

# Groton Daily Independent

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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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## Wednesday, March 22

**School Lunch:** Tater tot hotdish, corn, fruit, Cauliflower and dip, garlic toast.

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

**Senior Menu:** Herbed roast pork, baked potatoes and sour cream, tomato spoon salad, cinnamon apple sauce, whole wheat bread.

**Emmanuel Lutheran:** Lenten meal at 6 p.m. (Sunday School serves), worship at 7 p.m.

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

## Thursday, March 23

All State Band at Sioux Falls O'Gorman High School

**School Lunch:** Meatballs, baked tiny potato, fruit, broccoli and dip, tea bun.

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

**Senior Menu:** Cheeseburger soup, ham salad sandwich, fruit, cookie.

## 2017 Groton Area Elementary

**Kindergarten Roundup (Screening) for children turning**

**5 on or before September 1, 2017**

**Friday, March 31**

Parents of children who will be turning 5 on or before September 1, 2017 in the Groton Area School District are asked to contact Heidi Krueger at the Groton Area Elementary School during school hours at 397-2317 to set up a screening time or to confirm their screening time. If your child is currently attending Junior Kindergarten they will not be screened.

Packets will be sent home this week with a scheduled time and additional paperwork that will need to be completed.

Kindergarten Roundup will take place at the Groton Area Elementary School. Please check in at the office.

**Kristi Peterson Bookkeeping**  
Simple Solutions for YOU  
605/216-4474 ~ peterson4@nvc.net

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## State DI Tournament is this weekend - Revised Schedule

The State Destination Imagination tournament will be held Saturday in Pierre. Schools being represented at state are Brandon Valley, Clear Lake, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte, Custer, Doland, Rapid City Douglas, Dupree, Edison Middle School, Elk Point-Jefferson, Gayville Volin, Groton Area, Huron, Meade, Mitchell, Pierre Indian Learning Center, Rapid City Catholic, Rosholt, Spearfish, Todd County, Tri-Valley, Wagner, Watertown, Webster and West Central.

Here is the schedule for the Groton Area teams:

### Challenge D: 3-Peat Improvisational - Room 309

Bazang Boys - Groeblichhoff/Barse - ML - Main Challenge at 11:30 a.m., Instant Challenge at 8:50 a.m.

Army Ants - Marzahn - EL - Main Challenge at 12:30 p.m., Instant Challenge at 1:05 p.m.

### Challenge C - Vanished - Fine Arts - Band Room

The Wonderful Nonsense - Jensen/Rosenau - SL - Main Challenge at 8:40 a.m., Instant Challenge at 11:50 a.m.

The Aquarium Solvers - Kosel/Bahr - EL - Main Challenge at 10:20 a.m., Instant Challenge at 2:05 p.m.

Dysfunctional Broad Squad - Milbrandt - ML - Main Challenge at 2:15 p.m., Instant Challenge at 9:10 a.m.

### Challenge B - Top Secret - Scientific - Choir Room

Out of the Boxers - Fjelstad - SL, Main Challenge at 11:10 a.m., Instant Challenge at 1:40 p.m.

### Challenge A - Show & Tech - Technical - Main Gym

Dumpling Jokers - Groeblichhoff/Weismantel - EL, Main Challenge at 2:00 p.m., Instant Challenge at 10:10 a.m.

## Groton City March 20 Meeting Minutes

March 20, 2017

The Groton City Council met on the above date at 7:00pm at the Groton Community Center for their regular second monthly meeting with the following members present: Flieds, Blackmun, Opp, McGannon, Peterson and Mayor Hanlon presiding. Glover was absent. Also present were: Finance Officer Lowary, Paul Kosel, and Kathy Sundermeyer.

At 7pm the following sealed bids for the 2017 Street Resurfacing Project were opened and read aloud: Bituminous Paving, Ortonville, MN - \$100,520.70; Topkote, Yankton, SD - \$87,322.60; Road Guy, Yankton, SD - \$95,734.00; Jensen Rock & Sand, Mobridge, SD - \$125,094.66. Moved by McGannon and seconded by Opp to accept the low bid from Topoke and proceed with the project. All members present voted aye.

The minutes were approved as read on a motion by Blackmun and seconded by McGannon. All members present voted aye.

Moved by McGannon and seconded by Blackmun to authorize the following bills for payment. All members present voted aye.

Cons Fed Cr Union 1,125.00 emp savings; First State Bank 7,751.69 ss & wh; Paul Kosel 716.56 med flex; SD Dept of Revenue 18.00 title, lic plates; 1st National Bank 9,604.27 lagoon bond pay; Abeln, Branden 11.00 lunch; AFLAC 797.60 group ins; Jerry Bjerke 10.01 gas; Brite 109.00 comp cover; Car Quest 168.33 filters, oil; Chief Supply 186.46 coat, case, belt, batt stick; Cole Paper 122.53 bags; Colonial Research 2,594.94 herbicide, cleaner; Dakota Playground 1,590.00 spinner; Employers Mutual Ins 75.60 life ins; Fire Safty First 30.00 1st Aid; Groton Independent 109.69 publishing; Guardian Ins 245.30 emp ins; Harry Imp 2,295.00 mower; Heartland Cons Power District 68,564.33 power; Anita Lowary 37.20 mileage, books, med flex; MJs Sinclair 729.63 gas, tire repair, battery; Red Horse Inn 60.00 Fam Cr motel room; SD Supplement Retirement 3,060.00 emp retire; Dan Sunne 11.00 lunch; T & R Electric Supply 20.00 PCB testing; Wellmark Blue Cross/Blue Shield 12,734.65 health ins; Western Area Power Adm 25,567.95 power; Wolfcom 911.98 2 cameras

The spring limited garbage routes were announced to start Mar 28.

Finance Officer Lowary proposed Deb McKiver, Wanda Hamilton, and Linda Locken to act as the election workers for the April 11 Ward 3 Election. Moved by Opp and seconded by Peterson to approve this board and set the pay at \$130.00 for the day. All members present voted aye.

At 7:15pm the Council adjourned into executive session on a motion by Opp and seconded by Peterson to discuss legal and personnel matters under SDCL 1-25-2 (1) & (3). All members present voted aye. Council reconvened at 7:50pm.

Meeting adjourned into board of equalization.

Scott Hanlon, Mayor

Anita Lowary, Finance Officer

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## Connecting Agriculture Celebrating Those Who Feed Us

By Mike Jaspers, South Dakota Secretary of Agriculture

March Madness - South Dakota style: Around-the-clock trips to the lambing barn or the calving pen to ensure newborn animals take that ever so important first drink loaded with the nutrients, energy and antibodies vital for survival. Outguessing the weather conditions for the upcoming growing season. Deciding which crop to plant, where, at what seeding rates and what fertility levels. Predicting which weeds, insects and diseases will try to overtake my crops. These challenges can make filling out your NCAA bracket seem like breeze!

Whether it's realized or not, the decisions our producers make impact virtually every South Dakotan in some way or another. Farmers, ranchers, agribusiness men and women and other agricultural workers provide a large amount of our state's economic impact annually. Twenty percent of all the jobs in South Dakota, or one in every five, is connected in some way to agriculture. We have 31,000 farm and ranch families who grow a wide variety of products every year that make their way into our homes and onto our kitchen tables every day. Despite this, we may not always take the time to think about how large of an impact agriculture has on our everyday lives.

Because of all that agriculture does for us, we celebrate National Ag Week March 19th through March 25th. This week gives us all a chance to reflect on the many ways agriculture impacts us on a daily basis. From the steak and salad on your plate, to the cotton in your jeans, to the ethanol in your fuel tank, agricultural products are all around us. Agriculture even plays a role in developing medicines to combat a variety of diseases.

As you cheer on your favorite team this week, I encourage you to also think about the food on your table, the fiber in your clothes and the many other agriculture products around you. Reflect on the many hands that worked to bring those items to you and your family. And, if you see an agricultural producer, be sure to pass along a game winning 'high five'!



**Now Open!**  
**GDI CLEAN!**  
**Downtown**  
**Groton**

Paul - 397-7460  
Tina - 397-7285

PLEASE Empty your pockets before loading the washer!

Welcome to **GDI Clean!**  
For any questions or problems, call or text  
Paul 605-397-7460  
or Tina 605-397-7285

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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

## For Sale

City of Groton is taking sealed bids on 2 used John Deere 725 mowers and 3 propane cylinders-100 lb. until Mar 29. Send bid with your name to City Hall, PO Box 587, Groton, SD 57445 in envelope marked bid. Call 397-2690 for more info.

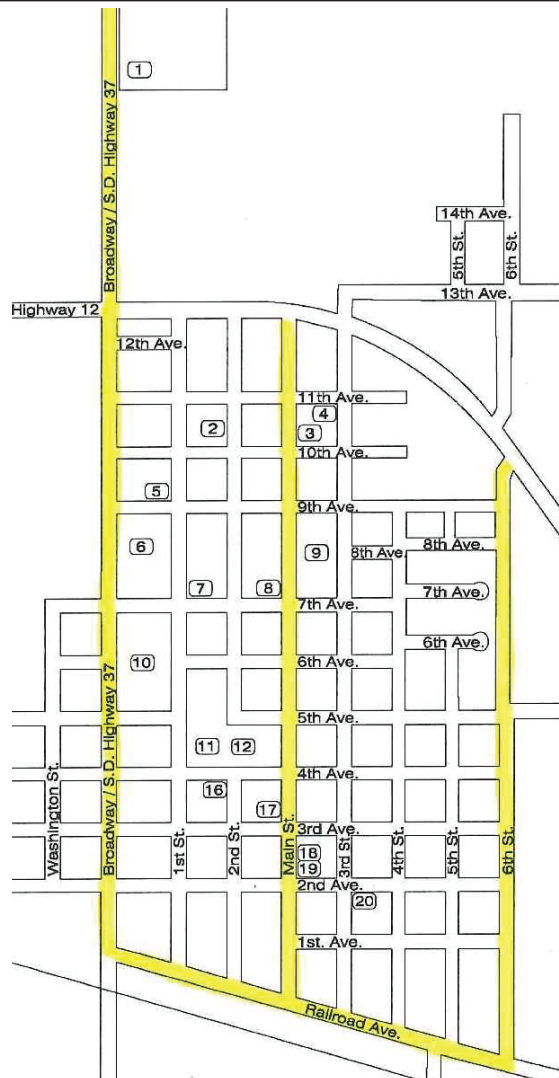


**GDI Living Fitness**  
25 Main St., Downtown Groton

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

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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!!

## Students Win South Dakota State Math Competition



**Smith qualified for state**

Isaac Smith, an eighth grade student from Groton, qualified to participate in the South Dakota State MathCounts Competition as an individual on Saturday, March 11, 2017, at the Econo Lodge in Pierre.

A team of middle school Mathletes® from Mickelson Middle School in Brookings won the South Dakota State MathCounts Competition for the third year in a row. The top individual was Serena An from Mickelson, who also won the state competition last year. Members of the winning team were: Serena An, Samyok Nepal, Ryan Nielson, and Carl Steinlicht, coached by Shannon Renkly.

The second and third place teams were from Edison Middle School of Sioux Falls, and Holgate Middle School of Aberdeen, respectively.

The top four individuals from the state competition will represent South Dakota at the 2017 Raytheon MathCounts National Competition in Orlando, Florida, May 13-16. The four team members are Serena An (Mickelson), Samyok Nepal (Mickelson), Drew Comstock (Holgate), and Tristina Ting (Mickelson). The coach is Shannon Renkly (Mickelson).

As a national math enrichment, coaching, and competition program designed to improve math skills, MathCounts prepares students for future career opportunities and success. More than six million students across the United States have participated in MathCounts programs.

The state program is sponsored by the South Dakota Engineering Society and 3M Gives Foundation. MathCounts was founded by the National Society of Professional Engineers, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, and CNA Foundation.

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## Fourth Grade Americanism Poetry Winners

The fourth grade winners in the Americanism Poetry contest are pictured above. The Groton Legion Auxiliary winners are Nicolette Nickeson in second place and Kayla Lehr in first place; and the Columbia Legion Auxiliary winners are Carter Simon in second place and Payton Mitchell in first place. In back are Meri Erickson from the Groton Legion Auxiliary and Cara Dennert from the Columbia Legion Auxiliary.

## Groton Coffee Cup

**Final Team Standings:** James Valley 39 winners of second half, Kens 26, Jungle Lanes 22, Ten Pins 17

**High Games:** Angie Carlson 178, Mary Jane Jark 167, Vickie Kramp 158.

**High Series:** Vicki Walter 462, Mary Jane Jark 456, Vickie Kramp 455.

## Conde National

**Final Team Standings:** Pirates 29 1/2 winners of second half, Braves 29, Mets 26 1/2, Cubs 26, Giants 23 1/2, Colts 20 1/2.

