meeting on Thursday.

"My decision to step aside as CEO is solely to support the best interests of USA Gymnastics at this time," Penny said in a statement.

USOC chairman Larry Probst said the move "will hopefully allow USA Gymnastics to shift its attention to the future with a secure environment for its athletes and continued success in competition."

Penny joined USA Gymnastics in 1999 and was named the organization's president in 2005, overseeing one of the greatest runs in Olympic history. Led by national team coordinator Martha Karolyi, the women's program has become a dominant force, producing each of the last four Olympic all-around champions and team golds in 2012 and 2016. The success turned gymnasts like Simone Biles, Gabby Douglas, Nastia Liukin and Shawn Johnson into stars and made USA Gymnastics a magnet for big-time corporate sponsors who wanted to be aligned with its healthy, winning image.

That image took a serious hit in recent months following an investigation by the Indianapolis Star that portrayed USA Gymnastics as slow to act when it came to addressing allegations of sexual abuse by a team doctor and coaches at member gyms across the country.

"The Board believes this change in leadership will help USA Gymnastics face its current challenges and implement solutions to move the organization forward in promoting a safe environment for its athletes at all levels," Parilla said in a statement.

Last fall, Jamie Dantzscher, a member of the 2000 Olympic team, filed a civil lawsuit in California against USA Gymnastics and former team doctor Larry Nassar.

The lawsuit claims Nassar — who worked for the organization on a volunteer basis for nearly 30 years before being dismissed in the summer of 2015 — sexually groped and fondled the gymnasts as teenagers. Subsequent lawsuits have followed, including some that name Penny, Karolyi and her husband Bela as co-defendants because they "had knowledge of inappropriate conduct and molestations committed by (Nassar) before and during his employment, yet chose to allow him to remain unsupervised where he sexually abused plaintiff."

John Manly, the attorney representing Dantzscher and scores of others who have filed suits against Penny, USA Gymnastics and others said his clients "welcome" Penny's resignation but see his decision as simply "the end of the beginning."

Martha Karolyi retired last August and sold the training gyms at the Karolyi Ranch north of Houston to USA Gymnastics.

Nassar was fired by USA Gymnastics after Penny heard of an athlete's concerns about Nassar's conduct and went to federal authorities. The Indianapolis-based organization initially claimed it notified the authorities immediately but amended its timeline last month, indicating it conducted its own investigation during a five-week span before reporting Nassar to the FBI. Nassar is in prison in Michigan, where he worked for decades at Michigan State University before being fired last fall. He faces charges in both

the state and federal system.

In federal court in western Michigan, Nassar is being sued by 69 women and girls, including 20 who joined the case this week. They participated in gymnastics, basketball, cross country, track, ballet and tennis. USA Gymnastics and Michigan State University are defendants in some of the claims.

USA Gymnastics hired a former federal prosecutor last fall to conduct an extensive review of the organization's policies in regards to potential sexual misconduct. The report by Deborah J. Daniels is expected sometime in the spring or early summer.

The gregarious Penny — whose booming voice and penchant for wearing eye-catching shoes during big events made him stand out in a sea of gymnasts — has denied any wrongdoing and the USA Gymnastics board of directors had remained supportive throughout the firestorm.

That didn't stop the USOC from sending recommendations to USA Gymnastics last week. While the USOC does not have official authority to remove heads of national governing bodies, it can apply pressure by threatening to withhold funding. The USOC gives USA Gymnastics a cash grant of nearly \$2 million annually.

Pressure also has been building within the gymnastics community. International Gymnastics Camp, a summer camp located in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, announced last week it was pulling its sponsorship of the organization. "USA Gymnastics must become the leading governing body in child safety considerations including National Team programs and club programs alike," camp director Brent Klaus wrote in an open letter on the camp's web site.

Penny's departure is not enough for some of the women who have filed suit against Nassar and the organization. Manly, who is representing more than 70 women currently suing Nassar and USA Gymnastics, issued a letter to Probst this weekend asking the USOC to de-certify USA Gymnastics.

