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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 **Closed**

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Thursday, April 6

St. John's Lutheran: Nursery Circle and Good Cheer Circle at 1:30 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Nirgeria Circle at 2 p.m.

Track at Oakes, N.D. at 4 p.m.

Senior Menu: Stir fry beef with rice, oriental blend vegetables, honey fruit salad, whole wheat bread.

School Lunch: Turkey dinner, dressing, mashed potatoes, corn, pie, tea buns.

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

United Methodist: Prayer Group at 7 p.m.

Friday, April 7

State Student Congress in Pierre
9 a.m. to 3 p.m.: Groton FFA CDE

United Methodist: MOMS Group at 9:30 a.m.

Senior Menu: Tuna noodle casserole, beets, peach upside down cake, whole wheat bread.

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

United Methodist: MOMS Group, 9:30 a.m.

School Lunch: Pizza, green beans, fruit, broccoli and dip.

Saturday, April 8

ACT Test, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at GHS
State Show Choir in Aberdeen

United Methodist: Focus Days at Conde UMC.

Sunday, April 9

POPS Concert at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with Sunday



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GROTON KIWANIS CLUB

Tom Paepke, president; led the short business session for the Wednesday weekly dinner meeting. Plans are being made for the annual Kiwanis sponsored GHS athletic banquet, May 1.

Mayor Scott Hanlon was program leader, and introduced John Schuroke and Brian Schroeder, who spoke on Groton's road construction plans.

Thirteen members attended the meeting, and two guests.

Next week's program leader is Sharon Simon, followed by Steve Simon.

The president met with the membership committee after the meeting. Those committee members are Reed Litch, chairman, Mike Ehreshmann and Lee Schinkel

Groton Senior Citizens

Groton Senior Citizens met March 13. Lee Schinkel played. "His truth goes Marching on" President Ruby Donovan opened the meeting all recited the flag pledge. Minutes and treasurers report were read and accepted. get well card was sent to Ruth Pray. meeting adjourned. Cards were played. Winners from each game. Pinochle- David Kliensassor, whist- Ella Johnson and Bob Pray. Door Prizes- Pat Larson, David Kliensassor and Lee Schinkel. Lunch was served by Eunice McColister

March 20 and April birthdays were celebrated. Twenty three members were present. Bingo was played. Pat Larson won black out. Cards were played after bingo. Door prizes went to Alan Zoellner, Darlene Fischer, Grace Albrecht. Cake and ice cream were served by Alan and Sharon Zoellner and Pat Larson.

March 27 seniors met. Twenty three members attended. President Joe Schwan from the high school came and spoke on the school project. Cards were played. the winners. Canasta-Beulah Hoops and Mary Walker, Pinochle- Don Donovan, Bridge- Wally Fischer, whist- Ella Johnson and Marion Raines. Door prizes- Lois Pasch, Grace Albrecht, and Don Darwin. Lunch was served by Wally and Darlene Fischer, Lee Schinkel and David Kliensassor

Blood Drive set for April 17th

The Groton blood drive is set for Monday April 17, 2017, from 11:30 a.m. to 6:00p.m. at the Groton American Legion. Contact June Ackman at 605-397-8369 or Eunice Alberts at 605-397-8485 to make an appointment.

Living Stations to be presented Wednesday

Living Stations event at St. Elizabeth Catholic Church on April 12, 2017 at 7:00pm. The address is 107 E. 7th Avenue. There will be bars and coffee afterwards. It is being sponsored by the High School CCD students.

Flags At Half-Staff Thursday To Honor John Glenn

PIERRE, S.D. – The White House has issued a proclamation to honor the life of John Glenn on Thursday, April 6, 2017, the day of his interment.

President Trump calls for the flag of the United States to be displayed at half-staff, and he has invited governors of the United States to join in the observance.

At the President's request, Gov. Dennis Daugaard asks that all flags in the state be flown at half-staff from sunrise to sunset on Thursday.



By Richard P. Holm M.D.

Beauty is 'health'

Isn't it strange that in this era when there is an epidemic of obesity, our society seems to define beauty as thin? When there is such a difference between what's expected and what's real, it leaves people desperately in search for a solution to their problem. To add to the perceived beauty issue, several severe medical problems result or worsen from obesity, including diabetes mellitus, sleep apnea, weakness, and immobility, making weight loss as an important goal to enhance health not just for cosmetic reasons.

There seems no easy solution, not for any individual, and not for society as a whole.

Multiple studies show weight loss, even in highly motivated people, happens in about 30 out of a 100. After one year, only ten have kept it off, and in five years, only one. I know there are exceptions to this rule, but in general losing weight and keeping it off is a very difficult task.

Repeated studies show that for the most part adopted adults weigh what their biologic parents weigh, not their adopted parents. In the case of body shape, nature wins over nurture, as it seems we are destined to look a lot like our parents.

In addition, it's human nature to eat more than we need, and to rest whenever we are not required to move. That's old-world survival behavior that comes already set into our hard drives. However, it's a new world where too much food comes with too little effort. What's more, our hormonal and metabolic systems seem to manipulate hunger, metabolism, and activity to maintain or even gradually gain weight, but not to allow weight loss.

Is this overweight destiny completely out of our hands? Does our hunger have to drive us to the fast food restaurant, or could we serve our family smaller portions of a healthier fare, especially with non-starchy vegetables? Does genetics chain us to that couch, or are we still free to get up and get moving with a daily 30-minute walk. Studies show that a heavy person, in condition and eating right, lives as well and healthy as a thin person.

Bottom line: we should not set our expectations toward looking like someone we are not, rather toward living a healthier lifestyle. We should do our best to avoid the up and down and up again weight rollercoaster, which can be harmful physically while worsening self-image. We can choose to realize that beauty is not defined by weight or size. Beauty is 'health,' which comes from exercising well, eating right, and then loving ourselves for it.



Pappas earns outstanding presiding officer award

GHS Freshman, KaSandra Pappas was awarded the Senate Outstanding Presiding Officer award at the Northern District State Student Congress Contest. Also at this contest, Keri Pappas was selected as an alternate in the House of Representatives for the National Congressional Debate Contest.

THINKING ABOUT HEALTH

'Repeal and Replace' Fails; Now Obamacare Needs Fixing

By Trudy Lieberman, Rural Health News Service

The failure of the Republican-led effort to repeal and replace Obamacare represents a big victory for all kinds of citizens and interest groups that analyzed the proposed legislation and said no dice.

The day before House Speaker Paul Ryan decided not to take a vote on the American Health Care Act, a Quinnipiac Poll found that only 17 percent of American voters approved of the GOP's legislation while 56 percent did not.

You can hardly call that a vote of support for what the bill was trying to do. Too many people would be hurt, and the public along with editorial writers in newspapers across the country, got that message: The GOP plan would cause real pain. Members of Congress heard it loud and clear, and many responded to what they heard.

Older Americans would have had to pay more, sometimes thousands of dollars more to get health insurance. In 32 states, millions of Americans with incomes slightly above the poverty line who had gained coverage under their state's Medicaid expansion program would have lost their coverage.

Others already on Medicaid or joining in the future would also have been affected. The proposal called for cutting back the federal government's commitment to fund healthcare for the poor by changing the way it would pay for its share of program. That would have left the states, which jointly fund Medicaid, strapped for funds to cover everyone needing medical treatment as well as middle class families who required help paying for long-term care. Medicaid pays for about half of all nursing home stays.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA), or Obamacare, had mandated that every insurance policy sold in the individual market where people without employer or government coverage must shop had to include 10 essential benefits. Under the Republicans' plan, that mandate – that all plans include things like prescription drug coverage, emergency room services, maternity care and mental health treatment – would have disappeared.

Dropping any of the essential benefits would have helped some insurance companies whose individual policies provided only bare bones coverage until 2010 when the ACA required essential benefits to be included. Insurers would have been able to sell skimpy and cheaper coverage to those willing to gamble.

Now, even though the "repeal and replace," effort failed, we are left with a health law that needs repairs of its own.

"Many of the criticisms of the ACA are, in fact, valid," says RoseAnn DeMoro, executive director of the National Nurses United, the largest union and professional organization of registered nurses. "For all the improvements under the ACA - primarily the expansion of Medicaid and crackdown on some insurance abuses - the ACA still left 28 million without health coverage - and millions more struggling with un-payable bills and escalating out-of-pocket costs."

DeMoro's assessment hits home to many readers of this column who have complained about higher and higher premiums, sky-high deductibles and coinsurance, and lack of choice. Many have limited choice of doctors, hospitals and other providers in insurers' restrictive networks. Even worse, in some parts of the country there's only one insurer to buy from.

Those problems stem from the underlying premise of Obamacare itself. The ACA was built on top of the existing private insurance system, which means that it will work only if insurers find it to be good business. As the years went on and sick people with pre-existing conditions flocked to buy coverage, which the law guaranteed they could do, insurers found that Obamacare was not good business. They left the market or made consumers pay more out of pocket or through higher premiums.

The ACA did not provide for any serious cost containment, and the GOP plan didn't call for any either. Medical inflation continues as doctors, hospitals and drug companies raise their prices, and new expensive medical technology comes on the market before there is good evidence that it works. One consulting actuary put it this way, "Medical inflation will continue until doctors decide they have enough money and don't raise their fees."

It's not clear that the country's divisive politics will allow for any fix of the ACA's problems, let alone put any teeth into cost control measures. There could be renewed interest in a public option that could allow people to choose government-sponsored insurance rather than a policy from a commercial carrier. Or maybe there would be a move to let people in their 50s or early 60s buy into Medicare, which could spark the beginning of a movement toward Medicare for All.

I'm not betting on any of this right now, but as the failure of the GOP's "repeal and replace" shows, the public is demanding a seat at the table.

How would you fix the Affordable Care Act? Write to Trudy at trudy.Lieberman@gmail.com.

The Life of Genevieve Treml

Mass of Christian Burial for Genevieve Treml, 99, of Aberdeen and formerly of Groton will be 10 a.m. Saturday, April 8 at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church, Groton. Father Mike Kelly will officiate. Burial will follow in Groton Union Cemetery.



Visitation will be held at Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel on Friday from 5-7 p.m. with a prayer service at 7 p.m.

Jenny passed away Friday, March 31, 2017 surrounded by family at Avera Mother Joseph Manor, Aberdeen.

Genevieve (Jenny) Froehle Treml was born Feb. 18, 1918 to Joseph and Barbara Herrbach Schroh in Aberdeen, SD. She attended St. Mary's Catholic School through 8th grade. Genevieve assisted several families in the neighborhood by doing housekeeping and babysitting. On Oct 9, 1944, she married Gordon Froehle at St. Mary's Catholic Church. They established a home in Groton where Gordon farmed land north and south of town. Together, they raised 4 daughters, Margaret, Mary Jane, Janice & Rosemary. Jenny was a fantastic seamstress and sewed most of their clothes using a Singer treadle sewing machine. During their younger years, her 3 oldest daughters were usually dressed in lookalike dresses created by her. Having 4 daughters, also gave her the opportunity to sew many doll clothes. Jenny always had a set of dishtowels nearby that she was embroidering and loved to give them as

gifts. She had a great talent for crafts and her favorite projects were Christmas decorations. Jenny enjoyed hosting coffee parties with her friends and always served her homemade goodies (Pies, cakes, brownies, and cookies) which she baked every Saturday morning. During

the summer, she spent endless hours working in 2 gardens which produced enough vegetables to feed her family for the year. Every year after Gordon had completed harvest, the family of six would load up the car and travel to a nearby state and enjoy the different sights.