**Men's High Series:** Lance Frohling 200, Bryce Dargatz 187, Larry Frohling 186.

**Men's High Series:** Lance Frohling 522, Larry Frohling 509, Bryce Dargatz 493.

**Women's High Games:** Kayla Johnson 170, 163; Mary Larson 168; Vickie Kramp 160.

**Women's High Series:** Mary Larson 474, Vickie Kramp 454, Kayla Johnson 432.

## Groton Prairie Mixed

**Team Standings:** Cheetahs 15 1/2, Foxes 14, Chipmunks 14, Coyotes 11, Jackelopes 11, Shih Tzus 6 1/2

**Men's High Games:** Tony Madsen 216, Brad Waage 213, 206, Ron Belden 213, Randy Stanley 210, Mike Siegler 210, Roger Spanier 203

**Women's High Games:** Angie Carlson 190, Darci Spanier 178, Karen Spanier 177, Dar Larson 177

**Men's High Series:** Brad Waage 606, Roger Spanier 567, Mike Siegler 566

**Women's High Series:** Darci Spanier 462, Dar Larson 462, Vicki Walter 459, Nicole Kassube 455



## Third Grade Americanism Poetry Winners

The Americanism Poetry winners have been announced for this year. Pictured above at the third grade winners. The Groton Legion Auxiliary winners are Jerica Locke in first place and Gavin Englund in second place. The Columbia Legion Auxiliary winners are Mia Crank in second place and Paisley Mitchell in first place. Pictured in back are Meri Erickson from the Groton Legion Auxiliary and Cara



## Today in Weather History

March 22, 1966: The blizzard began on the 22nd in the west moving southeastward into Nebraska and then moving northeastward across the southeastern part of South Dakota. Winds up to 50 mph caused blowing snow which reduced visibility to near zero. Seven to 8 inches of snow fell on the plains of South Dakota with up to 2 feet in the Black Hills. Traffic was paralyzed due to snow-blocked roads. Schools and many businesses were closed. One death was attributed to the storm to exposure and exhaustion. One death in Sioux Falls was indirectly caused by a heart attack.

March 22, 1987: Snowmelt and rainfall caused some rivers and small streams to rise to very high levels in central South Dakota. Lowland flooding around the basins occurred, submerging some small roads and streets. In addition, high water levels and ice damaged some railroad bridges between Wakpala and Mahto in Corson County.

March 22, 2009: A stretch of warmer weather occurred from March 14th to 17th, which resulted in high temperatures in the 40s and low 50s. The snow depth in Fargo on the 14th was 15 inches with a melted water equivalent of 3.10 inches. By the 17th, the snow depth in Fargo had dropped to 6 inches. This was followed by a couple of cooler days, which temporarily slowed down any additional snowmelt. The second period of warmer weather began on March 20th and continued through the 24th. During this period of time, high temperatures again climbed into the 40s and low 50s. Most of the remaining snow in Fargo melted during this stretch of warm weather, with the Fargo snow depth falling from 2 inches to 0. Conditions were about the same in Grand Forks, with the snow depth falling to 0 by the 24th. These two warm-ups resulted in a quick response in river levels, especially across the southern Red River Valley and west central Minnesota. The Red River also showed a response, especially in the southern Red River Valley. With all the runoff moving into the river systems, water covered many roads and resulted in numerous road closures. The water covered entire sections of land as well and threatened many homes. A winter storm event on March 24th and 25th brought more snow to the region, along with a turn to colder temperatures. This resulted in the first crest for many rivers in the southern Red River Valley and west central Minnesota. However, river levels at most points along the Red River continued to stay high. Another winter storm event hit much of the area March 30th to 31st, dropping up to 2 feet of snow in the southern Red River Valley. There was a lot of moisture in this new snow, with snow to liquid ratios of less than 10 to 1. This set the stage for continued flooding into the months of April and early May. The North Dakota Governor issued a statewide disaster declaration on March 13 in anticipation of spring flooding. Most counties in eastern North Dakota later received a Presidential Disaster Declaration.








1888: Chicago's morning low dips to one degree below zero, the latest sub-zero Fahrenheit reading in the city's history. This record still stands today.

1893: The first tornado was recorded in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma on this date. It destroyed 14 buildings and injured four people as it passed through the center of town. There was minor damage to the Weather Bureau office, which was located at Grand and Robinson in south Oklahoma City.

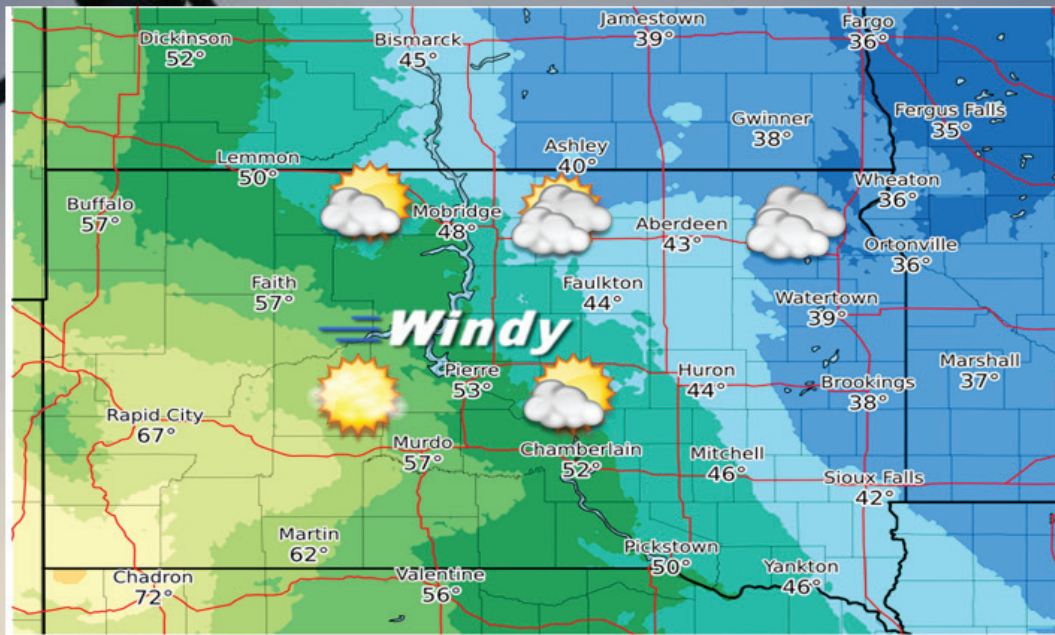
1920: A spectacular display of the "Northern Lights" was visible as far south as Bradenton FL, El Paso, TX and Fresno, CA. At Detroit MI, the display was described "so brilliant as to blot out all stars below the first magnitude".

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Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday
						
30%   20%	20%	30%	20%			
Breezy. Chance Snow then Slight Chance Rain	Mostly Cloudy then Slight Chance Rain	Chance Rain	Slight Chance Rain	Partly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny
High: 43 °F	Low: 34 °F	High: 51 °F	Low: 36 °F	High: 48 °F	Low: 30 °F	High: 51 °F

## Morning Snow Showers Turning Mild & Windy Today



## High/Very High Fire Danger



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD

Updated: 3/22/2017 4:21 AM Central

Published on: 03/22/2017 at 4:31AM

Brief pockets of snow will move across the forecast area this morning. This is on the leading edge of some milder air. Strong southerly winds will develop as well, with gusts around 40mph. This will enhance the fire danger today.

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## Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 33.6 F at 12:00 AM

Low Outside Temp: 19.7 F at 11:54 PM

High Gust: 21.0 Mph at 4:54 PM

Snow: Precip: 0.00

## Today's Info

Record High: 78° in 1945

Record Low: -16 in 1899

Average High: 43°F

Average Low: 22°F

Average Precip in March.: 0.75

Precip to date in March.: 0.59

Average Precip to date: 1.77

Precip Year to Date: 0.59

Sunset Tonight: 7:49 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:30 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Wed, Mar 22, 2017, issued 4:46 AM EDT  
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center  
Prepared by McReynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

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## NEEDS AND WANTS

Two merchants in a small community were fierce competitors. Their stores faced each other on opposite sides of the street. Drake's Store was much larger than Albert's Merchandise Mart. Each fought for the same customers.

One day Drake put up a sign in his store that read, "If you want it, we've got it!" Not to be out done, Albert hung a larger sign across the entrance to his store that read, "If we don't have it, you don't need it!"

There is a vast difference between "a need" and "a want." A "need" refers to the essentials in life, the things that we cannot do without. A "want" is something quite different. It is something that is not really essential. Think of the importance of water and the pleasure of a soft-drink. We can do without soft-drinks, but water is essential.

Jesus said, "Your Father knows what you need and He will give you what you need if you live for Him and make the Kingdom of God your primary concern." When we make the Kingdom of God our primary concern, it means that God is first and foremost in our lives and that He is at the center of all that we do.

If we make His thoughts our thoughts, His desires our desires, His priorities our priorities and His ways our ways, He will meet our every need every day!

Prayer: Our Father, may we give You the place of honor that You deserve in our lives. May we always place You first in our lives and honor You in all that we do. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Matthew 6:31-34 ...Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

## News from the Associated Press

### Dakota Access pipeline vandalism highlights sabotage risks

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON** and **STEVE KARNOWSKI**, Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — The developer of the Dakota Access pipeline has reported “recent coordinated physical attacks” on the much-protested line, just as it’s almost ready to carry oil.

Texas-based Energy Transfer Partners didn’t give details, but experts say Dakota Access and the rest of the nearly 3 million miles of pipeline that deliver natural gas and petroleum in the U.S. are vulnerable to acts of sabotage.

It’s a threat that ETP takes seriously enough that it has asked a court to shield details such as spill response plans and features of the four-state pipeline that the company fears could be used against it by activists or terrorists.

Here is a look at some pipeline security issues:

#### RECENT ATTACKS

Authorities in South Dakota and Iowa confirmed Tuesday that someone apparently used a torch to burn a hole through empty sections of the pipeline at aboveground shut-off valve sites.

Mahaska County Sheriff Russell Van Renterghem said the culprit in Iowa appeared to have gotten under a fence around the facility, but Lincoln County Sheriff’s Deputy Chad Brown said the site in South Dakota wasn’t fenced.

The Iowa incident was discovered March 13 and the South Dakota incident Friday.

Pipeline operators are asked to report security breaches to the National Response Center. Data on the center’s website show no reports from ETP this month.

The \$3.8 billion Dakota Access pipeline runs 1,200 miles through the Dakotas, Iowa and Illinois.

#### HOW DO YOU ATTACK A PIPELINE?

Because pipelines mainly run underground, aboveground shut-off valves are natural targets, according to Jay O’Hara, a spokesman for the environmental group Climate Direct Action. That group targeted valves on pipelines in October in North Dakota, Minnesota, Montana and Washington state, though the pipeline companies said activists didn’t succeed because none of the sites were operating when the attacks happened.

Explosives, firearms and heavy machinery also have been used to try to sabotage pipelines.

Securing pipelines is difficult because they often travel long distances through remote and even uninhabited territory, said Kerry Sundberg, a professor at Mount Royal University in Calgary, Alberta, who studies energy infrastructure security and environmental crime.

#### THE DANGER

Sundberg said “it’s stupid and dangerous” to tamper with pipeline shut-off valves.

Modern oil pipelines are “incredibly sophisticated” systems that move huge volumes of petrochemicals at high pressures, he said. Simply closing a valve can cause the pressure upstream to increase quickly, creating a significant risk of a spill that endangers the environment and anyone in the area where the pipe suddenly bursts, he said.

In response to the October incidents, federal regulators issued a bulletin warning that tampering with pipeline valves “can have significant consequences such as death, injury, and economic and environmental harm.”

Sundberg also said that it’s ironic for people who say they’re concerned about the environment to take an action that could cause an environmental disaster.

But O’Hara said: “The hypocrisy really lies in the pipeline corporations who say their pipelines are safe, say leaks don’t happen. They blame activists who are trying to stop global cataclysm by taking action to point out what they do every day, which is leak and spill.”

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Someone who targets a pipeline facility in the U.S. could face up to 20 years in prison.

## WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RECENT ATTACKS?

No suspects have been identified in either state and no group has claimed responsibility. O'Hara told The Associated Press that Climate Direct Action wasn't involved in any actions against the Dakota Access pipeline.

Attorneys for the Standing Rock and Cheyenne River Sioux tribes, which are leading the legal battle against the pipeline, said the tribes don't condone acts of violence against pipeline property.

## HOW FREQUENTLY DOES PIPELINE SABOTAGE OCCUR?

Not very often, Sundberg said. It happens more frequently in Canada than the U.S. It's generally committed by people trying to make an environmental point. It would be "very scary" if terrorist groups tried it in North America, he said.

Some of the worst incidents in the U.S. were on the Trans Alaska Pipeline. Vandals blew up a section in 1978, spilling about 16,000 barrels of oil near Fairbanks. In 2001, a drunken man fired a hunting rifle into the pipeline near Livengood, causing more than 6,000 barrels to spray out.

Some of the most notable incidents in Canada happened in the 1990s and 2000s in Alberta and British Columbia. A series of bombings in 2008-09 targeted pipelines in British Columbia. Weibo Ludwig, an Alberta man who crusaded against the extraction of "sour gas" containing high amounts of hydrogen sulfide, was convicted in several of the 1990s acts of vandalism. He was arrested but never charged in the later attacks.

Pipeline sabotage happens with some regularity in war zones. Iraqi insurgents, Colombian rebels and Mexican guerrillas all have claimed responsibility for pipeline attacks in recent decades.