The letter pointed to the Ted Stevens Amateur Sports Act, a federal law that guarantees athletes the right to compete without discrimination. The letter pointed to misconduct by coaches as proof that USA Gymnastics "materially inhibits these women's ability to participate in their sport."

10 injured by volcanic explosion on Italy's Mount Etna

By COLLEEN BARRY, Associated Press

MILAN (AP) — Sicily's Mount Etna volcano unleashed an explosion Thursday, hurling molten rocks and steam that rained down on tourists, journalists and a scientist who scrambled to escape the barrage. Ten people were reported injured.

The tourists, who were drawn to Etna to observe the spectacle of the active volcano erupting, were caught by surprise when its flowing magma hit thick snow, causing a phreatic explosion that rained rock and other material down upon them.

A BBC journalist and camerawoman on assignment at the volcano were among the injured. Their film shows an explosion of steam followed by a second explosion of boiling rocks and people running away from the explosion. The clip continues in a snowcat, where a man holds a paper towel to stanch the bleeding from his head and hugs his wife.

Authorities say about 35 tourists were on the volcano when the explosion occurred around midday, and that the guides who accompanied them helped bring them to safety.

The president of the Italian Alpine Club chapter in Catania, Umberto Marino, said he was traveling up the volcano in a snowcat when injured people started running in his direction.

"The material thrown into the air fell back down, striking the heads and bodies of people who were closest," Marino was quoted by the Catania Today website as saying.

According to Italian news agency ANSA, four people including three German tourists were hospitalized, mostly with head injuries. None of the injuries was listed as grave.

Italy's volcanology institute said the explosion took place at about 2,700 meters (8,858 feet) above sea level, putting the tourists at more than 500 meters (1,640 feet) below the base of the newest southeast Mount Etna crater where the lava flow originated.

Among those present when the explosion occurred was a scientist from Italy's volcanology institute,

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Boris Behncke, who said on his Facebook page that he had suffered a bruise to his head.

"I am generally fine and having a good, well-deserved beer in this moment," he added.

The BBC's global science reporter, Rebecca Morelle, was on assignment on Etna and described the experience in a series of tweets.

"Running down a mountain pelted by rocks, dodging burning boulders and boiling steam — not an experience I ever ever want to repeat," Morelle wrote.

The BBC crew was shaken but physically OK despite having suffered cuts, bruises and burns, she wrote. Morelle later showed the camerawoman's jacket on the air with a big hole in the back where the material had melted in the explosion.

Morelle said the explosion was "a reminder of how dangerous (and) unpredictable volcanoes can be."

Mount Etna has been active for the past two days, creating a visual spectacle as it spews lava and ash into the air. A new lava flow started from the southeastern crater on Wednesday, and was advancing with a temperature above 1,000 degrees Centigrade (1,832 degrees Fahrenheit) in an area covered by snow, creating the explosion.

Officials at nearby Catania airport announced Thursday they would reduce arrivals by half to five flights an hour due to Mount Etna's ash clouds. Departures were continuing as scheduled.

Thousands of tourists each year visit Etna, one of the world's most active volcanoes located on the eastern coast of Sicily. Eruptions occur frequently, although incidents that involve injured tourists are rare.

A similar phreatic explosion, caused when lava hits water, on Etna in 2002 injured 32 people, mostly firefighters and other emergency workers responding to a series of eruptions.

Authorities limited access to riskier areas on Mount Etna following a deadly eruption in 1979 that killed nine tourists who were standing at the volcano's rim. Reports indicate that the tourists who experienced the eruption Thursday were in a zone where access is permitted with a guide.

The volcanology institute said it was continuing to monitor the situation.

Falls are taking a huge and rising toll on elderly brains

By MIKE STOBBE, AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Elderly people are suffering concussions and other brain injuries from falls at what appear to be unprecedented rates, according to a new report from U.S. government researchers.

The reason for the increase isn't clear, the report's authors said. But one likely factor is that a growing number of elderly people are living at home and taking repeated tumbles, said one expert.