After her children were grown, she looked forward to having everyone home for the holidays and loved having her entire family around their table enjoying her home cooked meals.

She was a member of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church, formerly St. John the Baptist Catholic Church and was involved in altar society. For several years, she was a member of a women's birthday club which met at individual's homes and she developed close friendships with everyone.

Jenny worked at the Groton School cafeteria from 1964 through 1980.

Gordon died suddenly in July of 1975 after suffering a heart attack.

She married George Treml on Sept 20, 1980 and they continued to live in Groton. They loved gardening together and maintaining their beautiful yard. George died in July of 2000.

In June of 2007, Jenny moved to Avera Mother Joseph Manor in Aberdeen and lived there until the time of her death. Even when her health had started to decline, Jenny still enjoyed embroidering and visiting with people and loved the visits from the staff.

Genevieve is preceded in death by a daughter, Janice Peterson, sons-in-law, Raymond "Pete" Peterson and Jack Looyen, her parents, 3 brothers, Lawrence, Walter, and Joseph and 1 sister, Agnes Lapp.

She will be missed by 3 daughters, Margaret (Carl) Hennemen, New Auburn, WI, Mary Jane Looyen, Blaine, MN, Rosemary (Tom) Eisenbeisz, Aberdeen, SD. 10 Grandchildren, Jeff (Tricia) Henneman, Natalie (Don) Springer, Brenda, (Javi) Lopez, John Henneman, Doug (Sheryl) Looyen, Claudelle (Mike) Thomas, Becky Peterson, Laura (Scott) Bohls, Bradley (Michaela) Eisenbeisz, and Kevin Eisenbeisz and 17 great grandchildren.

Casketbearers will be Kevin Eisenbeisz, Jeff Henneman, John Henneman, Doug Looyen, Scott Bohls, Don Springer and Mike Thomas.

Sanford
Underground
Research
Facility



Subscribe at: Sanfordlab.org/newsletters

Deep Thoughts

Notes from the underground by Communications Director Constance Walter

Tuesday, April 4, 2017

Talking science across South Dakota



At the heart of Sanford Lab's mission is a strong commitment to "transform education." We offer internships in different disciplines to undergraduate students, introduce students to exciting research through our Davis-Bahcall Scholars Program, and inspire K-12 students and teachers using innovative teaching and learning tools.

But our commitment to education extends beyond the classroom.

In 2015, Sanford Lab began a public lecture series called "Deep Talks: Science for Everyone." Members of the public hear about our experiments, Nobel-winning research, hands-on learning and even algorithmic art. The series is held each month from October to May at the Sanford Lab Homestake Visitor Center; so far, we've reached more than 800 people in Lead, alone.

This success encouraged us to broaden our reach. So, beginning in February, Mike Headley, executive director of the SDSTA, and Jaret Heise, science director, took to the road, giving public talks at Dakota State University, Augustana University, the University of South Dakota and Northern State University.

"We were thrilled to welcome Sanford Lab to DSU," said Michael

Gaylor, assistant professor of chemistry at DSU. "It was a wonderfully stimulating evening of intellectualism and discourse that informed and inspired. This talk did much to remind folks that this world-class scientific research facility is pushing the bounds of scientific knowledge right here in our own backyard."

With more than \$170 million in spending across the state, Sanford Lab "has a strong, positive impact on South Dakota's economy," Headley added. "And through a partnership with Black Hills State University, we've developed high-quality curriculum units, based on our science, that give K-12 teachers innovative tools that get students excited about science."

Sanford Lab's education specialists also offer assembly programs and field trips. Since September of 2015, nearly 14,000 South Dakota students have participated in Education and Outreach programs.

While on the road, Headley also gave presentations to the Optimist and Rotary clubs in Sioux Falls. "We were pleased to have the opportunity to host Sanford Lab," said David Pfeifle, program chair of the Sioux Falls Downtown Rotary. "It was a great program and a real success."

In all, the statewide Deep Talks

Mike Headley speaks to the Sioux Falls Downtown Rotary.
Photo by Constance Walter

presentations drew more than 400 students, faculty and members of the public.

"We've enjoyed sharing the exciting news across the state about our current experiments and plans for lab expansion to host a new generation of world-leading science," Headley said.

"Deep Talks: Science on the Road" will continue in the fall.

Talks by the Numbers:

- Deep Talks attendance in Lead (Dec. 2015-March 2017): **801**
- Deep Talks on the Road (Feb.-March 2017): **408**
- K-12 students reached (Sept. 2015-Feb. 2017): **13,568**
- Dollars spent in South Dakota (2008-2016): **\$171 million**

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Today in Weather History

April 6, 1959: Dust storms impacted much of the state of South Dakota beginning on the 6th and on into the 7th. The preceding drought period had left a little moisture in the soil, so the fall-plowed fields in exposed locations eroded seriously. Strong winds on the 6th and 7th lifted the loose soil, creating areas of blowing dust. In the localities, visibility was less than a quarter mile for short periods. Some observers stated that it was the worst dust event since the 1930s.

April 6, 2006: Severe thunderstorms the morning of the 6th produced large hail up to 1.75 inches in diameter near Miller in Hand County. Later on, heavy rains of 3 to 6 inches fell from around midday through the afternoon hours causing flash flooding across parts of Spink, Clark, and Day counties. Many county and township roads were flooded with several of the roads damaged or completely washed out. Areas around Frankfort, Doland, Turton, Conde, Crandall, Raymond, Butler and Bristol were most affected. Many roads were closed. Also, several basements were flooded and sewers were backed up.

April 6, 2008: An area of low pressure moving across South Dakota spread heavy snow of 6 to 15 inches across much of central, north central, and northeast South Dakota. Also, strong winds gusting to 25 to 40 mph caused some blowing and drifting snow. Many activities were cancelled and roads became treacherous. Many vehicles went into the ditch and several accidents also occurred. Snowfall amounts included, 6 inches at Mission Ridge, Isabel, Mellette, and Britton, 7 inches at Faulkton, Andover, Columbia, Timber Lake, and Eureka, 8 inches at Bath, Selby, Mobridge, and Leola, 9 inches at Hosmer, 10 inches at Ipswich, 11 inches at Mound City, and 6 miles east of Hayes. Locations with a foot or more of snow included 12 inches at Roscoe and Elm Lake, 13 inches at Eagle Butte, Onaka, and 23 miles north of Highmore, and 15 inches at Bowdle.

1936 - A tornado outbreak in the Deep South resulted in a total of 446 deaths and eighteen million dollars damage. It was a "Tale of Two Cities". During the evening of the 5th a tornado hit Tupelo MS killing 216 persons, injuring 700 others, and causing three million dollars damage. The next morning the paths of two tornadoes met about 8:30 AM and cut a swath four blocks wide through Gainesville GA killing 203 persons, injuring 934, and causing thirteen million dollars damage. Eight to ten feet of debris filled the streets following the storm. At least 70 persons died in the Cooper Pants Factory, the greatest tornado toll of record for a single building. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1983 - The temperature at Denver, CO, dipped to a record cold seven degrees above zero. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Rain and melting snow caused flooding from New England to Ohio. Flooding in the Merrimack Valley of Massachusetts was the worst in fifty years, causing forty-two million dollars damage. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A powerful storm produced wind gusts to 75 mph around Chicago, IL, and wind gusts to 92 mph at Goshen IN. The high winds created twenty-five foot waves on Lake Michigan. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)






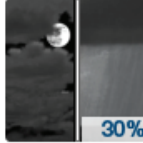

1989 - Unseasonably hot weather prevailed in California. Afternoon highs of 91 degrees in Downtown San Francisco, 93 degrees at San Jose, 98 degrees at San Diego, 103 degrees at Santa Maria, 104 degrees at Riverside, and 106 degrees in Downtown Los Angeles established records for the month of April. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Snow developed in the northeastern U.S. for the second time in the month. In Virginia, a heavy wet snow blanketed northern and central sections of the Shenandoah Valley, and eastern foothills, with up to 12 inches reported around Harrisonburg. Heavy snow also blanketed the high elevations of West Virginia, with 10 inches reported at Snowshoe. An inch of snow at Syracuse NY raised their total for the winter season to a record-tying 161.3 inches. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)


2005 - Thunderstorms erupted and produced severe weather including 32 reports of tornadoes, most of which touched down in Mississippi and Louisiana. Between 20 and 25 homes were destroyed and 7 people were injured. Mississippi governor Haley Barbour declared a state of emergency (CNN).

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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
						
Sunny	Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny and Breezy	Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy then Chance Showers	Chance Showers
High: 54 °F	Low: 33 °F	High: 70 °F	Low: 46 °F	High: 79 °F	Low: 46 °F	High: 64 °F

Today



Highs in the 50s

Friday




FIRE DANGER

Breezy Southerly Winds gusting near 35 mph over eastern SD

Warmer

Highs 65 to 80°

Saturday





FIRE DANGER

Winds shifting out of the Northwest during the day

Warmest

Highs 75 to 82°

National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD   Updated: 4/6/2017 3:47 AM Central

Published on: 04/06/2017 at 4:10AM

Dry weather and warming temperatures will be the rule through Saturday as an upper level ridge of high pressure builds across the region. Temperatures by Saturday will top out in the mid 70s to low 80s, which is well above normal for this time of year. The prolonged dry weather, well above normal temperatures, and breezy winds will combine to create dangerous fire weather conditions Friday and Saturday afternoon!