Karnowski reported from Minneapolis. Associated Press news researcher Jennifer Farrar contributed to this story from New York, and reporter David Pitt contributed from Des Moines, Iowa.

Follow Blake Nicholson on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/NicholsonBlake> . Follow Steve Karnowski at: <https://twitter.com/skarnowski> .

## SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Mega Millions

04-45-53-73-75, Mega Ball: 7, Megaplier: 3

(four, forty-five, fifty-three, seventy-three, seventy-five; Mega Ball: seven; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$140 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$155 million

## Federal agency to reconsider decision on South Dakota EB-5

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A federal immigration agency's appeals office says that the agency must reconsider its decision to end South Dakota's participation in a federal program offering wealthy immigrants visas in return for investments.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' appeals office in a March 15 decision remanded the matter for additional proceedings.

The agency said in a July notice that South Dakota's participation should be terminated for reasons including the diversion of millions of investor dollars away from intended purposes. The agency sent its decision to its own Administrative Appeals Office for review.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard has said that his administration is pushing to maintain the program to spare investors that might be harmed if it is terminated by the federal government.

## North Dakota Legislature OKs hidden firearms without permit

By JAMES MacPHERSON, Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — The North Dakota Legislature has voted to allow most adults to carry a concealed firearm without a permit, but it's not clear whether the governor will support the move.

The Senate approved the measure 34-13 on Tuesday and the House passed it last month. It would allow people 18 and older to forgo background checks and classes that are now required.

Supporters say the bill promotes constitutional rights and allows protection from criminals. Critics worry it could lead to more shootings as people with less training would be carrying weapons.

Approval of the bill in both the Senate and House generally fell along party lines in the Republican-led Legislature. GOP Gov. Doug Burgum hasn't said whether he would support the measure and sign it into law.

"He hasn't seen the bill and won't make a decision until he receives it," said Mike Nowatzki, a Burgum spokesman.

Sen. Kelly Armstrong, a Republican from Dickinson, said the measure allows law-abiding citizens to exercise their constitutional right to carry a gun.

"Anyone legally allowed to carry a gun, can carry a gun," Armstrong said.

Carrying a hidden firearm without a permit is now a misdemeanor in North Dakota that's punishable by up to 30 days in jail and a fine of up to \$1,500. Under the measure, someone carrying a concealed weapon would be required to have a valid ID and notify law enforcement of the weapon in incidents such as a traffic stop.

The number of concealed carry permits in North Dakota has more than doubled in the past five years, to 48,700.

North Dakota residents already can get a concealed carry permit by completing an hour-long class and passing an open-book test. The classes cost about \$50. An enhanced license, that allows reciprocity with other states, requires firearms training and the open-book test.

Democratic Sen. Carolyn Nelson, of Fargo, said it already is simple to acquire a permit to carry a concealed weapon, and that the measure was not needed.

"If you can read, you can pass the test," she said. "I'm even more scared than I am now."

About a dozen states already have similar laws. The South Dakota Legislature this month approved a similar measure but GOP Gov. Dennis Daugaard vetoed it, saying his state's gun laws are reasonable.

## Police: 19-year-old tech student died of alcohol poisoning

WATERTOWN, S.D. (AP) — Investigators say a 19-year-old woman has died of apparent alcohol poisoning in Watertown.

Police and paramedics were called to a home early Tuesday and found the woman unresponsive. She was pronounced dead at Prairie Lakes Hospital.

Police say three to four people were inside the home at the time. Witnesses told investigators that the group had been drinking during a small gathering.

Detective Sgt. Chad Stahl says police are investigating who supplied the alcohol because everyone inside the home was underage, and have some strong leads. The South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation is helping local detectives.

KELO-TV (<http://bit.ly/2mpUkU2>) reports the woman was a student at Lake Area Tech. Her name

has not been released.

Information from: KELO-TV, <http://www.keloland.com>

## **Inmate dies in South Dakota's Springfield prison**

SPRINGFIELD, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota corrections officials say an inmate has died at the Springfield prison.

The Department of Corrections says 62-year-old Dennis Lambert died Sunday at the Mike Durfee State Prison following an illness.

Lambert was serving two consecutive 10-year sentences for sexual contact with a child in Brown County. An autopsy will be conducted.

## **Not my laptop! Airline passengers hit the device doldrums**

**By BARBARA ORTUTAY, AP Technology Writer**

NEW YORK (AP) — As the indignities of modern air travel go, the latest ban on laptops and tablets on some international flights falls somewhere between having to take off your shoes at the security checkpoint and having your baby food and milk tested for bomb residue.

It's yet another inconvenience in the name of security for weary travelers, especially those from or passing through the 10 mostly Middle Eastern and North African countries covered by new U.S. and British policies. While it's not quite as disruptive as an outright ban on smartphones — much less a travel ban based on nationality — the laptop limitation loomed large for some people as they prepared to travel.

"Why are only Middle Eastern airlines subject to this ban?" asked Kelsey Norman, a doctoral student who plans to fly home Friday to Los Angeles from Beirut — and expects to have to check her laptop, a Kindle tablet and her DSLR camera. "Overall this policy is inconvenient, discriminatory, and continues to hurt America's rapidly deteriorating reputation globally."

### **BAN LOGIC**

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security rules forbid laptop computers, tablets, Kindles, some gaming devices, cameras and other electronics larger than a smartphone in carry-on baggage. The U.S. government cited unspecified threats as the reason for the ban. The U.K. government instituted a similar ban; neither government's restrictions affect U.S.-based airlines.

On the positive side, items people can still bring with them to their seat items like smartphones, duffel bags, coats, tiny bottles of hand lotion, snacks, earplugs, nose hair trimmers, and babies. For now, at least — tomorrow could bring a new unspecified threat and with it a new ban.

### **LOST PRODUCTIVITY**

Some, especially of the dutiful business traveler, worry that laptops in checked bags could be stolen, damaged or compromised — no to mention hours of down time in the air. Some tried rerouting flights to avoid the affected airports, but this is not easy.

Banu Akdenizli, a native of Turkey, said having to fly 17 hours without her laptop will cost her precious time to work and prepare for a conference.

"It might seem trivial to a lot of people, but what you get from these parts of the world are usually business travelers," said Akdenizli, an associate professor of communications at the Doha, Qatar, campus of Northwestern University. "It's not just about watching movies, but also being able to get some work done."

Of course, others may well revel in a few hours of laptop-free time, stretched out in their luxurious middle coach seats rather than hunched over Excel spreadsheets. It wasn't so long ago that such this was the norm for air travelers.

And there still are a few ways to make do without those laptops, tablets and portable DVD players. Sort of.

### **AWKWARD WORKAROUNDS**



If you simply must work, it's possible to take import documents into Google Docs and thumb away on your smartphone's keyboard, at least so long as you remember to save them to your phone before you take off. But features can be limited with some apps; Microsoft's Office app, for instance, only lets you open one document at a time.

Such apps are OK for simple proofreading and minor editing, but probably won't do if you're working on your novel. Among other things, the text is tiny on a phone screen, though there's a way to temporarily reformat text for the smaller display.

Catching up on email or cleaning out your inbox could be another way to pass time without your laptop, especially if you shell out for in-flight Wi-Fi.

If you can resist the urge to work, you can download shows from Netflix or Amazon onto your phone. You might want to stick with comedies or TV shows rather than epics designed for big screens.

## AT LEAST IT'S NOT PHONES

For most of us, laptops and other gadgets play only a supporting role next to our smartphones. We go to sleep with it and greet it first thing in the morning.

Last fall, Samsung asked users of its fire-prone Galaxy Note 7 to "power down and stop using the device" when getting on a plane. (The phone was later banned, and then recalled.) People followed the directions but found clever workarounds, such as borrowing non-Note 7 phones from friends.

One big difference with that ban and today's regionally based restrictions is that with the Galaxy, there were widely circulated videos of Note 7s bursting into flames. There was no doubt that this would be bad thing at 30,000 feet. Here, the threat is much harder to envision, travelers say.

A few manage anyway. Nick Lieber, a dual U.S.-Israeli citizen living in Jerusalem, plans an April trip to Chicago that will take him through Amman, Jordan, and therefore subject him to the ban. He said stowing his laptop in his checked luggage won't be too inconvenient because he doesn't anticipate having to work on the flight.

But he worries about laptop lithium-ion batteries — which have been blamed for past aircraft fires — stored in the plane's cargo hold. "I'm a nervous flyer already," Lieber said.

Associated Press writers Russ Bynum in Savannah, Georgia, and Anick Jesdanun in New York contributed to this story.

## AP Exclusive: Manafort had plan to benefit Putin government

By JEFF HORWITZ and CHAD DAY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's former campaign chairman, Paul Manafort, secretly worked for a Russian billionaire to advance the interests of Russian President Vladimir Putin a decade ago and proposed an ambitious political strategy to undermine anti-Russian opposition across former Soviet republics, The Associated Press has learned. The work appears to contradict assertions by the Trump administration and Manafort himself that he never worked for Russian interests.

Manafort proposed in a confidential strategy plan as early as June 2005 that he would influence politics, business dealings and news coverage inside the United States, Europe and the former Soviet republics to benefit the Putin government, even as U.S.-Russia relations under Republican President George W. Bush grew worse. Manafort pitched the plans to Russian aluminum magnate Oleg Deripaska, a close Putin ally with whom Manafort eventually signed a \$10 million annual contract beginning in 2006, according to interviews with several people familiar with payments to Manafort and business records obtained by the AP. Manafort and Deripaska maintained a business relationship until at least 2009, according to one person familiar with the work.

"We are now of the belief that this model can greatly benefit the Putin Government if employed at the correct levels with the appropriate commitment to success," Manafort wrote in the 2005 memo to Deripaska. The effort, Manafort wrote, "will be offering a great service that can re-focus, both internally and externally, the policies of the Putin government."

Manafort's plans were laid out in documents obtained by the AP that included strategy memoranda and records showing international wire transfers for millions of dollars. How much work Manafort performed

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under the contract was unclear.

The disclosure comes as Trump campaign advisers are the subject of an FBI probe and two congressional investigations. Investigators are reviewing whether the Trump campaign and its associates coordinated with Moscow to meddle in the 2016 campaign. Manafort has dismissed the investigations as politically motivated and misguided, and said he never worked for Russian interests. The documents obtained by AP show Manafort's ties to Russia were closer than previously revealed.

In a statement to the AP, Manafort confirmed that he worked for Deripaska in various countries but said the work was being unfairly cast as "inappropriate or nefarious" as part of a "smear campaign."

"I worked with Oleg Deripaska almost a decade ago representing him on business and personal matters in countries where he had investments," Manafort said. "My work for Mr. Deripaska did not involve representing Russian political interests."

Deripaska became one of Russia's wealthiest men under Putin, buying assets abroad in ways widely perceived to benefit the Kremlin's interests. U.S. diplomatic cables from 2006 described Deripaska as "among the 2-3 oligarchs Putin turns to on a regular basis" and "a more-or-less permanent fixture on Putin's trips abroad." In response to questions about Manafort's consulting firm, a spokesman for Deripaska in 2008 — at least three years after they began working together — said Deripaska had never hired the firm. Another Deripaska spokesman in Moscow last week declined to answer AP's questions.

Manafort worked as Trump's unpaid campaign chairman last year from March until August. Trump asked Manafort to resign after AP revealed that Manafort had orchestrated a covert Washington lobbying operation until 2014 on behalf of Ukraine's ruling pro-Russian political party.

The newly obtained business records link Manafort more directly to Putin's interests in the region. According to those records and people with direct knowledge of Manafort's work for Deripaska, Manafort made plans to open an office in Moscow, and at least some of Manafort's work in Ukraine was directed by Deripaska, not local political interests there. The Moscow office never opened.

Manafort has been a leading focus of the U.S. intelligence investigation of Trump's associates and Russia, according to a U.S. official. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because details of the investigation were confidential. Meanwhile, federal criminal prosecutors became interested in Manafort's activities years ago as part of a broad investigation to recover stolen Ukraine assets after the ouster of pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich there in early 2014. No U.S. criminal charges have ever been filed in the case.

FBI Director James Comey, in confirming to Congress the federal intelligence investigation this week, declined to say whether Manafort was a target. Manafort's name was mentioned 28 times during the hearing of the House Intelligence Committee, mostly about his work in Ukraine. No one mentioned Deripaska.

White House spokesman Sean Spicer said Monday that Manafort "played a very limited role for a very limited amount of time" in the campaign, even though as Trump's presidential campaign chairman he led it during the crucial run-up to the Republican National Convention.

Manafort and his associates remain in Trump's orbit. Manafort told a colleague this year that he continues to speak with Trump by telephone. Manafort's former business partner in eastern Europe, Rick Gates, has been seen inside the White House on a number of occasions. Gates has since helped plan Trump's inauguration and now runs a nonprofit organization, America First Policies, to back the White House agenda.

Gates, whose name does not appear in the documents, told the AP that he joined Manafort's firm in 2006 and was aware Manafort had a relationship with Deripaska, but he was not aware of the work described in the memos. Gates said his work was focused on domestic U.S. lobbying and political consulting in Ukraine at the time. He said he stopped working for Manafort's firm in March 2016 when he joined Trump's presidential campaign.