"Many older adults are afraid their independence will be taken away if they admit to falling, and so they minimize it," said Dr. Lauren Southerland, an Ohio State University emergency physician who specializes in geriatric care.

But what may seem like a mild initial fall may cause concussions or other problems that increase the chances of future falls — and more severe injuries, she said.

Whatever the cause, the numbers are striking, according to the new report released Thursday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

One in every 45 Americans 75 and older suffered brain injuries that resulted in emergency department visits, hospitalizations, or deaths in 2013. The rate for that age group jumped 76 percent from 2007. The rate of these injuries for people of all ages rose 39 percent over that time, hitting a record level, the CDC found.

The report, which explored brain injuries in general, also found an increase in brain injuries from suicides and suicide attempts, mainly gunshot wounds to the head. Brain injuries from car crashes fell.

But the elderly suffered at far higher rates than any other group.

It's well known that falls among the elderly are common. Older people are more likely to have impaired vision, dizziness and other de-stabilizing health problems, and are less likely than younger people to have the strength and agility to find their feet once they begin to lose their balance. The CDC had already reported that falls were the top cause of injuries and deaths from injury among older people; an estimated 27,000 Americans die each year from falls.

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But even experts on elderly falls said the new numbers were striking.

Health officials have been increasing their focus on brain injuries among all ages, especially younger people. CDC investigators thought the overall rise in brain injuries might be mainly caused by rising awareness of sports-related head injuries in kids and young adults, and more diagnosis of injuries in that group that in the past were not recorded.

"But when we dug a little bit more into the numbers, we found the larger driver is older adult falls," said the CDC's Matt Breiding, a co-author of the new report.

The toll from elderly falls has been under-recognized by physicians and by seniors themselves, Southerland said. When falls do occur, older people tend to downplay it, she said.

But one fall can quickly lead to others. In a study published last year, Southerland and other Ohio State researchers found that more than a third of older adults with minor head injuries end up back in the ER within 90 days.

Even when they see a doctor, the future risk may be missed. In hospital emergency departments, it's not unusual for a 25-year-old athlete who fell on his head to get a more thorough evaluation for concussion than an elderly retiree, said Southerland, who is trying to develop a standard for assessing concussions in geriatric ER patients.

Surveys show that most older adults want to live at home for as long as possible. Research is mixed on what the healthiest and safest setting is for a senior — often it depends on the individual. "There are people falling in nursing homes as well," Southerland said.

Seniors are advised to have their vision checked regularly and do Tai Chi or other exercises that can strengthen legs and improve balance. Experts also advise making an elderly person's home safer by removing loose rugs and other tripping hazards, improving lighting and installing handrails and grab bars.

AP FACT CHECK: Irish "slavery" a St. Patrick's Day myth

By SHAWN POGATCHNIK, Associated Press

DUBLIN (AP) — Hundreds of thousands of Irish people were not transported to the Americas as slaves, despite nearly decade-old claims circulating anew online in the run-up to St. Patrick's Day.

The false articles, trending on social media as Ireland's national holiday approaches Friday, typically reprint entire sections from a comprehensively debunked 2008 column posted on a website that promotes conspiracy theories.

None of the articles contains credible sources for dozens of invented and misrepresented figures and events. The articles usually claim, for example, that King James II of England in 1625 ordered thousands of Irish prisoners to be sent to the West Indies as slaves. Historians say no evidence of any such directive exists — and James II wasn't born until 1633 and didn't gain the throne until 1685.

Reputable historians agree that the social media-driven reports deliberately conflate the extremely different contexts and conditions of African slavery and European indentured servitude. Analysts have noted that the reports gain particular traction among white supremacist sites and commentators seeking to downplay the evils of slavery.

The enslavement of Africans involved abductions, human sales at auctions and lifelong forced labor in a system that defined humans as property and trapped the children of those slaves in the same bondage.

Indentured servitude, while often accompanied by years of deprivation and exploitation, offered a usually voluntary means for impoverished British and Irish people to resettle in the Americas from the 17th century to the early 20th century. Contracts committed the servant to perform unpaid labor for a benefactor or employer for a fixed number of years in return for passage across the ocean, shelter and sustenance.