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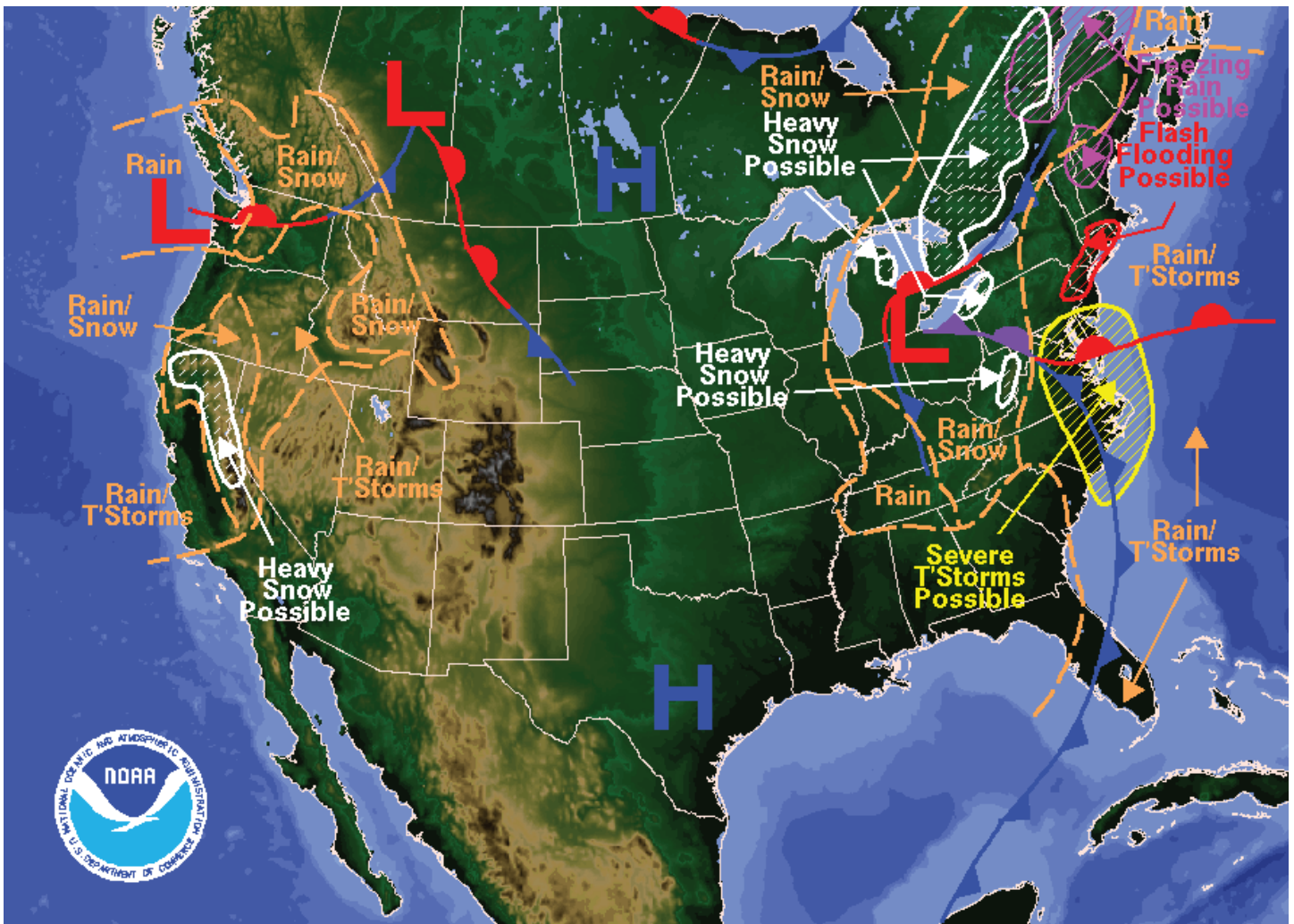
Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 51.8 F at 5:40 PM
Low Outside Temp: 35.1 F at 11:58 PM
High Gust: 18.0 Mph at 2:53 PM

Snow: Precip: 0.07

Today's Info

Record High: 85° in 1991
Record Low: 6° in 2007
Average High: 52°F
Average Low: 28°F
Average Precip in April.: 0.27
Precip to date in April.: 0.07
Average Precip to date: 2.45
Precip Year to Date: 0.66
Sunset Tonight: 8:08 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:02 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Thu, Apr 06, 2017, issued 4:49 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts



FACING REALITY

Linus approached Charlie Brown in a comic strip and boldly asked, "Charlie Brown, do you want to know what the trouble is with you?"

"No," he answered.

"That's the trouble with you, Charlie Brown," screamed Linus. "You don't want to know what the trouble is with you!"

Charlie Brown is not the only one with that problem.

Few want to hear or accept the fact that "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." But that does not change anything.

To refuse to hear something does not mean that it was not said. And if we deny something it does not mean that it is not true. Sin is sin and it comes in all sizes and shapes, colors and containers, with many options and countless opportunities.

We all seem to have a Charlie Brown attitude. Few want to admit that we have broken God's laws or that we have refused to follow the teachings of Jesus. But Paul said all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. That includes each and every one of us.

Denying the fact of sin will not keep us from sinning nor eliminate the penalty that comes from being disobedient to God. No one is foolish enough to believe that if they deny the reality of death, they will live forever. We must all admit and accept what is: "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life!"

Prayer: Open our hearts, Father, to the truths in Your Word and reality of sin and salvation. May we look to You in faith, believing that You alone can save us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Dakota Cash
01-11-20-27-35
(one, eleven, twenty, twenty-seven, thirty-five)
Estimated jackpot: \$67,000

Hot Lotto
07-15-30-39-45, Hot Ball: 1
(seven, fifteen, thirty, thirty-nine, forty-five; Hot Ball: one)
Estimated jackpot: \$5.29 million

Mega Millions
Estimated jackpot: \$20 million

Powerball
08-20-46-53-54, Powerball: 13, Power Play: 2
(eight, twenty, forty-six, fifty-three, fifty-four; Powerball: thirteen; Power Play: two)
Estimated jackpot: \$40 million

SD Supreme Court denies ABC bid to avoid 'pink slime' trial

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Supreme Court has rejected a move by ABC to avoid trial in a defamation lawsuit over the television network's reports on a beef product that critics dubbed "pink slime." The high court denied the petition on Monday. The network and correspondent Jim Avila had asked the state Supreme Court to reverse a lower court's order denying summary judgment.

A spokeswoman for ABC declined to comment.

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

The company praised the high court's decision and said it looks forward to presenting its case to a jury. A trial is scheduled to start in June.

Expansion of hog facility approved in southeast South Dakota

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — Despite concerns from local residents, a county in southeastern South Dakota has approved the expansion of a hog facility.

The Yankton County Commission voted 4-1 on Tuesday in favor of granting a conditional-use permit for the placement of a 2,400-head pork production barn southeast of Lesterville.

Residents and land owners have expressed concerns about an expanded operation, citing the smell they allege stems from poor stewardship by the current property owners. Representatives of the property owners say improvements have been made and they'll continue improving in the future.

"They want to add on to bring it up to the level that is allowed by current zoning," said Don Kettering, the commission's chairman.

The 90-minute discussion at Tuesday's meeting about the expansion is part of a larger debate over the

future of expanded value-added agriculture in the county, the Yankton Daily Press and Dakotan (<http://bit.ly/2nDJOUT>) reported.

Kettering said the Yankton County's planning and zoning department will be enforcing regulations, noting that other counties have been successful in the past.

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

South Dakota man charged with murder in wife's death

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota man has been jailed on \$1 million cash bond after prosecutors charged him in the death of his wife.

Forty-three-year-old Irving Jumping Eagle appeared in court Wednesday following his arrest in the death of 33-year-old Alicia Jumping Eagle. She was found dead in the couple's Sioux Falls apartment Monday.

Irving Jumping Eagle is charged with first-degree murder, second-degree murder and four counts of manslaughter. His public defender did not return a phone call for comment.

Police allege Irving Jumping Eagle had blood on himself Monday afternoon while at a gas station about 300 miles away near Streeter, North Dakota. The Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2oE5HYP>) reports the car he was driving hit a bridge pillar Tuesday morning in Deuel County, in eastern South Dakota. He was taken to a hospital and then jailed in Sioux Falls.

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

Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press

The Daily Republic, Mitchell, April 4

Time for tougher sentences

Sentencings in some high-profile cases have been a Rubik's Cube mystery lately.

We don't understand how judges come up with their decisions, but we feel like there needs to be more consistency, and perhaps harsher penalties, with sentences.

Two cases we reported on last week especially got us thinking.

Donald London shot, injured and nearly killed a state Highway Patrol officer received a 40-year prison sentence for his role in the 2015 Kimball standoff, but Matthew Novak — who violently cut a woman with a knife and killed her in Woonsocket — got 30 years in prison.

Then, on Monday, a judge decided to sentence Albert Fischer, of Lake Andes, to only 60 days in prison for driving drunk and crashing his vehicle, which led to the death of his younger brother.

When comparing each instance side by side, does any of that make sense?

We certainly don't believe so.

Again, we don't fully understand the process in which judges go through to make these hard decisions. Judges have a huge responsibility in holding the fate of a person's life when sentencing them for a crime, and we respect each of them for those duties.

Though, we wonder if South Dakota's crime rate has risen in recent years because many sentences aren't harsh enough. According to a report last month from the Attorney General's Office, South Dakota law enforcement agencies reported a total of 40,069 arrests, a 5.84 percent increase from 2014.

The vast majority of those crimes are not violent in nature, and many of them are drug-related. But we presume the people who receive light sentences for drug offenses are those who typically become violent offenders.

We appreciate judges who are up for the immense task we place before them, but maybe it's time we see some harsher sentences for violent crimes, and perhaps a tougher stance against drug offenses as well.

While some might argue stricter sentences wouldn't deter someone from committing an act that's already illegal, we believe the threat of longer prison terms for violent or repeat drug offenders couldn't possibly

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have a negative impact on the crime rate in South Dakota. And with a stronger deterrent in place, an individual might think twice about driving drunk, firing a gun at law enforcement officers or stabbing their housemate in the neck.

Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, Yankton, April 3

A new era of recycling looms

A big change is coming for Yankton. Will residents be ready?

The change is single-stream recycling, a system by which residents won't have to sort out their recyclable refuse items into different categories. Instead, items to be recycled can be placed in one bin — a single stream — and will be sorted out down the line.

It's overdue and it's needed. Yankton has not exactly been at the forefront in regards to wide-scale recycling, and the need to join the 21st century in this regard was essential.

Of course, it's not that city officials have ignored the issue. They've debated the best course for pursuing a more aggressive recycling program for some time, in part because it does come at a cost. Finally, it was determined that going with the single-stream method would be the easiest and, thus, most accepted approach for residents.

This process will kick into gear next month, but the signs of its arrival will be everywhere.

For many residents, that sign will take the shape of two large (92-gallon) upright carts. As the Press & Dakotan reported Saturday, there will be a black cart for general garbage and a red cart for recyclables. There are currently 9,000 of these carts stacked near the city's wastewater treatment plant, creating a sight that looks like a black and red mountain range. Workers will start delivering these carts to residents in about two weeks.

So, as was asked at the top of this piece, will residents be ready? The city will be making every effort to bring people up to speed. Each cart will come with a packet of instructions telling people what kind of items go in which cart, what changes there may be in recycling (for instance, there will no longer be any distractions between No. 1 and No. 2 plastics) and how to place the carts out for pickup.

It's an indication of just how big of a change this is going to be for Yankton residents.

So far, city officials say there have been a few questions about the new process. However, the best guess is there will be a lot more coming as the carts are distributed and as the actual change in the process is deployed.

People in general want to do recycling. It has a lot of environmental benefits and is just better for everyone. But the fact is, recycling takes some work — and when residents are asked to sort out different items into various separate categories, it can be a lot of work. The single-stream system reduces that workload and makes the process very simple. (The public will be asked, however, to rinse out recyclable items before placing them in the bins.) The simplicity means convenience, and that will make the program work well in the long run.

The first step (besides receiving the new carts) will be adjusting to the next method. It's a change of habit for some, but a better way to dispose of recyclables for everyone. Ultimately, it will be a big plus for Yankton.