Manafort told Deripaska in 2005 that he was pushing policies as part of his work in Ukraine "at the highest levels of the U.S. government — the White House, Capitol Hill and the State Department," according to the documents. He also said he had hired a "leading international law firm with close ties to President Bush to support our client's interests," but he did not identify the firm. Manafort also said he was employing unidentified legal experts for the effort at leading universities and think tanks, including

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Duke University, New York University and the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Manafort did not disclose details about the lobbying work to the Justice Department during the period the contract was in place.

Under the Foreign Agents Registration Act, people who lobby in the U.S. on behalf of foreign political leaders or political parties must provide detailed reports about their actions to the department. Willfully failing to register is a felony and can result in up to five years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000, though the government rarely files criminal charges.

Deripaska owns Basic Element Co., which employs 200,000 people worldwide in the agriculture, aviation, construction, energy, financial services, insurance and manufacturing industries, and he runs one of the world's largest aluminum companies. Forbes estimated his net worth at \$5.2 billion. How much Deripaska paid Manafort in total is not clear, but people familiar with the relationship said money transfers to Manafort amounted to tens of millions of dollars and continued through at least 2009. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the secret payments publicly.

In strategy memos, Manafort proposed that Deripaska and Putin would benefit from lobbying Western governments, especially the U.S., to allow oligarchs to keep possession of formerly state-owned assets in Ukraine. He proposed building "long term relationships" with Western journalists and a variety of measures to improve recruitment, communications and financial planning by pro-Russian parties in the region.

Manafort proposed extending his existing work in eastern Europe to Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Georgia, where he pledged to bolster the legitimacy of governments friendly to Putin and undercut anti-Russian figures through political campaigns, nonprofit front groups and media operations.

For the \$10 million contract, Manafort did not use his public-facing consulting firm, Davis Manafort. Instead, he used a company, LOAV Ltd., that he had registered in Delaware in 1992. He listed LOAV as having the same address of his lobbying and consulting firms in Alexandria, Virginia. In other records, LOAV's address was listed as Manafort's home, also in Alexandria. Manafort sold the home in July 2015 for \$1.4 million. He now owns an apartment in Trump Tower in New York, as well as other properties in Florida and New York.

One strategy memo to Deripaska was written by Manafort and Rick Davis, his business partner at the time. In written responses to the AP, Davis said he did not know that his firm had proposed a plan to covertly promote the interests of the Russian government.

Davis said he believes Manafort used his name without his permission on the strategy memo. "My name was on every piece of stationery used by the company and in every memo prior to 2006. It does not mean I had anything to do with the memo described," Davis said. He took a leave of absence from the firm in late 2006 to work on John McCain's 2008 presidential campaign.

Manafort's work with Deripaska continued for years, though they had a falling out laid bare in 2014 in a Cayman Islands bankruptcy court. The billionaire gave Manafort nearly \$19 million to invest in a Ukrainian TV company called Black Sea Cable, according to legal filings by Deripaska's representatives. It said that after taking the money, Manafort and his associates stopped responding to Deripaska's queries about how the funds had been used.

Early in the 2016 presidential campaign, Deripaska's representatives openly accused Manafort of fraud and pledged to recover the money from him. After Trump earned the nomination, Deripaska's representatives said they would no longer discuss the case.

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Associated Press writers Jack Gillum, Eric Tucker, Julie Pace, Ted Bridis, Stephen Braun and Julie Bykovicz contributed to this report in Washington; Nataliya Vasilyeva contributed from Moscow and Kiev, Ukraine; and Jake Pearson contributed from New York.

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## 10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

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

### 1. MANAFORT'S PLAN TO 'GREATLY BENEFIT THE PUTIN GOVERNMENT'

Trump's former campaign chairman, Paul Manafort, secretly worked for a Russian billionaire to advance the interests of Russian President Vladimir Putin, AP learns.

### 2. CRUNCH TIME NEARS ON HEALTH OVERHAUL BILL

Underscoring the bill's uncertain fate, a senior administration official says up to 20 to 25 House Republicans remain opposed or undecided, imperiling passage.

### 3. HOW PASSENGERS FEEL ABOUT GADGETS BAN

While some may relish a break from work at 30,000 feet, others fret about lost productivity and the risks of relegating laptops to the cargo hold.

### 4. SUPREME COURT NOMINEE SAILING ALONG AT HEARINGS

Neil Gorsuch has been largely unscathed by Democratic attacks, and Republicans confidently predict he will win confirmation despite liberal opposition.

### 5. OFFICIALS: NORTH KOREAN MISSILE LAUNCH FAILS

The development comes as Pyongyang angrily reacts to ongoing annual U.S.-South Korean military drills that it views as an invasion rehearsal.

### 6. WHERE BELGIUM STANDS ON ANNIVERSARY OF ATTACKS

Brussels' physical scars have mostly healed and tourism is bouncing back, despite Trump calling the Belgian capital a "hellhole" to avoid at all cost.

### 7. OMINOUS SIGNS BEFORE DEADLY GUATEMALA FIRE

Four different agencies issued warnings and at least two orders for closure were ignored before the blaze that killed 40 girls at a government-run shelter for troubled youth.

### 8. WHY PALESTINIANS IN JERUSALEM SEEK ISRAELI CITIZENSHIP

Palestinians in annexed east Jerusalem hope to swap their vulnerable status as mere city residents for the rights and ease of travel that come with an Israeli passport.

### 9. 'GONG SHOW' CREATOR CHUCK BARRIS DIES AT 87

The game show impresario's empire included "The Dating Game," "The Newlywed Game" and that infamous factory of cheese, "The Gong Show."

### 10. POWER FOOTBALL CONFERENCE EXCELLING IN HOOPS

The SEC is showing some basketball promise as the league has a chance to get three teams in the Elite Eight of the NCAA Tournament.

## US, South Korea say North Korea's latest missile test fails

By HYUNG-JIN KIM, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea's latest missile launch ended in failure on Wednesday as the United States sent a supersonic bomber streaking over ally South Korea in a show of force against the North, officials said.

The reported launch failure comes as the North angrily reacts to ongoing annual U.S.-South Korean military drills that it views as an invasion rehearsal. Earlier this month, North Korea fired four ballistic missiles that landed in waters off Japan, triggering strong protests from Seoul and Tokyo.

The American military detected what it assessed as a failed North Korean missile launch on Wednesday morning, the U.S. Pacific Command said in a statement. It said the missile "appears to have exploded within seconds of launch."

South Korea's Defense Ministry said it also believes the launch from the eastern coastal town of Wonsan ended in failure. It said it was analyzing what type of missile was launched.

The failure might mean that the missile is a newly developed one the North has not deployed, according to South Korean media. Last year, the country suffered a series of embarrassing failed launches of its new medium-range Musudan missile before it successfully test-fired one.

Also Wednesday, a U.S. Air Force B-1B bomber and South Korean fighter jets conducted joint training exercises that displayed "strong deterrence against North Korean nuclear and missile threats," South Korea's Defense Ministry said. The U.S. military said the training was held after the bomber staged a similar exercise with Japanese fighter jets.

The United States often sends powerful warplanes in times of heightened tensions on the Korean Peninsula, which remains in a technical state of war because the 1950-53 Korean War ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty. About 28,500 U.S. soldiers are deployed in South Korea.

North Korea is pushing hard to upgrade its weapons systems to cope with what it calls U.S. hostility. Many weapons experts say the North could have a functioning nuclear-tipped missile capable of reaching the continental U.S. within a few years. North Korea carried out two nuclear tests last year.

American defense officials had said Tuesday that the U.S. military was expecting another North Korean missile launch in the next several days. The officials said the U.S. had increased its surveillance over the North and had detected a North Korean missile launcher being moved, as well as the construction of VIP seating in Wonsan.

On Sunday, the North claimed a major breakthrough in its rocket development program, saying it had conducted a ground test of a new type of high-thrust rocket engine. Washington, Seoul and others view the North's space program as a cover for its banned long-range missile development program.

Associated Press writer Lolita C. Baldor in Washington contributed to this report.

## **GOP leaders boost pressure as health bill crunch time nears**

**By ALAN FRAM and RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump and House leaders are revving up pressure on balky conservatives and other Republican lawmakers as crunch time approaches on the party's health care overhaul bill, a drive GOP leaders concede they can't afford to lose.

A day before the House planned votes on the measure, Trump was expected to continue hunting support for what would be a significant achievement for his young presidency. But underscoring the bill's uncertain fate, a senior administration official said that 20 to 25 House Republicans remained opposed or undecided. That's a grave figure since united Democratic opposition means the measure crashes if 22 GOP lawmakers vote "no."

"If we keep our promise, people will reward us," House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., told reporters Tuesday of GOP vows to demolish former President Barack Obama's health care law that the GOP has assailed since its enactment in 2010. "If we don't keep our promise, it will be very hard to manage this," the speaker said.

"Honestly, a loss is not acceptable, folks," Trump told lawmakers at a closed-door Capitol meeting with House Republicans. He warned they'd face widespread defeats in next year's elections and possible loss of control of the chamber if the measure failed.

Trump's remarks and the White House nose count of votes were each described by Republicans who provided inside information on condition of anonymity.

Emerging from the meeting at the Capitol, Rep. Chris Collins, R-N.Y., said Trump told Republicans he would campaign for them if they backed the bill. Trump didn't indicate what he would do to those who vote against the bill, but during that meeting, he singled out Rep. Mark Meadows, R-N.C., an outspoken critic of the bill.

Collins said Trump asked Meadows to stand up, called him a great guy and said he is counting on Meadows to get this over the line.

Another person at the event said Trump told Meadows, "I'm gonna come after you so hard." Trump delivered that line with a smile, but it was also lined with a touch of seriousness, said the person, who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe a private meeting.

The Republican legislation would halt Obama's tax penalties against people who don't buy coverage and shrink the federal-state Medicaid program for low earners, which the statute has expanded. It would

provide tax credits for medical bills, though generally skimpier than the aid Obama's statute provides. It also would allow insurers to charge older Americans more and repeal tax boosts the law imposes on high-income people and health industry companies.

The House Rules committee, usually tightly controlled by GOP leadership, was meeting Wednesday to set the terms of debate.

The panel was expected to let the chamber vote on revisions that top Republicans concocted to win votes. These include adding federal aid for older people and protecting upstate New York counties — but not Democratic-run New York City — from repaying the state billions of dollars for Medicaid costs.

Eager to showcase their support for Obama's law, House Democrats invited former Vice President Joe Biden to speak Wednesday on the Capitol's steps. Democrats champion the statute for its expansion of health care coverage to 20 million more people and requiring insurers to cover the very ill, families' grown children to age 26 and specified services like mental health care.

While victory remained uncertain in the House, both sides were looking ahead to what could be an even tougher Senate fight.

Republicans control that chamber 52-48 and six GOP senators have already said they oppose the legislation, enough to sink it without changes. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said in an interview with The Associated Press Tuesday he will "have the president weigh in" with senators.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., and other Democrats will try removing provisions from the GOP bill cherished by conservatives: letting states require some Medicaid recipients to work and barring federal health subsidies from use for abortions. The tactic was described by a Democrat speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss strategy, and it could weaken conservative support for the measure if successful.

The Senate will debate the bill under rules barring provisions not directly related to the federal budget. The Senate parliamentarian makes that call and it would take 60 votes to overrule that decision — a threshold Republicans would be unlikely to reach.

At least a dozen of the House's most conservative lawmakers and a smattering of GOP moderates have said they oppose the Republican bill.

Many conservatives are demanding that the bill void Obama's restrictions on insurers, which they say drive up premiums. Moderates' concerns include a worry that the measure would snatch insurance from many voters — a week after the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office said the measure would toss 24 million off coverage in a decade.

"We're repealing Democrats' over-regulation of one-sixth of our economy with Republican over-regulation, just not quite as much," said Rep. Rod Blum, R-Iowa, among the opponents.

House GOP leaders' amendments to round up votes will literally be costly.

The budget office had projected the original bill would cut federal deficits by \$337 billion over a decade. But those savings are plummeting as top Republicans dole out provisions to nail down backing. Language helping older and disabled people includes \$85 billion set aside for the Senate to beef up tax credits for people aged 50 to 64, who budget analysts said would see big cost increases from the GOP bill.

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Associated Press reporters Kenneth Thomas, Erica Werner and Kevin Freking contributed to this report.

## Supreme Court nominee unscathed facing last day of hearings

By ERICA WERNER and MARK SHERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Supreme Court nominee Neil Gorsuch enters the third day of his nomination hearings largely unscathed by Democratic attacks, as Republicans confidently predict he will win confirmation despite liberal opposition.

A growing number of Democrats, including Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York and Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, are calling for Gorsuch's confirmation to be delayed because of the FBI investigation of ties between Donald Trump's presidential campaign and Russia. But Judiciary Chairman Chuck Grassley of Iowa dismissed that demand as "ridiculous," and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky told The Associated Press: "Gorsuch will be confirmed. I just can't tell you

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exactly how that will happen yet.”

Even with Democrats divided over how hard to fight Gorsuch’s nomination, the political intensity accompanying his confirmation process seemed at times palpable during the second day of hearings Tuesday, as the questioning stretched beyond 11 hours. Democratic Sen. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut announced he would be asking Gorsuch about the “elephant in the room” — Trump — and tried to draw him out over Trump’s attacks on judges, including those who halted his immigration travel ban.