The most widely shared story this week containing the fabricated slavery claims is illustrated with an unrelated photo of Pennsylvania child laborers taken in 1911. The story quotes at length from the original 2008 post on the Canadian-based Global Research site, which still displays its own article today with a disclaimer conceding it "includes a number of factual errors." It declines to specify the errors.

Irish-based historians have decried the errors repeatedly to the point of exhaustion.

Last year in the week before St. Patrick's Day, more than 80 global academics including senior Irish historians sent news sites an open letter urging them to remove versions of the article, which they described as "racist ahistorical propaganda."

The Irish Times newspaper reported that authors behind the myth of Irish slavery sought "to belittle the suffering visited on black slaves" and had twisted existing records of the emigration of Irish indentured servants "to lunatic effect."

This story is part of an ongoing Associated Press effort to fact-check claims in suspected false news stories.

How to elude Russian hackers with decent password security

By MAE ANDERSON, AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Details from the Department of Justice indictment of Russian hackers on Wednesday show that many people are still not taking routine precautions to safeguard their email accounts — and hackers are exploiting that.

The Russian hackers didn't have to work very hard to break into people's email accounts, even those belonging to government officials or powerful executives. Here's a look at a few simple ways to help safeguard your email account from hackers.

DON'T REUSE PASSWORDS

Many online break-ins result when people have reused a password across, say, their email, social and financial accounts. If it's compromised at any one of those services, the others are suddenly vulnerable.

One simple way to avoid this problem is to start with a base password you can remember, and then add on letters and numbers that reference where you're using it. If your base password is "greatsurfer2017" (which isn't particularly secure; more on that in a moment), you could make "greatsurfer2017Y" your Yahoo password, and "greatsurfer2017G" your Google password.

If you can't be bothered to do more, this is a base level of security that can help shield you from the most obvious threats. But it's still only a baby step.

PICK A STRONGER PASSWORD

You can make things harder for attackers by making your base password stronger. The more complicated and lengthy a password is, the harder it will be for hackers to guess.

The downside: Tougher passwords are also harder to remember. But there are some ways around that. Don't include your kids' names, birthdays or references to any other personal details. Hackers routinely troll Facebook and Twitter for clues to passwords like these. Obvious and default passwords such as "Password123" are also bad, as are words commonly found in dictionaries, as these are used in programs hackers have to automate guesses.

You can make your own strong passwords with randomly capitalized nonsense words interspersed with numbers and characters -- like, say, "giLly31!florp." (Just don't use that one now that it's appeared in this story.) So long as you're making up the words yourself, these are difficult for hackers to crack — and they're easier to remember than you might think, though you might want to practice them a few times.

HAVE YOUR PASSWORDS MANAGED FOR YOU

Of course, you can make things easier on yourself by using a password-manager service such as LastPass or DashLane, which keep track of multiple complex passwords for you. Some web browsers such as Apple's Safari and Google's Chrome also have built-in password managers; these work if you switch devices, but not if you switch browsers.

After you create a strong password for your password manager, it can create random passwords for your other accounts — and will remember them for you as well.

"It's more secure and it makes your life easier," said Jamie Winterton, director of strategy at the Global Security Initiative at Arizona State University.

MULTIFACTOR AUTHENTICATION IS A MUST

The next line of defense is two- or multifactor authentication, which asks users to enter a second form of identification, such as a code texted to their phone, when they log in. It's now commonplace for many email and social media accounts. That way, even if hackers manage to get your password they still need your phone with the texted code.

"Having another way for that account to say 'Hey, is that really you?', and give veto authority is really important," Winterton said.

KEYWORDS MATTER

According to the indictment, the Russian hackers searched email accounts for keywords like "passwords" to find people's passwords for other accounts. They also searched for "credit card" "visa," among other terms. So think twice before you use common key words that can serve as a road map to sensitive information for hackers. And don't save passwords in old emails.