Capital Journal, March 28, 2017

New criminal booking photos law a step in right direction

The movement for a more open and transparent government scored at least one concrete victory during the 2017 South Dakota legislative session.

Booking photos of criminals will be opened up to the public starting on July 1, thanks to a bill supported by Attorney General Marty Jackley. This is something for which the newspaper industry in our state has fought for years.

It's been a long time coming and, as Jackley was quoted as saying in the story published in Tuesday's edition of the Capital Journal, making booking photos available to the public makes good government sense.

There are several reasons for this. Perhaps the most important reason for journalists is that being able to secure a booking photo helps to ensure that the right person is identified when we're reporting on crime. That's a big deal to us.

Of lesser importance is the fact that the new law brings South Dakota into line with almost every other state in the country, most of which long-ago passed laws that made booking photos open to the public.

We feel that making booking photos open to the public is a step in the right direction for South Dakota. The more open our government can be at all levels, the better.

Vigil held for 5 children killed in Spearfish house fire

SPEARFISH, S.D. (AP) — Hundreds of people turned out for a candlelight vigil to remember five children killed in a Spearfish house fire over the weekend.

The Tuesday night gathering was outside the home where the fire broke out early Saturday. People put flowers and stuffed animals on a memorial and lit candles.

Fire Chief Mark Sachara called it "an amazing amount of support from the community."

Police Lt. Boyd Dean says the investigation into the fire is ongoing, with some results possible by the end of the week.

The victims were from Spearfish and Sturgis and ranged in age from 6 to 11.

GateHouse names new publisher for group of 8 Ohio newspapers

WOOSTER, Ohio (AP) — GateHouse Media has named a new publisher and regional editor for a group of newspapers in northern and eastern Ohio.

Veteran publisher and advertising executive Bill Albrecht will be publisher for eight newspapers: The Review in Alliance, the Ashland Times-Gazette, The Daily Jeffersonian in Cambridge, The Canton Repository, the Kent-Ravenna Record-Courier, The Independent in Massillon, The Times-Reporters in Dover and New Philadelphia, and The Daily Record in Wooster.

New regional editor Mike Shearer oversees their news operations.

The recent sale of the Dix Communications newspaper chain to Pittsford, New York-based GateHouse included the Alliance, Ashland, Cambridge, Kent and Wooster publications.

Albrecht most recently was president of Argus Leader Media in South Dakota. He previously was president for Gannett's Media Network of Central Ohio, where Shearer was executive editor.

Senators want more details on Corps' Dakota Access decisions

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — Two Democratic U.S. senators want the chief of the Army Corps of Engineers to explain the agency's decision-making that ultimately paved the way for completion of the disputed Dakota Access oil pipeline.

Delaware Sen. Tom Carper and Washington Sen. Maria Cantwell are ranking Democratic members on Senate environment and energy committees. They sent a letter to Corps Lt. Gen. Todd Semonite Monday asking for a host of information including communications between the agency and Trump administration officials.

President Donald Trump pushed for the pipeline's completion shortly after taking office in January, despite the desire of American Indian tribes that wanted more environmental study.

Texas-based Energy Transfer Partners last month finished building the \$3.8 billion pipeline, which should be fully operational later this month and moving North Dakota oil to Illinois.

No injuries, no major damage in Mitchell business fire

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — No one was hurt when a small fire broke out in a heater at a Mitchell manufacturing company.

The Daily Republic reports (<http://bit.ly/2nXdn5A>) that AKG employees were evacuated for about 40

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minutes Tuesday night.

Fire Department Battalion Chief Steve Nedved said the fire was contained to an exhaust unit, and there was no structural damage to the building.

The company makes radiators and other coolers for more than 70 companies, including Caterpillar, John Deere, Case New Holland and Cummins. It is one of the largest employers in Mitchell, with nearly 150 workers.

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

Showdown at hand over Trump's Supreme Court nominee

By ERICA WERNER, AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Senate showdown is at hand over President Donald Trump's Supreme Court nominee, and it could change the Senate and the court for years to come.

Democrats escalated their attacks against Judge Neil Gorsuch ahead of key votes set for Thursday, portraying him as an ally of the powerful and an enemy of the weak. Republicans defended him, accusing Democrats of trying to block Gorsuch out of frustration over Trump's election victory.

"Democrats would filibuster Ruth Bader Ginsburg if President Donald Trump nominated her," said Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., naming one of the more liberal sitting justices. "There is simply no principled reason to oppose this exceptional, exceptional Supreme Court nominee."

Democrats begged to differ, returning again and again to McConnell's decision last year to deny consideration to then-President Barack Obama's Supreme Court nominee, Judge Merrick Garland, who was ignored for nearly a year by Senate Republicans after the death of Justice Antonin Scalia.

Instead McConnell kept Scalia's seat open, a calculation that is now paying off hugely for Republicans and Trump, who will be able to claim the biggest victory of his presidency to date if Gorsuch is confirmed as expected.

"For the first time in history, we are considering a nominee for a stolen Supreme Court seat, and that alone should be reason for everyone who cares about this institution to turn down this nominee," said Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., as he wrapped up a 15-and-a-half-hour overnight talk-a-thon to underscore his party's opposition to Gorsuch.

The confrontation will play out Thursday as 44 Democrats and independents try to block Gorsuch by denying Republicans the 60 votes needed to proceed to final passage. McConnell and fellow Republicans intend to respond by unilaterally changing Senate rules to remove the 60-vote filibuster requirement for Gorsuch and all future Supreme Court nominees, reducing it to a simple majority in the 100-member Senate.

If the maneuvering plays out as expected it will set the stage for a final confirmation vote on Gorsuch Friday, allowing him to join the court in time to hear the final set of cases this term.

Senators on both sides of the aisle lamented the trajectory they were on toward the Senate rules change, though they themselves were in position to prevent it from happening and failed to do so.

Moderate Republican Sen. Susan Collins of Maine said roughly 10 senators of both parties worked over the weekend to come up with a deal to stave off the so-called "nuclear option," as the rules change is known, but couldn't come to agreement. In 2005, a bipartisan deal headed off GOP plans to remove the filibuster barrier for lower-court nominees, but in 2013 Democrats took the step, leaving the filibuster in place only for Supreme Court justices.

And now, with political polarization at an extreme, the Senate is on the verge of killing off the Supreme Court filibuster, the one remaining vestige of bipartisanship on presidential appointments. For now the filibuster barrier on legislation will remain, though many fear it could be the next to go.

"I fear that someday we will regret what we are about to do. In fact, I am confident we will," said Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz. "It is imperative we have a functioning Senate where the rights of the minority are protected regardless of which party is in power at the time."

Nonetheless, McCain was prepared to vote with McConnell on the rules change, saying he felt he had no choice.

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Gorsuch now counts 55 supporters in the Senate: the 52 Republicans, along with three moderate Democrats from states that Trump won last November — Joe Manchin of West Virginia, Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota and Joe Donnelly of Indiana. A fourth Senate Democrat, Michael Bennet from Gorsuch's home state of Colorado, has said he will not join in the filibuster against Gorsuch but has not said how he will vote on confirmation.

Associated Press writers Mark Sherman, Mary Clare Jalonick and Jill Colvin contributed to this report.

Turkey: Syria autopsies show chemical weapons used in attack

By **BASSEM MROUE** and **SUZAN FRASER**, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Turkey's justice minister said on Thursday that results from autopsies conducted on three Syrians brought to Turkey after this week's assault in Syria's Idlib province that killed 86 people show the victims were subjected to a chemical weapons attack.

The statement came as international outrage is growing over the harrowing attack on the town of Khan Sheikhoun in northern Syria. In France, the country's foreign minister called for President Bashar Assad's government to be prosecuted over its alleged use of chemical weapons.

The Syrian government has denied it carried out any chemical attack on the town in Idlib.

Foreign Minister Walid Moallem reiterated that stance on Thursday, telling reporters in Damascus that his government never used and will not use chemical weapons in Syria.

"The Syrian Arab Army has never used chemical weapons and will not use chemical weapons against Syrians and even against terrorists," Moallem told the news conference.

In Turkey, state-run Anadolu and the private DHA news agencies quoted Justice Minister Bekir Bozdag as saying that "it was determined after the autopsy that a chemical weapon was used."

Turkish officials say that close to 60 victims of the attack were brought to Turkey for treatment and three of them died.

Tuesday's attack happened just 100 kilometers (60 miles) from the Turkish border, and the Turkish government — a close ally of Syrian rebels — set up a decontamination center at a border crossing in the province of Hatay, where the victims were initially treated before being moved to hospitals.

Russia's Defense Ministry said the toxic agents were released when a Syrian airstrike hit a rebel chemical weapons arsenal and munitions factory on the town's eastern outskirts.

At the Damascus presser, Moallem also echoed that statement, saying the Syrian army bombed a warehouse belonging to al-Qaida's branch in Syria which contained chemical weapons.

The area of the town is difficult to access and as more time passes in the aftermath of the attack, it will be increasingly difficult to determine exactly what happened.

Turkish media have reported that World Health Organization experts took part in the autopsies of Syrian victims conducted in a hospital in the Turkish city of Adana late Wednesday.

In France, Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault urged for a resumption of Syrian peace talks and said he wants Assad's government prosecuted over its alleged use of chemical weapons.

He told CNews television on Thursday that a new U.N. resolution and Syrian peace negotiations should be a top priority — not rushing into new military interventions. Ayrault said that "France is still seeking to talk with its partners on the Security Council ... Russia in particular."

"These crimes must not remain unpunished. ... One day, international justice will rule on Assad," Ayrault said.

Russia argued at a U.N. Security Council meeting on Wednesday against holding Assad's government responsible for the Idlib attack. The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, warned that the Trump administration would take action if the Security Council did not.

U.S. President Donald Trump and other world leaders said the Syrian government was to blame, but Moscow, a key ally of Assad, said the assault was caused by a Syrian airstrike that hit a rebel stockpile of chemical arms.

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Early U.S. assessments showed the use of chlorine gas and traces of the nerve agent sarin in the attack Tuesday that terrorized Khan Sheikhoun, according to two U.S. officials who weren't authorized to speak publicly on the matter and demanded anonymity.

The effects of the attack overwhelmed hospitals around the town, leading paramedics to send patients to medical facilities across rebel-held areas in northern Syria, as well as to Turkey. The Turkish Health Ministry said three victims died receiving treatment inside its borders. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group put the toll so far at 86 killed.

Victims of the attack showed signs of nerve gas exposure, the World Health Organization and Doctors Without Borders said, including suffocation, foaming at the mouth, convulsions, constricted pupils and involuntary defecation. Paramedics were using fire hoses to wash the chemicals from the bodies of victims.

Medical teams also reported smelling bleach on survivors of the attack, suggesting chlorine gas was also used, Doctors Without Borders said.

The magnitude of the attack was reflected in the images of the dead — children piled in heaps for burial, a father carrying his lifeless young twins.