“When anyone criticizes the honesty and integrity or the motives of a federal judge, I find that disheartening, I find that demoralizing,” Gorsuch said.

“Including the president?” Blumenthal said.

“Anyone is anyone,” Gorsuch replied.

It was the first time Gorsuch had said publicly what he had told senators, including Blumenthal, in private meetings in recent weeks.

Gorsuch’s exchange with Blumenthal also yielded the surprising revelation that Trump had used a private interview with Gorsuch, prior to nominating him in January, to muse about having lost Colorado in the presidential election and argue that he would have won the state if given more time. Gorsuch serves on the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Denver, and would fill the 13-month vacancy on the high court created by the death of Antonin Scalia last year.

Gorsuch, who will face additional questioning from senators Wednesday, made two other notable statements in response to questions from members of the Judiciary Committee, and both also related to Trump, who nominated him.

Republican Lindsey Graham of South Carolina asked Gorsuch whether Trump had asked him to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the case establishing a right to abortion, and what he would have done had Trump asked him to do so.

“Senator, I would have walked out the door,” Gorsuch replied. “That’s not what judges do.”

And when Vermont Democratic Sen. Patrick Leahy asked Gorsuch if a president is free to ignore laws on national security grounds, Gorsuch replied that “nobody is above the law in this country, and that includes the president of the United States.”

Still the day was mostly devoid of drama as Gorsuch swatted away Democrats’ efforts to get him to reveal his views on abortion, guns and other controversial issues, insisting he keeps “an open mind for the entire process” when he makes rulings.

There are now just eight justices on the nine-member high court. There have been a number of 4-4 ties and Gorsuch, a highly credentialed conservative who is ideologically akin to Scalia, would be expected to join the bloc of largely conservative justices.

The confirmation hearing will wrap up with a panel of outside witnesses talking about Gorsuch, before a committee vote expected April 3 and a Senate floor vote later that same week.

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Associated Press writer Mary Clare Jalonick contributed to this report.

## US edges Japan 2-1, advances to WBC championship game

By GREG BEACHAM, AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Luke Gregerson’s final strike breezed past Nobuhiro Matsuda, and the rain-drenched American players celebrated on the field while a soaked crowd roared through the evening mist.

A daylong downpour couldn’t dampen this resilient United States club or its fans, who will finally get to root for the home team in a World Baseball Classic championship game.

Brandon Crawford scored the tiebreaking run when Matsuda bobbled Adam Jones’ grounder to third in the eighth inning, and the United States reached the WBC final for the first time by beating Japan 2-1 on Tuesday night at rainy Dodger Stadium.

Andrew McCutchen drove in an early run for the U.S., which will play Puerto Rico for the title Wednesday night. Puerto Rico edged the Netherlands 4-3 in 11 innings Monday.

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"It means a heck of a lot," said McCutchen, the Pittsburgh Pirates slugger. "We've got a great group of guys on this team who have dedicated this time to be able to try and win some ballgames. Sacrifices had to be made, and there are no egos when that door opens. That's what's good about this team. Everybody is a superstar on this team. There are no egos."

The World Baseball Classic final has been played in the United States in each of its four editions, but the home team had never been able to play America's pastime on what has become its biggest international stage. The U.S. only reached the semifinals once before, in 2009.

While manager Jim Leyland's current roster is missing Clayton Kershaw, Mike Trout and many other American superstars, the All-Star-laden group that decided to participate has won two straight elimination games to earn a chance for the U.S.' first crown.

"Coming into this event, I didn't really want to talk about the fact that the United States has never won it (and) they've never gone to the finals," Leyland said. "I didn't think that was a big deal. I wanted this, for the players, to be a memory. I've talked a lot about it. Make a memory. Hopefully it's a real good one, regardless of the results (Wednesday). I know it is for me. It's been an absolute honor."

To reach the final, the Americans had to persevere through an uncharacteristic Los Angeles rain that drenched the playing field several hours before game time. They also had to beat a gifted Japanese team at its own game: pitching, defense and small ball.

Ryosuke Kikuchi hit a tying homer off reliever Nate Jones in the sixth inning for Japan, but the two-time WBC champions were twice let down by their normally sturdy defense.

McCutchen opened the scoring with an RBI single in the fourth moments after Kikuchi's two-base error at second. In the eighth, Crawford likely would have been out at the plate on Jones' innocent grounder, but Matsuda didn't field it cleanly and had to throw to first.

"Well, two plays," Japan manager Hiroki Kokubo said through a translator. "Honestly, there were some mistakes, and then a run was scored. ... The team that makes mistakes will lose. That's what it means. I cannot blame them, though, for doing that."

Japan won the first two WBC tournaments before losing in the 2013 semifinals, and Kokubo's current team was unbeaten in this event.

"The players really did their very best," Kokubo said. "I really appreciate it. It's do-or-die, one semifinal."

Tanner Roark pitched four scoreless innings of two-hit ball before Leyland pulled him on the instructions of the Washington Nationals, who limited Roark to 50 pitches because he hadn't faced live hitters in nine days.

"I felt good enough to stay out there," Roark said.

Gregerson, the Americans' sixth reliever, worked a perfect ninth inning after Pat Neshek escaped a two-on jam in the eighth.

Leyland is confident he'll have a capable bullpen Wednesday after receiving texts from various pitching coaches around the majors on the status of their players. Toronto's Marcus Stroman, the starter, is free to reach the WBC's 95-pitch limit, Leyland confirmed.

Although the crowd of 33,462 strongly favored the team with five California natives in the starting lineup, thousands of Japanese fans showed up early and chanted throughout the game, accompanied by the brass band in the left-field bleachers.

Tomoyuki Sugano, the Yomiuri Giants ace with a seven-pitch repertoire, tossed six innings of three-hit ball for Japan, striking out six and yielding only one unearned run.

But Sugano was matched by Roark, who gave up just two singles and a walk in his four innings, also hitting a batter with a pitch.

After Christian Yelich reached second in the fourth inning when his hard-hit grounder was mishandled by Kikuchi, the standout defensive second baseman, Eric Hosmer worked out of an 0-2 count to draw a two-out walk.

McCutchen had just two hits in his first 14 at-bats in the WBC, but he drove in Yelich with a sharp single to left.

Kikuchi made up for his mistake in the sixth, driving Jones' fastball barely over the reach of McCutchen in right field for his first homer of the tournament.



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Japan reliever Kodai Senga struck out the first four batters he faced with a 96 mph fastball and exceptional off-speed stuff, but Crawford then delivered a sharp single before Ian Kinsler doubled to deep left-center.

Neshek got cleanup hitter Yoshimoto Tsutsugoh on a fly to right to end the eighth.

## SEC Rises: Football league has 3 teams vying for Elite Eight

By MARK LONG, AP Sports Writer

GAINESVILLE, Fla. (AP) — Tennessee's Rick Barnes has coached in the Big East, the Atlantic Coast Conference and the Big 12. He's made the NCAA Tournament nearly two dozen times and advanced to the Final Four.

He's been around. He's seen it done a number of different ways.

So Barnes has credibility when he raves about his current league, the Southeastern Conference.

"I've said it all year: This league is better than everybody's giving it credit for," Barnes said Tuesday. "It's not like I told you so, but the fact is this basketball league is better. What I'm ecstatic about is we've had to overcome the perception that it wasn't very good, and we've got teams that have gone out and played good basketball."

Long considered a football power, the SEC is showing some basketball promise. The league, which many thought might get just three teams in the NCAA Tournament a few months ago, could have three in the Elite Eight.

Kentucky, Florida and South Carolina play in the Sweet 16 on Friday night. The second-seeded Wildcats (31-5) face No. 3 seed UCLA in Memphis, Tennessee. The fourth-seeded Gators (26-8) take on No. 8 seed Wisconsin in New York City, shortly after the seventh-seeded Gamecocks (24-10) play No. 3 seed Baylor.

Given how the SEC has performed in the tournament so far, it might be foolish to bet against any of them.

Kentucky is one of the hottest teams remaining, having won 13 in a row since losing at Florida in early February. The Gators looked as solid as anyone in the first two rounds, beating East Tennessee State and Virginia by a combined 41 points. And the Gamecocks pulled off one of the bracket's biggest upsets by knocking off No. 2 seed Duke in Greenville, South Carolina.

Throw in oh-so-close losses by Arkansas and Vanderbilt, and the SEC has reason to brag.

The Razorbacks rallied from a 17-point deficit to take a 65-60 lead in the final minutes and looked like they would stun top-seeded North Carolina in the second round. But the Tar Heels closed out the game with a 12-0 run that left Arkansas imagining what might have been.

The Commodores had similar thoughts after giving away their NCAA opener against Northwestern. Commodores guard Matthew Fisher-Davis intentionally and inexplicably grabbed Northwestern's Bryant McIntosh despite his team leading by 1. His mistake — Fisher-Davis thought Vandy was down 1 — sent McIntosh to the free-throw line for the go-ahead points with 14.6 seconds left. Vanderbilt lost 68-66.

"Our conference is pretty good," South Carolina coach Frank Martin said. "I don't need to keep repeating that. I think anyone with any kind of understanding of basketball can start making those assessments on their own without me having to force feed it down their throats."

The league has come a long way in a short time, especially considering it ranked seventh in conference RPI in 2013.

After landing just three teams in the 2016 NCAA Tournament once again, the SEC hired former Big East Commissioner Mike Tranghese to bolster the league's basketball profile and postseason presence.

Tranghese's plan started with scheduling games against better competition and winning more of those key, nonconference matchups. The SEC now mandates that nonconference opponents must have a three-year RPI average of 175 or better. That number will drop to 150 in the future.

The SEC also went 5-5 in the SEC/Big 12 Challenge after winning just 10 of 30 meetings in the first three years of the inter-conference showcase.

"We don't really get talked about a lot, basketball-wise," Florida forward Devin Robinson said. "They

talk a lot of football and things like that. The SEC is a tough league. ... That conference got us ready to play against anybody in different matchups and different types of offenses and different types of defenses, so it just gets us ready for just playing against other opponents."

The league, which has 11 national titles in men's basketball, might have its best days ahead.

Georgia and Mississippi just missed getting into the 68-team field, and with high-profile coaches like Barnes, Ben Howland (Mississippi State), Bruce Pearl (Auburn) and Avery Johnson (Alabama) trying to building sustainable programs, the SEC could be on the verge of a basketball uprising.

"We feel like it's a league that's trending up," Vanderbilt coach Bryce Drew said. "There's a lot of really, really good veteran coaches in this league, and there's a lot of great talent in this league. Even as we look to the future, there's some great recruiting classes coming in that's going to make the league even better next year."

AP Sports Writers Pete Iacobelli in Columbia, South Carolina, Steve Megargee in Knoxville, Tennessee, and Teresa Walker in Nashville, Tennessee, contributed to this report.

More AP college basketball: [www.collegebasketball.ap.org](http://www.collegebasketball.ap.org) and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Top25](https://twitter.com/AP_Top25)

## Police: Mom let 2-year-old handle gun before fatal shooting

**PAUL DAVENPORT, Associated Press**

PHOENIX (AP) — A 9-year-old boy shot in the head by his 2-year-old brother with their mother's handgun died Tuesday, and their mother told police she had previously let the toddler handle the gun when it wasn't loaded, authorities said.

Landen Lavarnia was declared dead at a hospital, Phoenix police spokesman Sgt. Vince Lewis said. Police had initially said the boy died on Monday when he was shot. But they corrected themselves and said he remained on life support earlier Tuesday before dying in the late afternoon.

The mother, Wendy Lavarnia, 28, told police she had put her loaded gun on a bed within reach of her 2-year-old and 4-year-old sons while she turned to get a holster, according to court records. That's when the 2-year-old grabbed the gun and shot her 9-year-old son, who was playing video games a few feet away, police said.

Wendy Lavarnia told police she had allowed "the 2-year-old to practice pulling the trigger of this gun when empty on previous occasions," the records showed.

Lavarnia had appeared in court briefly before the boy was declared dead, and asked the judge whether she could go to the hospital to see him, but the judge said she couldn't get out of jail without posting a \$25,000 bond. The judge also said she had to stay away from victims in the case as well as any children.

She didn't have an attorney and spoke little during her brief appearance. She was jailed on suspicion of four counts of child abuse — one count for each of her four children in the home.

Lewis says investigators are examining whether to bring additional charges against the boy's parents.

The father, 31-year-old Kansas Lavarnia, arrived home as police investigated the shooting. He was arrested because he was barred from having a gun in the family home because of a theft conviction, authorities said. He completed a three-year prison sentence in 2012.

Authorities say he knew there was a gun in his home.

He said only his name and date of birth in his court appearance.

He was ordered released on his own recognizance because he isn't accused of directly causing harm in the shooting by the 2-year-old, said Maricopa County Court Commissioner Paula Williams.

He hasn't been assigned a lawyer, and there's no phone listing under his name.

A review conducted by The Associated Press and the USA TODAY Network found that minors died from accidental shootings at their own hands, or at the hands of other children or adults, at a pace of one every other day during the first six months of 2016.