"There's not one single thing out there that can keep you perfectly safe," Winterton said. "But there are a lot of different things out there that can keep you almost perfectly safe."

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 Broadway 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 and in a country furiously discussing borders and immigration.

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. Later went backstage to greet the performers.

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 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 mu-

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sical 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: "But I guess she can't fly jets."

Online: <http://comefromaway.com>

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

US to confront trade partners at global finance meeting

By DAVID MCHUGH, 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 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 Group of 20 — 19 countries worth most of the global economy, plus the EU — 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

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referendum last year.

In a visit to Berlin ahead of the G-20 meeting, Mnuchin said the U.S. is interested in trade that is not only free but fair.

"Our objective is getting more balanced trade agreements," he said, confirming that having border adjusted taxes is an option. He said, without providing specifics, that some U.S. trade agreements need to be re-examined, while adding that, "It is not our desire to get into trade wars."

Mnuchin is expected to press his counterparts to live up to their commitments to refrain from purposefully weakening their currencies. 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 due to also discuss ways to strengthen the global economy and create more jobs.

After meeting Thursday with Schaeuble, Mnuchin said the U.S. wants to still play an "essential leadership role" in the world economy. He and Schaeuble, he said, agreed it was important to work together to produce "growth, stimulate job creation, and work cooperatively on balanced trade across the economies."

The G-20 meeting 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, with 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's 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.

Marty Crutsinger in Washington, DC, and David Rising in Berlin contributed to this report.

'Saturday Night Live' to air live to all, not taped for some

NEW YORK (AP) — After 42 seasons, "Saturday Night Live" is trying something new: airing live to everybody.

For the first time, "SNL" will broadcast live simultaneously across the U.S. for its final four shows of the season, NBC announced Thursday. Until now, viewers in the Mountain and Pacific time zones have seen the show not as it aired "live from New York," but on tape delay.

The new live-for-all policy will apply to episodes telecast April 15, May 6, May 13 and May 20. Each show will air at 11:30 p.m. (Eastern), 10:30 p.m. (Central), 9:30 p.m. (Mountain) and 8:30 p.m. (Pacific). In the Mountain and Pacific time zones, the show will repeat at 11:30 p.m.

Hosts for these editions will be, respectively, Jimmy Fallon, Chris Pine, Melissa McCarthy and, for the season finale, Dwayne Johnson.

UK authorities seek owner of gold trove stashed inside piano

LONDON (AP) — British officials are trying to trace the owner of a trove of gold coins worth a "life-changing" amount of money found stashed inside a piano.

A coroner investigating the find on Thursday urged anyone with information to come forward.

When the piano's owners took it to be tuned last year in Shropshire, central England, it was found to contain a hoard of gold sovereigns minted between the mid-19th and early 20th centuries.

Investigators have determined that the piano was built in London in 1906 and sold to a pair of piano teachers in Saffron Walden, eastern England. They are seeking information on its ownership before 1983.

Anyone wanting to make a claim has until April 20, when coroner John Ellery will conclude his inquest. If the gold's owner or heirs cannot be traced, it will be declared treasure, and the piano's current owners will reap the reward.

Officials have not disclosed how much the coins are worth. Peter Reavill, who assesses finds for the British Museum's Portable Antiquities Scheme, said "it's a hoard of objects which is potentially life-changing for somebody to receive."

UK grants 1st license to make babies using DNA from 3 people

By MARIA CHENG, AP Medical Writer

LONDON (AP) — Britain's Newcastle University says its scientists have received a license to create babies using DNA from three people to prevent women from passing on potentially fatal genetic diseases to their children — the first time such approval has been granted.

The license was granted Thursday by the country's fertility regulator, according to the university.

In December, British officials approved the "cautious use" of the techniques, which aim to fix problems linked to mitochondria, the energy-producing structures outside a cell's nucleus. Faulty mitochondria can result in conditions including muscular dystrophy and major organ failure.

"Mitochondria diseases can be devastating for families affected and this is a momentous day for patients," said Doug Turnbull, director of the research at Newcastle University. The university has said it is aiming to treat up to 25 patients a year.