The visuals from the scene were reminiscent of a 2013 nerve gas attack on the suburbs of Damascus that left hundreds dead and prompted an agreement brokered by the U.S. and Russia to disarm Assad's chemical stockpile. Western nations blamed government forces for that attack, where effects were concentrated on opposition-held areas.

Fraser reported from Ankara, Turkey.

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. WHY SOME DEMOCRATS HAVE A TOUGH CALL TO MAKE

Ten lawmakers facing re-election in states won by Trump are facing pressure from both sides over Supreme Court nominee Neil Gorsuch.

2. FOR ASSAD, AN ENORMOUS GAMBLE

If the Syrian president's forces were behind the chemical attack in the country's north, a war crime, it would come just as the West made clear they are no longer seeking his immediate removal.

3. WHERE TRUMP, XI DIFFER

As the U.S. president plays host to his Chinese counterpart, the world's two largest economies and carbon polluters are taking divergent paths on climate policy.

4. HOW AFGHANS ARE TRYING TO GET TRUMP'S ATTENTION

Kabul is dangling a wealth of minerals, including lithium, the silvery metal used in mobile phone and computer batteries considered essential to modern life.

5. GOP HEALTH DEAL ELUSIVE AS HOUSE NEARS RECESS

And in an unexpected twist, "Obamacare" — never very popular — seems to be rising in public opinion polls.

6. PRICE OF GRIEVING HIGH FOR HAITIANS

Burial costs an average of \$5,000 per household — well over what most residents of the impoverished Caribbean nation earn in a year.

7. BALTIMORE READY FOR POLICING CHANGES

Residents are expected to offer commentary, critiques and recommendations regarding a proposed agreement to overhaul the city's troubled police force.

8. CAROLINAS BRACING FOR SEVERE WEATHER

Forecasters warn residents to keep weather radios and cellphones handy as a second round of powerful storms threatens the region.

9. WWI INNOVATIONS STILL RELEVANT A CENTURY LATER

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Tanks, machine guns, chemical weapons, portable X-rays, trench coats and wristwatches are just some of the creations still with us today.

10. WHAT TO EXPECT AT AUGUSTA NATIONAL

Strong winds and a fall down a staircase by Dustin Johnson, the Masters' pre-tournament favorite, could change the complexion of golf's first major.

Weather, DJ's fall should make for wild 1st round at Masters

By JIM LITKE, AP Sports Writer

AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP) — Strong winds and a fall down a staircase by the Masters pre-tournament favorite could change the complexion of the season's first major.

Dustin Johnson, the world's No. 1-ranked golfer, injured his lower back late Wednesday afternoon in what his agent described as a "serious" fall down the staircase at a home he'd rented for the week. Johnson goes off in the last group for Thursday's opening round, but even the late 2:03 p.m. starting time may not give him enough time to recover.

"He landed very hard on his lower back and is now resting, although quite uncomfortably," David Winkle, Johnson's agent said in an email. "He has been advised to remain immobile and begin a regimen of anti-inflammatory medication and icing, with the hope of being able to play tomorrow."

Johnson has won his last three starts. His questionable status further scrambled what was already predicted to be a wild first round.

The weather forecast for the region, socked by powerful storms two of the last three days, calls for cool, overcast skies and steady winds of 20-30 mph, with gusts up to 40 mph. Augusta National can bedevil the world's best in tame conditions. But strong winds make hitting fairways and approach shots even tougher, and if the greens dry out, putting can turn treacherous.

Johnson was at the club earlier in the day to practice before the wave of storms forced Masters officials to close the course. Coincidentally, he predicted earlier in the week that tough conditions could make the leaderboard resemble a game of musical chairs.

"The short game is going to be very important around here because if it's blowing 27 miles an hour, like it's forecasted for, it's going to be tough to hit the greens," Johnson said. "You're going to really have to be careful where you hit it and just try to make pars."

Some other things to watch for at the Masters:

SLAMMING RORY: Only five players have won the career Grand Slam. For the third year in a row, Rory McIlroy has a chance to join the exclusive club. The Masters has been the only major missing from his resume since his victory at the 2014 British Open. Strangely enough, it looked like Augusta was going to provide his first major title six years ago. McIlroy went to the final round with a four-stroke lead, only to post a horrific 80 that included a shot behind a cabin along the 10th fairway.

A NEW DAY: Augusta National at times can favor emotion. Who can forget Ben Crenshaw winning just days after he was a pallbearer at swing coach Harvey Penick's funeral? That might bode well for Australian Jason Day, who wasn't entirely sure he was going to play a few weeks ago when his mother came to America to have surgery for lung cancer. The operation went well and her prognosis suddenly got a whole lot better. "I owe everything to her," Day said.

SPIETH'S COMEBACK: No one was more eager than Jordan Spieth for another shot at the Masters. The young Texan had a five-shot lead going to the back nine on Sunday last year, seemingly a lock for his second straight green jacket. It all fell apart at the par-3 12th, where he dumped two shots in the water and surrendered the lead with a quadruple-bogey 7. "We'll step out and try and get a chance to win on Sunday on the back nine again," Spieth said. "That's all we're asking for. That's it. Just that small little piece."

DEFENDING CHAMP: Danny Willett hasn't been much of a factor since winning the green jacket a year ago with a bogey-free 67 in the final round. His best finish of 2017 is a tie for fifth at the Maybank Classic, an Asian-European Tour event with a weaker field than any tournament played on this side of the Atlantic

this year. He's slipped to No. 17 in the world rankings. "You've got to either climb down or stay up there," he said, "and it's incredibly difficult to stay up there all the time."

TIGER WATCH: No need to look for Tiger Woods. The four-time Masters champion is sitting out the tournament for the second year in a row — and third time in the last four years — as he deals with another injury. Woods missed a chance to play on the 20th anniversary of his first major title, a 12-shot runaway at the 1997 Masters that signaled his emergence as the game's dominant player.

Dems in Trump states pressured from both sides on court pick

By MARY CLARE JALONICK, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It's a rare and momentous decision — one by one, seated at desks centuries old, senators will stand and cast their votes for a Supreme Court nominee.

It's a difficult political call in the modern era, especially for the 10 Democrats facing tough re-election next year in states that President Donald Trump won.

"Resist" is the rallying cry for the Democratic Party's liberal base, and that applies to all Trump nominees, even Neil Gorsuch, a mild-mannered jurist who won unanimous Senate backing to the appellate court in 2006. Democratic voters have flooded lawmakers' offices with calls, protested outside state offices and tweeted vulgarities if senators even hint at being conciliatory with Trump and the GOP.

"I come from a state that no matter how I vote, 50 percent of the people are mad," says Missouri Sen. Claire McCaskill, who will oppose Gorsuch. "So I'm kind of used to this. The only difference is that the ones who are happy are really happy."

Already in the minority, Democrats face tough political odds in next year's midterms, defending 25 seats for caucus members to the GOP's eight. The looming question for the 10 Democrats is whether a Supreme Court vote will still resonate with voters in 19 months or whether Trump's standing, the economy, jobs or health care would be a greater concern.

Trump won McCaskill's state by almost 20 percentage points and conservative groups are running ads against her. But liberals are also fired up.

The January evening Gorsuch was nominated, McCaskill tweeted that there should be a hearing and vote on "ANY nominee" — a reference to last year's Republican blockade of former President Barack Obama's nominee for the same seat, Merrick Garland. She got more than 700 replies, some using curse words and threatening a primary.

Montana Sen. Jon Tester also will oppose Gorsuch, even though his state similarly supported Trump by 20 points. Tester said he's concerned about how Gorsuch would rule on privacy issues and women's health, and whether he'd support working people over corporations.

"I think that Montanans have always expected me to have a reason for why I voted, and I have plenty of them on Judge Gorsuch," Tester said.

Marlene Johnson, 65, of Helena, said she hopes Tester's opposition will hurt him politically. She is closely following the debate and called Gorsuch a decent person who is qualified to sit on the Supreme Court. She says Tester is "letting Montana down."

Tester has never won more than 50 percent of the vote. But Republicans are lacking a strong challenger, with their best chance, former Montana Rep. Ryan Zinke, now serving as Trump's interior secretary.

Indiana Sen. Joe Donnelly, North Dakota Sen. Heidi Heitkamp and West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin had a different calculus — they're all supporting Gorsuch. Trump won Indiana by 19 points, North Dakota by 36 points and West Virginia by 42 points.

Still, some Democrats are angry. About 20 protesters marched to Donnelly's downtown Indianapolis office Tuesday, chanting: "No, no, Joe."

North Dakota Democrat Dan Spiekemeier is more understanding of Heitkamp. The farmer said he's upset that Republicans did not allow a vote on Garland, but said "some people among the Democrats need to be centrists, so I think she made the right call."

In swing states where Trump had narrower victories, the decision may have been easier. Pennsylvania

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Sen. Bob Casey, Florida Sen. Bill Nelson, Wisconsin Sen. Tammy Baldwin and Michigan Sen. Debbie Stabenow are all opposing Gorsuch. Trump won those states by a point or less.

It's unclear if their eventual opponents will use the issue against them in 2018 — or if voters will even remember the Supreme Court fight. Florida Gov. Rick Scott, viewed as a likely challenger to Nelson, has so far avoided any direct criticism, though he supports Gorsuch.

In Wisconsin, though, Republican Gov. Scott Walker, who is also up for re-election next year, tweeted to Baldwin in February that “pandering to liberal special interests in Washington is more important to you than listening to WI residents.”

Others in the state say they are tired of the politics.

“Nobody is making any concessions and I think this is going to be the downfall of both parties,” said Anna Street, a 56-year-old nurse from West Allis, Wisconsin.

In Ohio, where Trump won by 8 points, Democratic Sen. Sherrod Brown says he didn't consider the political consequences when he made his decision to oppose Gorsuch the night he was nominated. Most Democrats waited until after his March hearings.

Brown has been the target of a steady stream of attack ads over Gorsuch. And Republican Josh Mandel, making a repeat try at unseating Brown, told supporters in a fundraising email that Brown's decision was “uninformed, out of touch, knee-jerk politicking.”

Brown says he believes Gorsuch will favor corporations over workers and he gets “a lot of pushback on both sides on everything.”

As for whether voters will still support him, he says: “I guess we'll see, won't we? I think so.”

Associated Press writers Matthew Daly in Washington, David Lieb in Jefferson City, Missouri; Gary Fineout in Tallahassee, Florida; Matt Volz in Helena, Montana; Dave Kolpack in Fargo, North Dakota; Scott Bauer in Madison, Wisconsin; Ivan Moreno in West Allis, Wisconsin; Julie Carr Smyth in Columbus, Ohio and Tom Davies in Indianapolis, Indiana contributed to this report.

Trump boosts coal as China takes the lead on climate change

By MICHAEL BIESECKER and LOUISE WATT, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For years, cutting carbon emissions to stave off the worst impacts of climate change was routinely near the top of the agenda at talks between the leaders of the United States and China.

Not anymore.

As President Donald Trump hosts President Xi Jinping at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida this week, the world's two largest economies and carbon polluters are taking dramatically divergent paths on climate policy.