"It's gun safety," Jason Burns, a neighbor of the Lavarnias, told KPHO-KTVK-TV (<https://goo.gl/qGMpyz>) . "You need to keep it locked up and you need to educate your kids that this is not a toy."

## Closer US-Russia ties uncertain as Tillerson plans trip

By JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With Russia-tinged investigations swirling around his administration, President Donald Trump has yet to fulfill a campaign pledge of closer cooperation with Moscow. A planned trip by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson to Russia could test if detente proves anything more than talk.

In a move alarming U.S. allies, Tillerson plans to skip a meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Belgium next month, according to U.S. officials. The top American diplomat almost always attends such gatherings, and Tillerson will follow up his absence in Brussels by traveling to Russia's capital shortly afterward.

The juxtaposition of the trips — one taken and one avoided — has reinforced concerns about America's commitment to NATO, which Trump has repeatedly fueled by dressing down allies as deadbeats who aren't paying enough for their own defense and who take U.S. help for granted.

Trump will take part in a meeting of NATO heads of state in Brussels on May 25, the White House announced Tuesday. Spokesman Sean Spicer said the president looks forward to discussing "issues critical to the alliance, especially allied responsibility-sharing and NATO's role in the fight against terrorism."

As far as the U.S.-Russia relationship, Trump has yet to make any major steps as president to bring the two nations closer together.

As a candidate, Trump opened the door to potentially rolling back the sanctions imposed on Russia after its annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region in 2014, a move Democrats and Republicans in Congress oppose. But as president, Trump has tamped down such suggestions as long as Russia fails to live up to its various commitments to end the fighting in Ukraine.

His administration also has resisted Russia's calls to join forces against the Islamic State group in Syria, where the former Cold War foes have long backed opposing sides in a civil war. The Pentagon is continuing only what it calls U.S.-Russian "deconfliction" contacts, designed to ensure their forces don't accidentally collide on Syria's crowded battlefield and contested skies.

But Trump's biggest roadblock to a new Russia approach may be the political realities at home.

In a remarkable public disclosure Monday, FBI Director James Comey said the bureau is investigating whether Trump campaign associates coordinated with Russian officials as Moscow sought to sway the U.S. presidential election. Several congressional committees are also investigating, ensuring the allegations of Russian meddling — and questions about Trump campaign collusion — stay in the spotlight for months to come.

Trump has denied any collaboration between his campaign and Russia. As a candidate, he spoke frequently of his admiration for Russian President Vladimir Putin and said improving relations with the traditional U.S. adversary would be positive. He argued that Russia shared America's goal of defeating IS extremists.

That's about as far as the new relationship has gone.

"Tillerson will need to publicly outline what he hopes to accomplish when he visits Moscow and what is the basis for U.S. policy toward Russia," said Heather Conley at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The prospect of Washington and Moscow teaming up, given Russia's recent actions in Ukraine, has sent chills through much of Europe. Candidate Trump exacerbated concerns by calling NATO "obsolete" and suggested the U.S. might not defend allies if they aren't paying enough for collective defense. As president, Trump has insisted the U.S. is fully committed to NATO.

Few are convinced. Western diplomats and some U.S. lawmakers expressed alarm Tuesday with Tillerson's decision to skip the upcoming NATO meeting and travel shortly afterward to Russia. Some Europeans see the decision as a U-turn from Vice President Mike Pence's pledges about safeguarding the alliance in Munich last month.

While other NATO countries send their foreign ministers — who include an ex-prime minister, top parliamentarians and several former defense chiefs — to Brussels, the U.S. will dispatch Tom Shannon, a career diplomat serving as the State Department's No. 3 official. (The No. 2 slot of deputy secretary is among dozens of unfilled posts.)

"We'll take care of the representation. This is something to be worked out, no problem," Defense

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Secretary Jim Mattis told reporters Tuesday.

The State Department wouldn't provide details Tuesday about the purpose of Tillerson's trip to Russia or whom he would meet there.

Spokesman Mark Toner said Tillerson's schedule would not allow him to attend the NATO meeting, saying the U.S. proposed alternative dates. He didn't elaborate, but Trump is expected to host Chinese President Xi Jinping for a highly anticipated meeting around the same time.

In any case, Tillerson is meeting with almost every NATO country's foreign minister in Washington this week, officials said. Yet that gathering is focused on fighting the Islamic State, not on NATO's key concern: Russia.

Rep. Steny Hoyer of Maryland, the No. 2-ranked House Democrat, said Tillerson was sending a "dangerous signal to our allies and adversaries."

"Vladimir Putin's Russia has not done anything to merit such engagement," Hoyer said.

AP Diplomatic Writer Matthew Lee and Associated Press writer Lolita C. Baldor contributed to this report.

Reach Josh Lederman on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/joshledermanAP>

## Trump to GOP: Pass health care bill or seal your fate

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR and ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Time for talk running out, President Donald Trump on Tuesday warned wavering House Republicans that their jobs were on the line in next year's elections if they failed to back a GOP bill that would upend Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act.

The countdown quickened toward an expected vote Thursday on legislation undoing much of the law that has provided coverage to some 20 million Americans. Trump huddled behind closed doors with rank-and-file Republicans just hours after GOP leaders unveiled changes intended to pick up votes by doling out concessions to centrists and hardliners alike.

"If we fail to get it done, fail to (meet) the promises made by all of us, including the president, then it could have a very detrimental effect to Republicans in '18 who are running for re-election," said Rep. Mike Conaway, R-Texas. "If it fails, then there will be a lot of people looking for work in 2018."

Trump's message to Republicans: "If you don't pass the bill there could be political costs," said Rep. Walter Jones, R-N.C.

Even with the revisions, the outlook for House passage remains dicey. After a day of cajoling votes, a senior administration official said the White House is trying to persuade about 20 to 25 House Republicans who are either opposed or undecided. House leaders and Trump can only afford to lose 21. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

At a Republican Congressional Committee fundraiser Tuesday night, Trump said the American people had handed Republicans the House, Senate and White House with an expectation they would deliver.

"These are the conservative solutions we campaign on and these are the conservative solutions the American people asked us as, a group, to deliver," he said, calling Thursday's vote "crucial" for the party and the American people.

"I think we're going to have some great surprises," he added. "I hope that it's going to all work out."

The GOP bill would scale back the role of government in the private health insurance market, and limit future federal financing for Medicaid. It would repeal tax increases on the wealthy that Democrats used to pay for Obama's coverage expansion. Fines enforcing the Obama-era requirement that virtually all Americans have coverage would be eliminated.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates that 24 million fewer people will have health insurance in 2026 under the GOP bill.

Trump warned House Republicans they'd seal their political doom if they waver, with the party potentially losing control of the House. Still, several conservatives were steadfast in their opposition even after the session with Trump.

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"The president wouldn't have been here this morning if they have the votes," said Rep. Rod Blum, R-Iowa, a member of the Freedom Caucus who complained that the GOP bill leaves too much government regulation in place.

Rep. Chris Collins, R-N.Y., said Trump told Republicans he would campaign for them if they backed the bill. Trump didn't indicate what he would do to those who vote against the bill, but during the caucus, he singled out Rep. Mark Meadows, R-N.C., an outspoken critic.

Collins said Trump asked Meadows to stand up, called him a great guy and said he is counting on Meadows to get this over the line.

"The president is very adroit at putting somebody on the spot and he did that today with Mark Meadows," Collins said. Asked if there was a threat to Meadows in that, Collins responded, "There was no threat whatsoever."

Another person at the event said Trump told Meadows, "I'm gonna come after you so hard." Trump delivered that line with a smile, but it was also lined with a touch of seriousness, said the person, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss a private meeting.

As for Meadows, he was still a "no" vote at the end of the day.

Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., told reporters that if Republicans pass the legislation, "people will reward us. If we don't keep our promise, it will be very hard to manage this."

If the bill advances, prospects are uncertain in the Senate, where Republicans hold a slim majority. Six GOP senators have expressed deep misgivings including Tom Cotton of Arkansas, who said Tuesday he cannot support the House bill.

In an Associated Press interview, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., signaled he'd use Trump's clout to pressure unhappy Republicans in his chamber.

"I would hate to be a Republican whose vote prevented us from keeping the commitment we've made to the American people for almost 10 years now," McConnell said.

The House GOP bill would end Obama-era subsidies based on peoples' incomes and the cost of insurance. A Medicaid expansion to 11 million more low-income people would disappear.

Instead, the bill would provide tax credits based chiefly on age to help people pay premiums. But insurers could charge older consumers five times the premiums they charge younger people instead of Obama's 3-1 limit.

The revisions by House GOP leaders to round up votes come at a cost — literally. Congressional budget experts had projected that the original bill would cut federal deficits by \$337 billion over a decade. But that amount is dwindling as top Republicans dole out provisions helping older and disabled people.

Democrats remain solidly opposed to the GOP repeal effort.

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Associated Press reporters Matthew Daly, Kevin Freking, Richard Lardner, Stephen Ohlemacher, Ken Thomas and Jill Colvin in Washington, and Thomas Beaumont in Iowa contributed to this report.

## Altered Facebook news headline jolts Virginia governor race

By ALAN SUDERMAN, Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — An altered Facebook headline on a newspaper story involving a statue of Robert E. Lee has blown up into a major sore point in the Virginia GOP primary for governor — another instance of politicians or their allies changing headlines to suit their own purposes on that platform.

Virginia's governor's race is being watched nationally as a possible early referendum on President Donald Trump. A group aligned with gubernatorial hopeful Corey Stewart, a firebrand conservative Trump backer, has weaponized a fake headline to attack rival Ed Gillespie, the GOP establishment's pick for governor. At issue: Gillespie's level of support for Virginia's Confederate monuments.

Stewart pledged no Confederate monuments would be removed if elected, staunchly supportive of Southern history. After Stewart protested before Charlottesville's Lee statue in February, the Washington Post wrote a story called "Protesters mob provocative Va. governor candidate as he defends Confederate statue."

A conservative nonprofit with ties to Stewart campaign aides — the Conservative Response Team

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— subsequently posted and promoted a Facebook post linking to the article but with a fake headline: "Gillespie: I'm OK with Charlottesville Taking Down the General Lee Monument." The post makes it look as if that were the Washington Post's headline.

In fact, Gillespie has said he doesn't support moving the statue and thinks local officials who approved moving it should be voted out of office. Gillespie also said it's an issue to be handled locally.

Rick Shaftan is a Republican operative who runs the Conservative Response Team's Facebook page and altered the headline. He said Gillespie's trying to have it both ways and the changed headline reflects that.

"It's all true, it's exactly what Ed thinks," Shaftan said.

Other flaps over altered headlines have erupted in at least two other states recently involving politicians or political groups close to them. The social media site has special tools available to page administrators allowing them to change headlines in ways that make it look like they were written by legitimate news organizations.

Critics complain altered headlines are a new kind of "fake news" to fool casual readers. Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan was recently called out for a staff-altered newspaper headline including the words "road kill" about legislation he criticized. In North Carolina, a GOP state senator drew fire for an altered headline stating Democratic Gov. Roy "Cooper flip flops on refugees."

During the presidential race, Facebook was criticized for not doing enough to stop patently fake news stories on its platform. Recently it announced a slew of new countermeasures.

The instances highlight Facebook's increasingly important presence in political campaigns, thanks to its vast reach and ability to target specific subgroups of voters.

The altered headline rankled Gillespie, whose own Facebook page is frequently visited by users chiding him for not supporting Confederate monuments.

The post was widely shared, and Shaftan said it was viewed more than 400,000 times. Shaftan said his group, which doesn't have to reveal its donors, paid a small amount to Facebook to promote the post. He said the issue resonates with a large group of voters opposed to an "elitist mindset" that dismisses the importance of preserving Southern statues. He said the rebellion echoes what happened last year.

"This is kind of why Trump won," Shaftan said.

Gillespie's campaign complained to Facebook in mid-February that the altered headline misrepresented his position. Facebook didn't remove the post then. It suggested, among other things, that Gillespie's campaign create a new page focused on debunking false stories.

But when asked about the post Friday by an Associated Press reporter, Facebook removed it that day. Spokesman Andy Stone said it violated Facebook's terms of not doing "anything unlawful, misleading, malicious, or discriminatory."

Gillespie spokesman Matthew Moran said the campaign's disappointed with Facebook.

"We hope Facebook will work harder to stop (Stewart) and his allies from using its platform to deceive voters," Moran said via email.

Shaftan said he found out Friday the post was removed. He reposted the story with the same altered headline hours later and paid to promote the new posting. It was still online Monday morning before Facebook removed it.

And after this story was first published, Shaftan posted it to the Conservative Response Team's Facebook page but with what he said was a "slightly more accurate headline." It reads: "Gillespie Flips Out Over True Altered Headline Over Lee Statue Removal."

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An earlier version incorrectly named the group that posted the altered headline on Facebook. It is the Conservative Response Team.

## No promises and no one above law, Supreme Court pick says

By MARK SHERMAN and ERICA WERNER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Supreme Court nominee Neil Gorsuch declared Tuesday he's made no promises to Donald Trump or anyone else about how he'll vote on abortion or other issues and testified he'll have no trouble as a justice holding anyone accountable, including the president who picked him.

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Gorsuch also called Trump's attacks on federal judges "disheartening" and "demoralizing."