To help women with mitochondria problems from passing them on to their children, scientists remove the nucleus DNA from the egg of a prospective mother and insert it into a donor egg from which the donor DNA has been removed. This can happen before or after fertilization. The resulting embryo ends up with nucleus DNA from its parents but mitochondrial DNA from a donor. The DNA from the donor amounts to less than 1 percent of the resulting embryo's genes.

The license granted to Newcastle University relates only to the clinic's capacity to perform the techniques, Britain's fertility regulator said. The clinic must apply for each individual patient to be treated and no patient application has yet been approved.

Last year, U.S.-based doctors announced they had created the world's first baby using such techniques, after traveling to Mexico to perform the procedure, which has not been approved in the United States.

Critics have raised concerns about the treatment, saying it will put people at unnecessary risk of an untested procedure. Some say women with faulty mitochondria should choose simply to use egg donors and that using the new techniques will open the door to genetically modified "designer babies."

Centrist European leaders celebrate Dutch election result

By MIKE CORDER, Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Centrist European leaders congratulated Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte Thursday on an election victory seen as a repudiation of far-right populism in Europe as he looked ahead to what is likely to be a long process of talks to form a government.

Rutte's right-wing VVD easily won national elections, defying polls that suggested a close race with anti-Islam populist Geert Wilders.

With most votes counted for the 150-seat legislature, Rutte's VVD had 33 seats, eight fewer than in 2012. The far-right populist Party for Freedom of Wilders was second with 20 seats, five more than the last time but still a stinging setback after polls in recent months had suggested his party could become the largest in Dutch politics.

"We are the second party in the Netherlands. Congratulations," Wilders said, popping the cork on a bottle of sparkling wine at a meeting of his new Parliamentary bloc. But, he conceded, "We would have preferred to be the first party."

The Christian Democrats and centrist D66 party — likely future coalition partners for Rutte — won 19 seats each.

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On Thursday, Edith Schippers, a prominent VVD party member, was appointed to investigate what coalitions might be possible in the splintered Dutch political landscape. Rutte will likely remain prime minister, but he warned that it could take a while to form a government.

"We need time for everybody to get back into the mood for cooperation, and that doesn't happen in a few hours," Rutte said.

All mainstream parties have ruled out cooperating with Wilders' party.

Meanwhile, congratulatory messages poured in from other European leaders, among them German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who called the Dutch election "a good day for democracy."

"I was very glad, and I think many people are, that a high turnout led to a very pro-European result," Merkel said during a speech in Berlin on Thursday.

The next test of populism's political viability in Europe will be in France, where Marine Le Pen of the National Front is likely to come out on top in the first round of French elections next month, though less likely to win the final round in May.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, March 17, the 76th day of 2017. There are 289 days left in the year. This is St. Patrick's Day.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 17, 1942, six days after departing the Philippines during World War II, Gen. Douglas MacArthur arrived in Australia to become supreme commander of Allied forces in the southwest Pacific theater.

On this date:

In 1776, the Revolutionary War Siege of Boston ended as British forces evacuated the city.

In 1861, Victor Emmanuel II was proclaimed the first king of a united Italy.

In 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt first likened crusading journalists to a man with "the muckrake in his hand" in a speech to the Gridiron Club in Washington.

In 1912, the Camp Fire Girls organization was incorporated in Washington, D.C., two years to the day after it was founded in Thetford, Vermont. (The group is now known as Camp Fire.)

In 1936, Pittsburgh's Great St. Patrick's Day Flood began as the Monongahela and Allegheny rivers and their tributaries, swollen by rain and melted snow, started exceeding flood stage; the high water was blamed for more than 60 deaths.

In 1941, the National Gallery of Art opened in Washington, D.C.

In 1956, comedian Fred Allen, 61, died in New York.

In 1966, a U.S. Navy midget submarine located a missing hydrogen bomb which had fallen from a U.S. Air Force B-52 bomber into the Mediterranean off Spain. (It took several more weeks to actually recover the bomb.)