The Chinese government recently canceled construction of more than 100 new coal-fired power plants and plans to invest at least \$360 billion in green energy projects by 2020. It is a building boom expected to create an estimated 13 million jobs. China already leads the world in total installed solar and wind capacity.

Trump, who has said global warming is a hoax perpetrated by the Chinese to hurt the U.S. economy, signed an executive order last week that aims to roll back Obama-era policies regulating carbon emissions. He has pledged to reverse decades of decline in coal mining, which now accounts for fewer than 75,000 U.S. jobs.

“Clean energy is the next, largest global market,” said Barbara Finamore, Asia director at the Natural Resources Defense Council, a U.S.-based environmental group. “The U.S. risks losing out.”

With Trump threatening to pull out of the Paris climate accord negotiated by the Obama administration, Xi is poised to become the world's foremost leader on climate change. Signed by nearly 200 nations, the 2014 agreement calls for holding global temperature increases to no more than 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) in hopes of preventing devastating droughts, storms and sea level rise.

Speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in January, Xi called the Paris accord a “hard-won achievement” and urged signatories to “stick to it.”

The White House declined to comment Wednesday on whether climate change will even be mentioned at Mar-a-Lago. U.S. officials are instead expected to focus on enlisting China's cooperation on curbing the

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North Korean nuclear threat.

While China eclipsed the United States as the world's top carbon polluter more than a decade ago, it is also now outpacing the U.S. in transitioning to a cleaner energy portfolio. China is currently generating about 20 percent of its electricity from renewable sources, compared to about 13 percent in the U.S.

China still burns more coal than any other nation, but its consumption of the dirtiest fossil fuel fell in 2016 for a third consecutive year. An analysis by Greenpeace of data from the Chinese National Energy Administration showed an expected corresponding decrease in China's carbon dioxide emissions of 1 percent in 2017, in what would be the fourth straight year of zero growth or a decline.

That puts China on track to meet its 2030 target under the Paris accord as much as one decade early. "Given the absolute lack of leadership from the Trump administration, China is seeing a stronger role both in its self-interest as a country threatened by the impacts of climate change, and also as a diplomatic opportunity in the vacuum left by Trump's retrograde position," said Lauri Myllyvirta, a senior coal campaigner for Greenpeace in Beijing.

In China's capital, Trump's public statements doubting that human activity is the primary cause of global warming are greeted with a mixture of bemusement and worry.

As China has burned gargantuan amounts of coal to accelerate the development of its economy, residents of its mega cities have had to deal with choking smog at levels not seen in the United States since passage of the Clean Air Act in 1970.

"In the past, some Chinese officials and ordinary people even believed that climate change was something created by developed countries to curb China's economic growth," said Teng Fei, a vice professor at Tsinghua University's Institute of Energy, Environment and Economy in Beijing. He said Trump's claim that climate change is a hoax might erode public support for taking action reducing the country's reliance on coal.

Wang Ke, a professor at the School of Environment and Natural Resources at Renmin University in Beijing, agreed: "Sometimes we joke that all our efforts are no use against one word from President Trump."

Even as Trump suggests global warming is mostly made up, climate scientists predict the issue will someday arrive literally at his doorstep.

Mar-a-Lago, the site of his summit with Xi, is located in one of the most vulnerable regions in the United States to sea level rise. Some streets in Palm Beach County already flood on sunny days during high tides, and recent studies predict Trump's prized resort will be underwater by the end of the century.

Associated Press reporter Louise Watt reported from Beijing. News researcher Yu Bing contributed to this report.

Follow AP environmental writer Michael Biesecker at www.Twitter.com/mbieseck

Grieving Haitians go into lifetime of debt to fund funerals

By DAVID McFADDEN, Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — Aspasia Tanis lives hand-to-mouth on the edge of eviction in the best of times, scraping out a living selling packets of spaghetti and cookies outside her low-slung concrete shack in Haiti's capital. Now the death of her father by stroke threatens to send her into a lifetime of debt.

The distraught single mother is frantically seeking loans from friends and pastors to pay for the cheapest funeral on offer. Hospital morgue officials say her father's body will be dumped in a pauper's grave unless her struggling family forks over a relative fortune of just over \$1,000.

"I'll never be at peace if he isn't buried properly," Tanis said quietly after transferring her father's corpse to a cut-rate private morgue.

Her anxiety is shared by many in Haiti, where two out of three people live on less than \$2 per day and burying the dead is a predatory business. While funerals are costly in any number of countries, Haitian undertakers get away with charging rates that exceed what most citizens earn in a year.

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Along the capital's bustling Rue de l'Enterrement, established morticians and unlicensed freelancers engage in a daily bidding war for new customers while telling bereaved families that anything less than their set packages can be seen as a lack of respect for the dead.

Teams of entrepreneurs, including videographers and brass bands who lead street processions, stand ready to rack up funeral bills with families who are frequently ill-equipped to pay for any of it. There are even mourners-for-hire for those who want the social prestige of a big sendoff.

"I can provide people to cry, roll on the ground, whatever you want," chuckled Joseph Jacques Simeon, director of the General Hospital's morgue department. He acknowledged to an Associated Press reporter that he gets a cut from the funeral packages families agree to when they arrive, shaken, at his office.

A 2012 report by the Brazil-based Igarape Institute indicated that funeral costs in Haiti average about \$5,000 per household and interest rates up to 150 percent were charged by moneylenders and morticians.

"In some cases we see poor families paying significantly more for mortician services than middle-class families because they are less informed about options and don't believe they have the room to negotiate the costs," said researcher Athena Kolbe, a co-author of the report.

The bereaved Tanis, who used what little savings she had to try and keep her father alive, appeared highly vulnerable to influence.

When Simeon insisted that the cheapest package was about \$1,000, Tanis and her unemployed brother passively accepted add-on services like a funeral video and didn't press to find out how much another morgue would charge them while they sought cash for a funeral package.

While many Haitians pool resources and seek funeral expenses from relatives living overseas, there's no shortage of grief-stricken families who sell possessions or take out high-interest-rate loans, in part due to deep traditions for open-casket funerals and social pressures to bury loved ones with a splash.

"This is particularly true for poorer people and for people in rural areas where social pressure is stronger," said Carine Roenen, director of Fonkoze Foundation, a non-profit working with Haiti's biggest microfinance institution.

Pitchmen often start hustling as soon as word gets out there's been a death in a family. Fly-by-night hearse drivers, prying neighbors and even hospital physicians will bring bereaved families to undertakers, competing to claim a finder's fee of 10 percent that mortuaries dole out to intermediaries.

Established funeral homes want authorities to rein in freelance morticians who cut into their business. But nothing has been accomplished by the state to tame the uncontrolled market, and licensed parlors reluctantly rent out their morgues and viewing rooms to get a piece of the barely cheaper packages offered by self-styled undertakers.

"This business has gotten crazy. More unlicensed people with nothing to offer get into it every single day," said Zenith Funeral Home and Morgue owner Marie Lamercie Louis Dorville, whose priciest package offers embalming, metal caskets, interment and other features costing over \$7,000. The median cost of a funeral in the United States is \$7,180, according to the most recent figures by the National Funeral Directors Association.

Haitians are largely resistant to cremation due to religious and cultural traditions.

Jean Pierre Mercelien, an 18-year-old who is learning how to upholster casket linings, is one of the latest recruits to Haiti's byzantine burial business.

"It's a good living because there will never stop being new customers," he said matter-of-factly in a yard with men building wooden caskets and decorating them with cushions and aluminum handles.

Business is booming on Rue de l'Enterrement even though there's little space left in the crowded capital to entomb the dead.

Such is the demand in the sprawling Cemetery of Port-au-Prince that families rent out space in a mausoleum for two or three years, enough time for a body to decay to a skeleton. After that, cemetery workers say they generally dump the bones in a vault or temporarily leave them scattered in a dilapidated corner to make room for the next paying customer. Few families come to collect the remains.

A walk through the once beautiful landmark revealed ghoulish scenes of skeletons lying in opened cas-

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kets, ribs and vertebrae scattered inside sun-bleached suits with ties still knotted and dresses zipped up. A few bodies tossed on the ground by workers still had mummified skin on their skulls.

On a recent afternoon, the air was thick with the emotional fallout of Haiti's uncontrolled funeral and burial business. One mourning family was stopped at the cemetery gates and told their funeral director neglected to pay to get a casket-carrying hearse inside.

"I paid the funeral home for a whole package! This is how they treat us? They embarrass us at the cemetery?" raged mourner Franky Merzier.

Sucking his teeth, he then pooled together \$145 to get the beat-up rented hearse carrying his late cousin Gertrude to her temporary tomb.

Associated Press reporter Evens Sanon contributed to this report.
David McFadden on Twitter: www.twitter.com/dmcfadd

Kansas City set for national WWI centennial observance

By **JIM SUHR, Associated Press**

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — By design, World War I never strays from Matt Naylor's thoughts: His grandfather's wartime shaving kit is on display in his office where he oversees a Kansas City, Missouri, museum dedicated to all things involving "The Great War."

"I have a familial relationship with World War I that's very direct," said Naylor, whose father, after serving with the British during World War II, moved to Australia, where Naylor was raised and acquired his lasting accent. That lineage of service "is an important part of my story."

So it is little wonder that Naylor embraces Thursday, when the National World War I Museum and Memorial he guides as president and CEO hosts a centennial observance of the day the U.S. begrudgingly waded into the global conflict that President Woodrow Wilson had sought to avoid.

In the shadow of the hilltop site's towering WWI monument known as Liberty Memorial, foreign dignitaries were to join 3,000 onlookers who snapped up tickets for the daylong homage titled "In Sacrifice for Liberty and Peace."

The event on the grounds of the nation's official WWI monument was to feature an eclectic mix of patriotic music, some poetry, speeches and readings from the time America first declared war on Germany.

To Naylor, the event that's years in the making "is commemorating, not celebrating" the moment when the U.S. trudged off to war at a time tanks and air combat were new.

By the time American military muscle helped vanquish Germany and the conflict ended in 1918, more than 9 million people were lost to combat, some 116,000 of them Americans.

"World War I may not be part of the cultural narrative," Naylor told The Associated Press on Tuesday. "But it is a defining period of history that reshaped the U.S. and birthed the American century. This gives us an opportunity to honor that."

He figures Liberty Memorial's selection for the centennial was a nod to the city's push to make the monument happen, thanks to a burst of postwar patriotism that over 10 days in 1919 raised \$2.5 million — the equivalent to about \$35 million today. Children pitched in, going door to door collecting money in what was "an early 20th century story of crowdsourcing," museum spokesman Mike Vietti said.

So noteworthy was the achievement that Allied commanders from Belgium, Great Britain, Italy, France and the U.S. gathered in 1921 to dedicate the site, across the street from the Kansas City train station that more than half of U.S. troops passed through before being shipped overseas.

When the monument was completed five years later, more than 150,000 turned out to hear President Calvin Coolidge dedicate it.