During the long second day of his Senate confirmation hearings, Gorsuch made two other notable statements in response to questions from members of the Judiciary Committee, and both also related to Trump, who nominated him.

Republican Lindsey Graham of South Carolina asked Gorsuch whether Trump had asked him to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the case establishing a right to abortion, and what he would have done had Trump asked him to do so.

"Senator, I would have walked out the door," Gorsuch replied. "That's not what judges do." Later in the day, Gorsuch acknowledged that he and Trump discussed abortion during his Supreme Court interview, but only how divisive an issue it is. Their conversation touched on abortion, Gorsuch said, after Trump bemoaned his loss of Gorsuch's native Colorado in November.

When Vermont Democratic Sen. Patrick Leahy asked Gorsuch if a president is free to ignore laws on national security grounds, Gorsuch replied that "nobody is above the law in this country, and that includes the president of the United States."

Some Democratic senators who are not on the Judiciary Committee called for a pause in the confirmation process after FBI Director James Comey said Monday that the bureau is investigating Russian meddling in last year's election and potential ties between Trump associates and Russia.

Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren said on Twitter that while the investigation continues, "lifetime court appointments can wait."

Judiciary Committee chairman Chuck Grassley dismissed the idea as ridiculous.

On a day mostly devoid of drama, Gorsuch batted away Democrats' efforts to get him to reveal his views on abortion, guns and other controversial issues, insisting he keeps "an open mind for the entire process" when he makes rulings. His comments were similar in response to questions from majority Republicans as they tried to help him highlight his neutrality in the face of Democratic attempts to link him to Trump.

The abortion question was especially pointed because Trump himself has insisted he would appoint "pro-life justices" who would vote to overturn the 1973 *Roe* decision.

Gorsuch likewise wouldn't comment on litigation over Trump's efforts to ban travel to the U.S. by people from some mainly Muslim countries. He did, however, say publicly what he had previously told senators in private about Trump's attacks on judges who ruled against him on that issue.

"When anyone criticizes the honesty and integrity or the motives of a federal judge, I find that disheartening, I find that demoralizing," he said.

Sen. Richard Blumenthal, the Connecticut Democrat, asked, "Including the president?"

"Anyone is anyone," Gorsuch replied.

As Tuesday's questioning wore on, senators and Gorsuch engaged in a routine well-established in recent confirmation hearings. The nominee resists all requests to say how he feels about Supreme Court decisions, even as he is asked about them again and again. Such was the case with questions about rulings on campaign finance, abortion, gun rights, even a privacy ruling from 1965 that John Roberts explicitly endorsed in his confirmation hearing in 2005.

Gorsuch made one exception, describing the two-year-old decision extending same-sex marriage nationwide as "settled law," a term he did not apply to any other decision.

The 49-year-old Denver appeals court judge kept a smile on his face most of the day, although he seemed to show flashes of anger under questioning from some Democrats.

Sen. Richard Durbin of Illinois pressed Gorsuch on claims by a former student at the University of Colorado Law School who said Gorsuch implied in a legal ethics class in April that he believes many female job applicants unfairly manipulate companies by hiding plans to begin families. She remembered him saying that many accept job offers but quickly leave with maternity benefits.

"Those are not my words and I would never have said them," Gorsuch said. He later explained he was trying to teach students about inappropriate questions from prospective employers, not endorsing such inquiries. Other students told the AP the accuser was misconstruing the lesson.

Gorsuch reacted sharply when Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island asked him what he knew

about a multimillion-dollar ad campaign run by a conservative group that backs his nomination. Ads have been running mainly in states won by Trump last year and in which Democratic senators face reelection in 2018.

"Is it any cause of concern to you that your nomination is the focus of a \$10 million political spending effort and we do not know who's behind it?" Whitehouse asked.

Gorsuch replied: "Senator, there's a lot about the confirmation process today that I regret. A lot."

Republicans are unanimous in support of Gorsuch. Democrats remain incensed over how Republicans treated former President Barack Obama's nominee, Judge Merrick Garland, who was denied even a hearing last year after Antonin Scalia's death created an opening on the high court. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell insisted that since a presidential campaign was underway it was the right of the next president to fill the opening, and his gamble paid off when Trump won the election and chose Gorsuch.

Gorsuch declined a couple of invitations to tell senators how he felt about the treatment of Garland, saying only "I think the world of Merrick Garland."

There are now just eight justices on the nine-member high court.

In an interview with Associated Press reporters and editors Tuesday, McConnell dismissed "whining" and "crocodile tears" by Democrats over Garland, insisting they would have done the same in his position. With a Senate narrowly divided 52-48 between Republicans and Democrats, McConnell would need eight Democrats to get Gorsuch over procedural hurdles to a final confirmation vote.

He said Tuesday he remains hopeful of getting Democratic votes, but if they aren't forthcoming he sounded prepared to move unilaterally to change Senate rules and confirm Gorsuch with a simple majority.

"If there aren't 60 votes for a nominee like Neil Gorsuch it's appropriate to ask the question is there any nominee any Republican president could make that Democrats would approve," McConnell said. "Gorsuch will be confirmed I just can't tell you exactly how that will happen yet."

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Associated Press writer Mary Clare Jalonick contributed to this report.

## That's not carry-on: Loose snake slumbers on Alaska flight

By DAN JOLING, Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — Anna McConnaughy was flying to Alaska's largest city when the announcement came over the intercom: a passenger on a previous flight had brought a pet snake on board.

The passenger had gotten off the plane. The snake had not.

"The pilot came, and said, 'Guys, we have some loose snake on the plane, but we don't know where it is,'" McConnaughy said Tuesday.

Unlike the movie "Snakes On A Plane," this one wasn't venomous. Mostly, it was sleepy.

A little boy, one of seven passengers on the Ravn Alaska commuter flight Sunday from the Alaska village of Aniak to Anchorage, was climbing on his seat when he spotted the slumbering snake. It was lying partially covered by a duffel bag near the back of the plane.

"He said, 'Oh, Mom, look at this. What's that?'" McConnaughy said. "That's how we figured out there was a snake sleeping in the corner."

There was no panic. McConnaughy said. Mostly people wanted to see the snake.

A pilot came back to help, she said, leading to a short discussion with a flight attendant on how best to capture it.

"He said, 'I'll hold the bag, and you grab the snake,'" McConnaughy said. "Quite a gentleman."

The flight attendant grabbed the snake by the belly and dropped it into a plastic trash bag. It spent the rest of the flight in an overhead storage bin, and the plane reached Anchorage on schedule.

Anchorage television station KTVA first reported the incident.

McConnaughy's photos show a pale snake about 4 to 5 feet long. She said it appeared to want only to go back to sleep.

A spokesman for the airline, William Walsh, said in a statement that the snake owner had not regis-



tered the pet for travel in the cabin of the Ravn Alaska flight. After arriving in Aniak, he reported that his snake was missing and likely on the return trip to Anchorage.

The airline was thankful for the heads-up, Walsh said. However, it has specific requirements for carrying on reptiles. Ravn Alaska does not allow any large animal that's not a dog to be used as a service animal.

McConnaughey said there are plenty of snakes where she grew up in the Russian Far East. However, there are no wild snakes in most of Alaska, and she's not crazy about them, she said.

"Here in Alaska, it's kind of weird," she said.

## S. Korea prosecutors grill Park over corruption allegations

By HYUNG-JIN KIM, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea's just-ousted president returned home early Wednesday after being grilled by prosecutors in a long-awaited investigation of corruption allegations that ended her rule and now threaten to put her in jail.

The questioning of Park Geun-hye came 11 days after the Constitutional Court unanimously ruled to dismiss her over suspicions she colluded with a confidante to extort money from businesses and committed other wrongdoings. Her powers had been suspended since she was impeached by parliament in December.

"I am sorry to the people. I will sincerely undergo an investigation," Park told reporters, without elaborating, when she arrived at the prosecutors' office on Tuesday.

It was not clear if Park's brief statement meant she acknowledged the corruption allegations, since she has repeatedly denied any legal wrongdoing. South Korean politicians embroiled in scandals often offer public apologies for causing trouble though they deny any involvement.

Park's questioning lasted 14 hours and ended just before midnight. She spent about seven more hours at the prosecutors' office reviewing their report to check whether they accurately described her testimony.

When she left the prosecutors' office and got into a black sedan waiting for her, Park didn't make any comments to reporters. But when she arrived at her home in southern Seoul, live TV footage showed Park smiling, talking to ruling party lawmakers and giving a nod in gestures of greetings several times for dozens of flag-waving supporters who lined up streets leading up to her residence.

In Park's questioning, prosecutors tried to determine whether to seek an arrest warrant, according to South Korean media. Many other suspects implicated in the scandal have already been arrested, including Park's confidante Choi Soon-sil, some top government officials and Samsung heir Lee Jae-yong.

Prosecutors have previously accused Park of extortion, bribery and abuse of power, which could theoretically carry penalties of up to life imprisonment. But arresting Park would be a delicate matter because it might aggravate a national divide and create a strong conservative backlash ahead of an election in May to choose her successor, some political experts said.

Park's scandal has roiled South Korea for months, with those opposing and supporting her rule staging massive rallies. After the March 10 Constitutional Court ruling, Park supporters clashed with police, leaving three dead. On Tuesday, hundreds of Park's supporters waited for hours outside the prosecutors' office, holding anti-impeachment signs and the national flag, which has become a symbol of their protest.

Park had immunity while in office and had refused to meet with prosecutors or allow officials to search her presidential compound. After leaving office, she has continued to reject the allegations, saying "I believe the truth will certainly come out."

Park is the first democratically elected leader to be forced out of office in South Korea since democracy replaced dictatorship in the late 1980s.

It was a dramatic fall for Park, the daughter of slain dictator Park Chung-hee who became the country's first female president in early 2013 with the backing of conservatives who remembered her father as a hero who pulled the country up from poverty despite his suppression of civil rights.

Moon Jae-in, a liberal who lost the 2012 presidential election to Park, currently has a commanding lead in opinion surveys for next leader.

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

## Man named in Brady jersey case sought autographs, selfies

By CARLOS RODRIGUEZ, Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — The Mexican media executive suspected of stealing Tom Brady's jersey went to the Super Bowl as a working journalist but spent the week collecting selfies and autographs from football greats and boasting to colleagues that he was there as a fan.

Mexican journalists who were in Houston for the game and interacted with Martin Mauricio Ortega, former director of the tabloid La Prensa, told The Associated Press that he brought multiple NFL memorabilia items, including a Kurt Warner jersey he hoped to sell to the former quarterback for thousands of dollars.

"When I met him he was carrying a football helmet and he was bragging about having the signatures of former Super Bowl MVPs, and he was a little disappointed that Marshall Faulk refused to sign it," said Ariel Velazquez, who covered the game for the Mexican daily El Universal. "He also said that he was not there to work: 'There are people here to do that.'"

Brady's jersey went missing from the Patriots' locker room after the game, and set off an investigation that stretched from Boston to the border. Working with U.S. investigators, Mexican authorities obtained a search warrant and recovered the jersey March 12, along with another Brady jersey that disappeared after the 2015 Super Bowl. A helmet belonging to a Denver Broncos player was also discovered, according to NFL spokesman Brian McCarthy.

Broncos spokesman Patrick Smyth said the team was in touch with NFL security because the helmet may belong to Von Miller, MVP at the 2016 Super Bowl. Ortega may have tried to sell it: A memorabilia dealer told the AP Tuesday that Ortega once asked him how much the helmet would be worth.

A Mexican government official confirmed that the warrant targeted Ortega and the search was at his home. Speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the case, the official said an agreement was reached for an unspecified victim in the U.S. not to press charges in exchange for the jersey's return.

Ortega did not respond to multiple calls and text messages to his personal phone seeking comment.

Arturo Palafox, sports editor of the newspaper 24 Horas, said he talked to Ortega frequently in Houston both in the media center and while riding the shuttle to and from the hotel. He was surprised that someone with the rank of newspaper director would be covering the Super Bowl as a reporter.

"He told me that he was not there to work, that he was a fan," Palafox said. "And that he had asked for vacation from work to spend it at Super Bowl week, and he had attended more than 20 of them."

Velazquez and Palafox both said Ortega was carrying a bag containing a past Super Bowl jersey worn by Warner and an Emmitt Smith book. Warner was named MVP at the 2000 Super Bowl.

"He showed me Warner's jersey with his signature and told me a story about how Warner was surprised that he was in possession of the item," Palafox said. "He said he planned to gather interest from Warner to sell him the jersey for \$8,000."

An official at OEM, the publishing company that owns La Prensa, said Ortega was not part of its Super Bowl coverage and the company had no idea he was even there. The person was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

La Prensa published at least six articles in his name from Houston during Super Bowl week, including one about Brady being named MVP. The official said Ortega ordered staffers back in Mexico City to write the articles and use his byline.

"What happened with La Prensa was just because Mauricio was the director ... he didn't have to consult anybody," the official said.

The person said the company did not have contact information for Ortega after he handed in his work phone when he resigned March 14, two days after the jerseys were recovered. The person added that Ortega had worked for La Prensa since 1993.