In 1969, Golda Meir became prime minister of Israel.

In 1970, the United States cast its first veto in the U.N. Security Council, killing a resolution that would have condemned Britain for failing to use force to overthrow the white-ruled government of Rhodesia.

In 1988, Avianca Flight 410, a Boeing 727, crashed after takeoff into a mountain in Colombia, killing all 143 people on board.

In 1992, 29 people were killed in the truck bombing of the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Whites in South Africa voted by a greater than 2-1 majority to forge ahead with talks to end white rule and give blacks voting rights for the first time in the country's history. In Illinois, Sen. Alan Dixon was defeated in his Democratic primary re-election bid by Carol Moseley-Braun, who went on to become the first black woman in the U.S. Senate.

Ten years ago: Denouncing a conflict entering its fifth year, protesters across the country raised their voices against U.S. policy in Iraq and marched by the thousands to the Pentagon. John Backus, the developer of Fortran, a programming language that changed how people interacted with computers,

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died in Ashland, Oregon, at age 82.

Five years ago: Twin suicide car bombings killed at least 27 people near intelligence and security buildings in the Syrian capital of Damascus. John Demjanjuk (dem-YAHN'-yuk), 91, convicted of being a low-ranking guard at the Sobibor death camp, but who maintained his innocence, died in Bad Feilnbach (bahd FYLN'-bahk), Germany.

One year ago: The Obama administration formally concluded the Islamic State group was committing genocide against Christians and other minorities in Iraq and Syria. An Arizona man was convicted of a terror charge tied to an attack on a Prophet Muhammad cartoon contest in Texas, marking the second conviction in the U.S. related to the Islamic State group; Abdul Malik Abdul Kareem, an American-born Muslim convert, was later sentenced to 30 years in prison. Finally bowing to years of public pressure, SeaWorld Entertainment said it would no longer breed killer whales or make them perform crowd-pleasing tricks.

Today's Birthdays: The former national chairwoman of the NAACP, Myrlie Evers-Williams, is 84. Former NASA astronaut Ken Mattingly is 81. Singer-songwriter Jim Weatherly is 74. Singer-songwriter John Sebastian (The Lovin' Spoonful) is 73. Former NSA Director and former CIA Director Michael Hayden is 72. Rock musician Harold Brown (War; Lowrider Band) is 71. Actor Patrick Duffy is 68. Actor Kurt Russell is 66. Country singer Susie Allanson is 65. Actress Lesley-Anne Down is 63. Actor Mark Boone Jr. is 62. Country singer Paul Overstreet is 62. Actor Gary Sinise is 62. Actor Christian Clemenson is 59. Former basketball and baseball player Danny Ainge is 58. Actor Arye Gross is 57. Actress Vicki Lewis is 57. Actor Casey Siemaszko (sheh-MA'-zshko) is 56. Writer-director Rob Sitch is 55. Actor Rob Lowe is 53. Rock singer Billy Corgan is 50. Rock musician Van Conner (Screaming Trees) is 50. Actor Mathew St. Patrick is 49. Actor Yanic (YAH'-neek) Truesdale is 48. Rock musician Melissa Auf der Maur is 45. Olympic gold medal soccer player Mia Hamm is 45. Rock musician Caroline Corr (The Corrs) is 44. Actress Amelia Heinle is 44. Country singer Keifer Thompson (Thompson Square) is 44. Actress Marisa Coughlan is 43. Rapper Swifty (D12) is 42. Actress Natalie Zea (zee) is 42. Actress Brittany Daniel is 41. Country musician Geoff Sprung (Old Dominion) is 39. Reggaeton singer Nicky Jam is 36. Pop/rock singer/songwriter Hozier is 27. Actress Eliza Hope Bennett is 25. Actor John Boyega is 25. Olympic gold medal swimmer Katie Ledecky is 20. Actor Flynn Morrison is 12.

Thought for Today: "History is not life. But since only life makes history, the union of the two is obvious." — Louis D. Brandeis, U.S. Supreme Court Justice (1856-1941).