But years of deferred maintenance led the site to be closed in 1994. A massive \$102 million transformation followed, funded by a sales tax, bond issue and private donations. The exterior was repaired, and the design firm behind attractions such as Washington's Holocaust Memorial Museum was tapped to create a new museum that would tell World War I's story of assassination, empires swept away and new nations

born.

The site — its 200,000 visitors last year spanning more than 70 countries — was made official in legislation that President Barack Obama signed in 2014.

Scotland's minister, a Trump critic, says she would meet him

By EDITH M. LEDERER, Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Scotland's leader Nicola Sturgeon, who has been a critic of Donald Trump, said Wednesday she would agree to meet the U.S. president and try to build on the already strong relationship between Scotland and the United States.

But the first minister of Scotland said in an interview with The Associated Press that she also strongly believes it's important "to stand up and champion values that we hold dear and not allow a diplomatic silence to get in the way of doing that."

Trump's mother came from the Western Isles and he has often touted his Scottish ancestry. His corporation owns golf resorts in Scotland.

But Sturgeon revoked Trump's honorary status as a business ambassador for Scotland in 2015 after he proposed a ban on Muslims entering the United States — and she told the Scottish Parliament in November that she stood by that criticism.

Sturgeon said she has no objection to the golf courses and welcomes U.S. investment.

She stressed, however, that "the fact that Donald Trump owns golf courses in Scotland does not mean that if I disagree with him on a matter of policy or a matter of principle that I will not say that."

"But I would seek to operate in a way that is respectful and constructive," she said.

Sturgeon said she is sure "the president has policy disagreements with me," as he will with many other governments.

But "as first minister of Scotland, I'm not going to decline to meet president Trump," she said.

"What I'm very keen to stress is that regardless of who occupies the office of president or first minister at any given time, the relationship between Scotland and the United States is a strong one," Sturgeon said. "It's very longstanding. It spans family, culture, business, and part of our purpose here in the United States is to strengthen, to build on that relationship."

That relationship, she said, is "more important than any transient policy disagreements between the governments of the two countries."

A strong advocate for gender equality, Sturgeon spoke at a United Nations meeting earlier Wednesday on human rights and the role of women in building peace. She reportedly backed Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton in the election and has had no meetings with Trump or his administration during her trip, which she said has focused mainly on strengthening trade and U.S. investment in Scotland.

According to U.S. census figures, there are 10 million Americans with Scots or Scots-Irish ancestry, Sturgeon said, "but surveys repeatedly show that there are around 30 million people in America who claim to have Scots ancestry."

"That says to me there are 20 million people who are not Scottish in America but would like to be Scottish. So that's a massive opportunity for us to build on," she said.

Sturgeon said there has also been enormous interest in the United States on the United Kingdom's decision last year to leave the European Union and the Scottish Parliament's vote on March 28 authorizing her to ask the British government for a new referendum on independence.

Scotland voted to remain in the EU in last year's Brexit referendum and Sturgeon said it should have "the right to look at its future" and have the choice of whether to remain part of the United Kingdom or become independent.

Sturgeon is pressing for a referendum between the fall of 2018 and spring of 2019, before Britain leaves the European Union but when details of the divorce are clear. British Prime Minister Theresa May, who is battling to hold the United Kingdom together, has made clear, however, that it isn't time for another vote.

Scottish voters rejected independence in a 2014 referendum that Sturgeon's Scottish National Party called

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a once-in-a-generation vote. But Sturgeon says Brexit has altered conditions dramatically.

"I'm very confident that Scotland will be an independent country in my lifetime — well within my lifetime — and take its seat at the United Nations alongside all the other independent countries of the world, large and small," the 46-year-old Scottish leader said.

Sturgeon said a new referendum "should be on the same basis as the last referendum."

She called prime minister May's position "not a sustainable one."

Sturgeon said she put forward compromises "but we haven't had any sign from the UK government that they want to meet us half way."

"Simply saying now is not the time only takes you so far before you have to answer the question, well when is the time?," she said. "I might put forward the timescale I think makes sense, and if she doesn't agree with that then we should discuss what the alternative might be. I'll set out in due course the steps I intend to take next."

Sturgeon said she would want an independent Scotland to definitely seek membership in the European Union and also "continue to cooperate with our family across the British isles."

"Scotland and England should always trade freely with each other," Sturgeon said. "It's in our mutual benefit. But I want that as well as trade within the single market because that is so important to Scotland's interests."

Get up to speed on the probes into Russia, Trump campaign

By ERIC TUCKER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — An FBI investigation and congressional probes into the Trump campaign and contacts with Russia continue to shadow the administration, each new development a focus of White House press briefings and attention on Capitol Hill.

President Donald Trump has dismissed the story as "fake news" and raised allegations of politically inspired spying by the Obama administration, but the investigations show no sign of abating anytime soon.

Here's a look at some key details:

THE BEGINNING

FBI Director James Comey told Congress last month that an investigation examining Russian interference in the presidential election, and potential coordination between Russia and the Trump campaign, began in late July.

The probe followed revelations that Russian hackers broke into the computer network of the Democratic National Committee, a hack U.S. officials and cybersecurity experts have publicly tied to Russian intelligence services. Stolen emails to and from top Democratic Party officials, including then-DNC chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz, were released to the public last summer on the secret-sharing website WikiLeaks, followed in the fall by the hacked messages of John Podesta, the campaign chairman of Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton.

U.S. intelligence agencies have been blunt in their assessment that the hacks of Democratic email accounts were intended to benefit Trump and harm Clinton, his Democratic opponent.

THE INVESTIGATIONS

The FBI is conducting a counterintelligence investigation exploring how Russia, in the last year, covertly sought to influence the American presidential election on Trump's behalf.

Investigations like this one that examine the operations of foreign intelligence services on U.S. soil are heavily classified, historically time-consuming and rarely result in criminal charges. It's not clear when this one will end or whether anything criminal will be found, though Comey has said the investigation is being done with an eye on whether any laws were broken.

The House and Senate intelligence committees are conducting their own, simultaneous investigations. Republicans in Congress are concerned that classified material was improperly leaked to the news media

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and that communications of Trump associates had been improperly disseminated throughout government agencies.

The House probe has been riven by discord, with the top Democrat seeking the recusal of the Republican chairman, Devin Nunes of California, after Nunes said he had met with a secret source at the White House to review classified material that he said indicated that communications of Trump associates were captured in "incidental" surveillance of foreigners.

THE PLAYERS

Numerous figures in the Trump orbit have come under scrutiny for communications with Russians, though each has denied doing anything improper — and no one has been charged with any crime.

Trump's former national security adviser, Michael Flynn, was interviewed by the FBI in the early days of the Trump administration about communications he had with the Russian ambassador, Sergey Kislyak, during the transition period. The White House fired him in February after concluding that he had not been truthful about those conversations.

Republican strategist Roger Stone has said he communicated with Guccifer 2.0, the unnamed hacker that has taken credit for breaking into the DNC servers. But Stone has denied that he worked with Russian officials to influence the presidential election.

Carter Page, a foreign policy adviser to the Trump campaign, met with a Russian intelligence operative in 2013 and provided him documents about the energy industry, according to court documents from a 2015 prosecution alleging a Cold War-style spy ring in New York. Page, referred to in the filing as "Male-1," is not accused of wrongdoing and said in a statement that he shared "basic immaterial information and publicly available research documents."

Meanwhile, Justice Department officials have scrutinized the business dealings of Paul Manafort, who was fired in August as Trump's campaign chairman. The Associated Press has reported that Manafort previously worked for Russian billionaire Oleg Deripaska and in 2005 proposed an ambitious plan to promote the interests of "the Putin government" through influencing politics, business dealings and news coverage inside the United States, Europe and former Soviet republics.

THE RESPONSE

Trump has sought to dismiss the story as "fake" and has countered with his own allegations of politically motivated spying by the Obama administration. The White House has also tried to publicly minimize the contributions either to the campaign or administration of some of the individuals whose names have surfaced as part of the investigation, such as Manafort and Flynn.

Trump took to Twitter last month to accuse President Barack Obama of having wiretapped him at Trump Tower, his New York skyscraper, during the campaign. Law enforcement, congressional and intelligence officials have called that allegation untrue.

The latest flare-up came this week amid revelations that Susan Rice, Obama's national security adviser, had asked spy agencies to give her the names of Trump associates who surfaced in intelligence reports she was regularly briefed on.

In an interview with MSNBC, Rice acknowledged that she had sometimes asked for the names of Americans who were referenced in reports, but denied that she or anyone else in the administration had used those reports for political intelligence purposes. Trump said the following day that he believed Rice had committed a crime.

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

US will take action on Syrian chemical attacks if UN doesn't

By EDITH M. LEDERER, Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley warned Wednesday that the Trump administration will take action against chemical attacks in Syria that bear "all the hallmarks" of President Bashar Assad's

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government if the U.N. Security Council fails to act.

Haley urged the council at an emergency meeting to immediately approve a resolution drafted by the U.S., Britain and France that condemns and threatens consequences for the use of chemical weapons, especially in Tuesday's attack that killed dozens of people in rebel-held Idlib province.

"There are times at the United Nations when we are compelled to take collective action," she said. "When the United Nations consistently fails in its duty to act collectively, there are times in the life of states that we are compelled to take our own action."

"For the sake of the victims, I hope the rest of the council is finally willing to do the same," she added.

Haley spoke after Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova announced Moscow's opposition to the draft resolution. She called it "categorically unacceptable" because "it runs ahead of the investigation results and names the culprit, Damascus."

"The main task now is to have an objective inquiry into what happened," Russia's deputy U.N. ambassador Vladimir Safronkov told the Security Council. "Up to now all falsified reports about this incident have come from the White Helmets or the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights based in London which have been discredited long ago."

He said that from 11:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. on April 4, the Syrian government carried out an airstrike on the eastern edge of the opposition-held town of Khan Sheikhoun "on a large warehouse of ammunition and military equipment."

On that compound, he said, there was a facility "to produce ammunition with the use of toxic weapons" which was supposed to be used in Iraq and Aleppo.

"Their use was confirmed last year by Russia and military experts," Safronkov said. "The symptoms of those affected in Khan Sheikhoun were the same as those by people who were affected last year in Aleppo."

Britain's U.N. Ambassador Matthew Rycroft also told the council that Tuesday's attack "bears all the hallmarks" of President Bashar Assad's regime.

"We have every indication that this was a sustained attack using aircraft over a number of hours," Rycroft said. "We see all the signs of an attack using a nerve agent capable of killing over a hundred people and harming hundreds more."

Holding up photos of victims of the attack, Haley accused Russia of blocking action and closing its eyes to the "barbarity" of three previous chemical attacks that investigators blamed on the Syrian government by vetoing a resolution in late February that would have imposed sanctions on those responsible.

"The truth is that Assad, Russia, and Iran have no interest in peace," she said. "The illegitimate Syrian government, led by a man with no conscience, has committed untold atrocities against his people for six years."

Haley said Assad has shown he isn't interested in participating in "a meaningful political process, Iran has reinforced Assad's military, and Russia has shielded Assad from U.N. sanctions."

"If Russia has the influence in Syria that it claims to have, we need to see them use it," she said. "We need to see them put an end to these horrific acts. How many more children have to die before Russia cares?"