It wasn't immediately clear how many Super Bowls Ortega attended, but the NFL said they found that he was credentialed at least as far back as 2005. A credentialed member of the media has access to prominent athletes and latitude to enter behind-the-scenes places in a stadium. Ethics policies at news organizations, credential guidelines and professional standards of conduct usually prohibit actions such

as seeking autographs while on the job. But it does happen.

The winning team's locker room after a Super Bowl is a loud, crowded place, filled with dozens of excited, celebrating players — sometimes passing around the Lombardi Trophy they just earned — along with coaches, various other team employees and members of the media.

Mostly, a player will stand or sit in front of his locker while being interviewed by what could be a dozen or more reporters at a time, a scene replicated in several spots around the room. Sometimes a player will step away for several minutes to go take a shower, leaving his belongings unguarded.

Ortega was also seen at Super Bowl auctions during the week of the big game. Mexican media have reported that Ortega's basement was full of NFL and other sports memorabilia.

Palafox said Ortega mentioned that in conversation: "He didn't tell me exactly what he had, he just said that back home he had a lot of stuff."

Brian Drent, president and CEO of Mile High Card Company, an auctioneer of fine sports memorabilia in Colorado, said Ortega told him last year that he had Miller's Super Bowl helmet.

He said Ortega had purchased a Joe Montana game-worn jersey for more than \$20,000 and flew from Mexico to Denver to pick it up. As they talked, Drent said, Ortega told him at this time he wanted to auction off a Patrick Ewing game-worn jersey and Jerry Rice game-used cleats. Then he brought up the helmet.

"He asked me what I thought Von Miller's helmet from Super Bowl 50 would be worth. I said, 'That's a great piece. But I'm not sure of its value,'" Drent said. "He said, 'Well, I have it.'"

"I asked him, 'How did you get it?' And he kind of shrugged off the question."

Drent said Ortega never offered to auction or sell the helmet and that the two never spoke again, although Ortega did try to get hold of him on Facebook.

Ortega also used his Super Bowl media access to take selfies with players, including at least one with Brady that he showed to Palafox.

"I told him that I was one of the first ones to talk to Brady after the game, and he said that he had it better and showed me a selfie with Brady," Palafox said. "I would say I was shocked to see it, but after everything that I saw that week that was just the icing on the cake."

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Associated Press journalists E. Eduardo Castillo and Peter Orsi in Mexico City, Arnie Stapleton in Denver and Howard Fendrich in Washington, D.C., contributed to this report.

## Police: Chicago teen apparently gang-raped on Facebook Live

By DON BABWIN, Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — A 15-year-old Chicago girl was apparently sexually assaulted by five or six men or boys on Facebook Live, and none of the roughly 40 people who watched the live video reported the attack to police, authorities said Tuesday.

The video marks the second time in recent months that the Chicago Police Department has investigated an apparent attack that was streamed live on Facebook. In January, four people were arrested after a cellphone footage showed them allegedly taunting and beating a mentally disabled man.

Police only learned of the latest alleged attack when the girl's mother approached the head of the police department, Superintendent Eddie Johnson, late Monday afternoon as he was leaving a department station in the Lawndale neighborhood on the city's West Side, department spokesman Anthony Guglielmi said. She told him her daughter had been missing since Sunday and showed him screen grab photos of the alleged assault.

He said Johnson immediately ordered detectives to investigate and the department asked Facebook to take down the video, which it did.

Guglielmi said Tuesday that detectives found the girl and reunited her with her family. He said she told detectives that she knows at least one of her alleged attackers, but it remained unclear how well they knew each other. He said investigators are questioning several people, but no one is considered a suspect yet and no arrests have been made.

He said Johnson was "visibly upset" after he watched the video, both by its content and the fact that there were "40 or so live viewers and no one thought to call authorities."

Investigators know the number of viewers because the count was posted with the video. To find out who they were, though, investigators would have to subpoena Facebook and would need to "prove a nexus to criminal activity" to obtain such a subpoena, Guglielmi said by email.

A spokeswoman for Facebook, Andrea Saul, said she had no specific comment on the Chicago incident but that the company takes its "responsibility to keep people safe on Facebook very seriously."

"Crimes like this are hideous and we do not allow that kind of content on Facebook," she said.

Jeffrey Urdangen, a professor at Northwestern University's law school and the director of the school's Center for Criminal Defense, said it isn't illegal to watch such a video or to not report it to the police. He also said child pornography charges wouldn't apply unless viewers were downloading the video.

## APNewsBreak: Virginia governor pardons 'Norfolk 4' sailors

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER, Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Virginia's governor pardoned four former sailors who became known as the "Norfolk Four," ending a decades-long fight to clear the men of rape and murder convictions based on intimidating police interrogations.

A spokesman for Democratic Gov. Terry McAuliffe told The Associated Press on Tuesday that the governor granted absolute pardons for the men in the 1997 rape and killing of Michelle Moore-Bosko. DNA evidence linked another man, Omar Ballard, to the crimes. He acknowledged that he was solely responsible and is serving a life sentence.

The "Norfolk Four" got their name because they were stationed at the Navy base in Norfolk. Their case drew widespread attention when their innocence claims were backed by dozens of former FBI agents, ex-prosecutors and crime novelist John Grisham.

One of the men, Eric Wilson, said the governor has "given us our lives back with these full pardons."

"We have been haunted by these wrongful convictions for 20 years, which have created profound pain, hardships, and stress for each of us and our families. We now look forward to rebuilding our reputations and our lives," Wilson said in a statement.

One of the men's attorneys said they will now qualify for compensation from the state.

Three of the men — Danial Williams, Joseph Dick and Derek Tice — were granted conditional pardons in 2009 by then-Democratic Gov. Tim Kaine and released from prison because of doubts about their guilt, but their convictions remained on the books. Wilson, who was convicted only of rape, had already been released.

A federal judge vacated Williams and Dick's convictions in October, declaring that "no sane human being" could find them guilty. Tice had his convictions erased in 2009.

A full pardon from McAuliffe was the only remedy for Wilson after he failed to get his conviction overturned in court because he had already completed his sentence when he brought the challenge. Because Wilson was convicted of rape, he has been forced to register as a sex offender and been barred from adopting his stepson.

Attorneys for the men argued absolute pardons from the governor carried greater weight than court rulings and were essential to helping the men rebuild their lives and reputations.

"These pardons close the final chapter on a grave injustice that has plagued these four men for nearly 20 years," McAuliffe spokesman Brian Coy said in an email.

George Kendall, an attorney for Dick, called on the state to investigate how the prosecutions went wrong in order to prevent "future miscarriages of justice."

"The 'Norfolk Four' and their families have lost 20 years of their lives because of the systemic failure of the Norfolk police department to seek justice and truth in this case. It's not enough to legally right this specific wrong," Kendall said in a statement.

Don Salzman, an attorney for Williams, said the men qualify for compensation from the state.

"I think compensation is absolutely the right thing to do now that the governor has officially recognized that our clients are innocent," Salzman said.

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Williams, who lived in the same apartment building as Moore-Bosko, became the prime suspect when one of her neighbors told police that Williams was romantically obsessed with the victim, a former Norfolk detective has said. That neighbor was also a childhood friend of Ballard's.

Police focused on Wilson after Dick — who was living with Williams at the time — mentioned someone named "Eric." Dick later identified Tice as one of his accomplices, according to court documents.

Prosecutors argued that the men raped Moore-Bosko while her husband was away at sea and then passed around a knife and took turns stabbing her. Their case relied solely on the men's coerced confessions as no physical evidence connected them to the crime.

Judge John A. Gibney Jr., who tossed the convictions for William and Dick, said the evidence points to a different likely scenario: Moore-Bosko let Ballard into her apartment, because they were acquaintances. Ballard then raped and stabbed her before fleeing with cash from her purse.

Williams has said he was told he would face a capital murder charge — punishable by death — if he didn't confess. He said he caved because he wanted the 11-hour interrogation to be over.

"I just couldn't take it anymore," Williams said during an April 2015 hearing. "I couldn't take being called a liar, the pressure."

Tice and Dick have also said they were threatened with the death penalty. University of San Francisco law professor Richard A. Leo, an expert on false confessions, said at the April hearing that Dick came to believe he must have participated in the crime.

The detective who questioned the men, Robert Glenn Ford, was convicted in 2011 of extortion and lying to the FBI in unrelated cases. He is serving 12 ½ years in prison for taking tens of thousands of dollars from drug dealers in exchange for getting them favorable treatment at sentencing.

Follow Alanna Durkin Richer at <http://twitter.com/aedurkinricher>. Read more of her work at <http://bigstory.ap.org/journalist/alanna-durkin-richer>.

## Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, March 22, the 81st day of 2017. There are 284 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 22, 1765, the British Parliament passed the Stamp Act to raise money from the American colonies, which fiercely resisted the tax. (The Stamp Act was repealed a year later.)

On this date:

In 1638, religious dissident Anne Hutchinson was expelled from the Massachusetts Bay Colony for defying Puritan orthodoxy.

In 1894, hockey's first Stanley Cup championship game was played; home team Montreal defeated Ottawa, 3-1.

In 1929, a U.S. Coast Guard vessel sank a Canadian-registered schooner, the I'm Alone, which was suspected of carrying bootleg liquor, in the Gulf of Mexico.

In 1933, during Prohibition, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a measure to make wine and beer containing up to 3.2 percent alcohol legal.

In 1941, the Grand Coulee hydroelectric dam in Washington state officially went into operation.

In 1958, movie producer Mike Todd, the husband of actress Elizabeth Taylor, and three other people, were killed in the crash of Todd's private plane near Grants, New Mexico.

In 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson named Gen. William C. Westmoreland to be the U.S. Army's new Chief of Staff.

In 1978, Karl Wallenda, the 73-year-old patriarch of "The Flying Wallendas" high-wire act, fell to his death while attempting to walk a cable strung between two hotel towers in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

In 1987, a garbage barge, carrying 3,200 tons of refuse, left Islip, New York, on a six-month journey in search of a place to unload. (The barge was turned away by several states and three other countries)

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until space was found back in Islip.)

In 1991, high school instructor Pamela Smart, accused of recruiting her teenage lover and his friends to kill her husband, Gregory, was convicted in Exeter, New Hampshire, of murder-conspiracy and being an accomplice to murder and was sentenced to life in prison without parole.

In 1992, 27 people were killed when a USAir Fokker F-28 jetliner bound for Cleveland crashed on takeoff from New York's LaGuardia Airport; 24 people survived.

In 1997, Tara Lipinski, at age 14 years and 10 months, became the youngest ladies' world figure skating champion in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Ten years ago: John and Elizabeth Edwards announced that her cancer had returned, but that the North Carolina Democrat planned to continue his presidential campaign. A rocket exploded 50 yards from U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon during a news conference in Baghdad's Green Zone just minutes after Iraq's prime minister said the visit showed the city was "on the road to stability." Brian Joubert became the first Frenchman in 42 years to win the world title by taking the men's event at the World Figure Skating Championships in Tokyo.

Five years ago: Coroner's officials ruled singer Whitney Houston died by drowning the previous February, but that heart disease and cocaine use were contributing factors. In a dramatic end to a 32-hour standoff, a French SWAT team slipped into the Toulouse apartment of an Islamic extremist suspected of seven killings, sparking a firefight that ended with the suspect jumping out the window and being fatally shot in the head.

One year ago: Capping a remarkable visit to Cuba, President Barack Obama sat beside President Raul Castro at a baseball game between Cuba's national team and the Tampa Bay Rays (the Rays won, 4-1); Obama left the game early to fly to Argentina for a state visit there. Suicide bombers attacked the Brussels airport and subway system, killing 32 people. Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton padded their delegate troves with victories in Arizona; Democratic challenger Bernie Sanders won caucuses in Utah and Idaho and Republican Ted Cruz claimed his party's caucuses in Utah. Death claimed Rob Ford, the troubled former mayor of Toronto, at age 46; actress Rita Gam at age 88; and rapper Phife Dawg at age 45.

Today's Birthdays: Composer-lyricist Stephen Sondheim is 87. Evangelist broadcaster Pat Robertson is 87. Actor William Shatner is 86. Senate President Pro Tempore Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, is 83. Actor M. Emmet Walsh is 82. Actor-singer Jeremy Clyde is 76. Singer-guitarist George Benson is 74. Writer James Patterson is 70. CNN newscaster Wolf Blitzer is 69. Composer Andrew Lloyd Webber is 69. Actress Fanny Ardant is 68. Sportscaster Bob Costas is 65. Country singer James House is 62. Actress Lena Olin is 62. Singer-actress Stephanie Mills is 60. Actor Matthew Modine is 58. Country musician Tim Beeler is 49. Actor-comedian Keegan-Michael Key is 46. Actor Will Yun Lee ("Hawaii Five-0") is 46. Olympic silver medal figure skater Elvis Stokjo is 45. Actor Guillermo Diaz is 42. Actress Anne Dudek is 42. Actor Cole Hauser is 42. Actress Kellie Williams is 41. Actress Reese Witherspoon is 41. Rock musician John Otto (Limp Bizkit) is 40. Actress Tiffany Dupont is 36. Rapper Mims is 36. Actress Constance Wu is 35. Actor James Wolk is 32. Rock musician Lincoln Parish (Cage the Elephant) is 27.

Thought for Today: "Kindness consists in loving people more than they deserve." — Joseph Joubert, French moralist (1754-1824).