The resolution drafted by the U.S., Britain and France would condemn the use of chemical weapons in Syria, especially on Tuesday, "in the strongest terms" and back an investigation by the international chemical weapons watchdog, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

It stresses that the Syrian government, under previous Security Council resolutions, is obligated to provide OPCW investigators and a U.N.-OPCW team charged with assessing blame for chemical attacks with information on all flight plans and air operations on April 4 and the names of commanders of any helicopter squadrons.

It reminds the government that it is also obligated to immediately provide investigators with access to air bases where they believe chemical weapons attacks may have been launched.

Russia's Safronkov told the council that several major provisions of the resolution are unacceptable to Moscow and France's U.N. Ambassador Francois Delattre told reporters later that negotiations on the text have started "with a good spirit."

He said he thinks there's a chance for agreement, if everyone is ready to compromise.

"Our objective is to go for a vote the sooner the better ... and we want a swift and strong resolution," he said, adding that a vote was unlikely late Wednesday.

The best option would be united action by the Security Council, he said when asked about possible unilateral action by the United States. "I'm concerned ... by the risk of inaction at this stage."

Syria's deputy U.N. ambassador Mounzer Mounzer told the council his government categorically rejects "false claims and accusations" that the army used toxic chemicals against Syrian civilians in Khan Sheikhoun, saying they are being used "as human shields by armed terrorist groups."

He said the army doesn't have any type of chemical weapons and "we have never used them and we will never use them."

Mounzer called Syria the victim of "falsification and fabrication" by some permanent members of the Security Council and "armed terrorist groups" backed by several U.N. member states. He didn't name any countries.

Trump tells newspaper Obama aide might have broken the law

By EILEEN SULLIVAN and JULIE PACE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Citing no evidence, President Donald Trump on Wednesday accused his predecessor's national security adviser of breaking the law, one month after he accused former President Barack Obama of illegally wiretapping him.

In an interview with The New York Times, Trump said Obama's national security adviser, Susan Rice, committed a crime when she asked government analysts to disclose the names of Trump associates documented in intelligence reports. Trump would not say if he reviewed new intelligence to support his claim. He told the Times he would say more "at the right time."

"I think it's going to be the biggest story," Trump said. "It's such an important story for our country and the world. It is one of the big stories of our time."

Rice is the latest target for Trump and his embattled defenders. She has firmly denied that she did anything inappropriate in requesting the identities of Trump associates. As the national security adviser, Rice would have been authorized to seek identities of people whose names were redacted from intelligence reports. Officials typically "unmask" Americans if it is deemed necessary for understanding the information. Some Trump allies have accused Rice of unmasking officials for political reasons.

"Absolutely false," Rice declared Tuesday.

Trump on Wednesday disagreed. When the Times asked him if Rice broke the law, he said, "Do I think? Yes, I think." The president did not specify what law he thinks Rice may have broken.

Erin Pelton, a spokeswoman for Rice, said, "I'm not going to dignify the president's ludicrous charge with a comment."

Trump's unfounded accusation fits a pattern for the president. Last month, he accused Obama of wiretapping his New York skyscraper and later said Obama had spied on his campaign. Neither allegation has been backed up by evidence.

Trump's first national security adviser, Michael Flynn, is under FBI scrutiny for his ties to Russia. Two congressional committees are also investigating Flynn as part of larger probes into the Kremlin's influence on the 2016 election and possible coordination with Trump associates. Last week Trump said that Flynn, who resigned in February, should seek an immunity deal.

On Wednesday, House Speaker Paul Ryan said the House intelligence committee investigation looking into Russia's role in the 2016 election was back on track after the committee's chairman had a secret meeting on White House grounds about intelligence that Trump later said vindicated his Obama wiretapping claims. A congressional aide said the documents are being made available for all committee members to view at the White House.

Also, Republicans and Democrats have agreed on the witnesses to be called, Ryan said.

Rep. Jim Himes, D-Conn., a member of the committee, told CNN that Rice is on the witness list. A congressional aide said there were more than a dozen people on the list.

According to a U.S. official, Rice asked spy agencies to give her the names of Trump associates who surfaced in intelligence reports she was regularly briefed on. Rice's official role would have given her the ability to make those requests for national security purposes.

In an interview with MSNBC on Tuesday, Rice acknowledged that she sometimes asked for the names of Americans referenced in reports. She would not say whether she saw intelligence related to Trump associates or whether she asked for their identities, though she did say that reports related to Russia increased in the final months of the presidential election campaign.

The Trump White House has been particularly incensed that intercepted conversations between Flynn and Russia's ambassador to the U.S. surfaced in news reports before the inauguration.

Rice denied that she had leaked details about Flynn's call, saying, "I leaked nothing to nobody."

AP writers Deb Riechmann and Alan Fram contributed to this report.

Follow Julie Pace at <http://twitter.com/jpaceDC> and Eileen Sullivan at <http://twitter.com/esullivanap>

Chemical attack kills 22 members of a single family in Syria

By SARAH EL DEEB, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — The grief-stricken father cradled his 9-month-old twins, Aya and Ahmed, each in the crook of an arm. Stroking their hair, he choked back tears, mumbling, "Say goodbye, baby, say goodbye" to their lifeless bodies.

Then Abdel Hameed Alyousef took them to a mass grave where 22 members of his family were being buried. Each branch of the clan got its own trench.

More than 80 people, including at least 30 children and 20 women, were killed in the chemical attack on the Syrian town of Khan Sheikhoun early Tuesday, and the toll could still rise. The Alyousef family, one of the town's main clans, was hardest hit.

Another member of the family, Aya Fadl, recalled running from her house with her 20-month-old son in her arms, thinking she could find safety from the toxic gas in the street. Instead, the 25-year-old English teacher was confronted face to face with the horror of it: A pick-up truck piled with the bodies of the dead, including many of her own relatives and students.

"Ammar, Aya, Mohammed, Ahmad, I love you my birds. Really they were like birds. Aunt Sana, Uncle Yasser, Abdul-Kareem, please hear me," Fadl said, choking back tears as she recalled how she said farewell to her relatives in the pile.

"I saw them. They were dead. All are dead now."

The tragedy has devastated the small town. It also deepened the frustration felt by many Syrians in opposition-held areas that such scenes of mass death, which have become routine in the country's 6-year-old civil war, bring no retribution or even determination of responsibility.

The U.S. and other Western countries accused President Bashar Assad of being behind the attack, while Syria and its main backer, Russia, denied it. Despite world condemnation, bringing justice is difficult in the absence of independent investigation of Syria's chemical arsenal, which the government insists it has destroyed.

"My heart is broken. Everything was terrible. Everyone was crying and couldn't breathe," Fadl told The Associated Press on Wednesday. "We had many circumstances in Syria and we had many difficult situations. This is the most difficult and most harmful situation I ever had."

In 2013, horrific scenes of Syrians flooding hospitals or found dead in their homes after a sarin gas attack that killed hundreds in the rebel-held Damascus suburb of Ghouta provoked international condemnation. A Russian-brokered deal followed allowing Assad to declare he has destroyed his chemical stockpile and joined the Chemical Weapons Convention.

But a year later, chlorine gas attacks became recurrent, killing scores of people.

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However, Tuesday's massacre was not caused by chlorine, an irritant with limited ability to kill. The high number of casualties, as well as the grave symptoms including convulsions, constricted pupils and vomiting point to a more complex chemical gas.

A Doctors Without Borders medical team that examined a number of victims in a hospital near the border with Turkey said the symptoms are consistent with exposure to a neurotoxic agent— at least two different chemical agents. The U.S.'s early assessment is that it involved the use of chlorine and sarin, according to two U.S. officials who weren't authorized to speak publicly on the matter and demanded anonymity.

In Khan Sheikhoun, the tragedy was compounded because so many victims were from a single extended family, the Alyousef clan.

Witnesses say four rockets hit around 6:30 a.m. Tuesday, smashing a crater in the ground, but causing minimal structural damage. It quickly became clear this was not a conventional attack.

Alaa Alyousef said his family was sleeping and woke to the sound of the impact only a few hundred yards (meters) away. The first thing they saw was smoke. His father went outside then rushed back in. He had seen a woman walking near the strike suddenly collapse. The family frantically closed windows and dampened cloths with water and apple vinegar to put over their faces.

They were lucky, the wind went in the other direction, Alyousef said.

The rockets hit on the edge of North Harah, a district where much of the Alyousef clan lives. Frantically the clan's members and their neighbors fled, running from house to house trying to track down relatives.

Fadl remembered her panic when the rockets woke her.

"My husband, where are you? Oh, where are you my lovely son?" she recalled calling out. "They were next to me but I couldn't see them." She said their eyes began hurting. "The air became very heavy. There was no bad smell. But the air was so heavy to breathe."

The Alyousefs brought their dead to a family member's home that was outside the worst attack area. The courtyard was turned into a makeshift morgue where surviving relatives tried for hours to resuscitate loved ones already dead.

That's when Fadl finally collapsed, she said, only to wake up in a medical center.

While Fadl recovers along with her son at her parents' home in a town north of Khan Sheikhoun, her husband is still looking for survivors from his extended family.

Alaa Alyousef said not all homes have been searched for survivors yet.

"We are still in shock, a big shock. Our family is devastated," the 27-year-old said. "Many are still missing. We are afraid to enter homes sometimes lest we find more people dead."

On Tuesday, he and other family members buried the clan's dead in the mass grave.

On the way to the grave, Abdel Hameed Alyousef asked a cousin to video his farewell to his twin son and daughter as he sat in the front seat of a van being loaded with bodies.

When the airstrikes hit, he was with the twins. "I carried them outside the house with their mother," the 29-year-old shop owner told the AP. "They were conscious at first, but 10 minutes later we could smell the odor."

The twins and his wife, Dalal Ahmed, fell sick.

He brought them to paramedics and, thinking they would be OK, went to look for the rest of his family. He found the bodies of two of his brothers, two nephews and a niece, as well as neighbors and friends. "I couldn't save anyone. They're all dead now," he said.

It was only later that his relatives could bring themselves to tell him that his children and wife had also died.

"Abdel Hameed is in very bad shape," said his cousin, Alaa Alyousef. He's being treated for exposure to the toxin, "but he's especially broken down over his massive loss."

Trump presses China on NKorea; another bluff could hurt him

By **MATTHEW PENNINGTON, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Warning the U.S. could act alone, President Donald Trump has vowed to deliver an ultimatum to Chinese leader Xi Jinping to rein in North Korea when the two men come face-to-face for the first time this week. But Trump's early retreat on Taiwan already has chipped away at his standing with Beijing, and another bluff could leave him looking the way he hates most: Weak.

While Trump enters first U.S.-Chinese summit short on foreign policy experience, he may have advantages to help him succeed where past presidents have failed. Trump's candor and unpredictability, combined with his veiled threats of possible sanctions on Chinese banks and even U.S. military action against North Korea, could provide him new leverage with Beijing. But if he's bluffing, and Xi calls him on it, that might prove damaging in future negotiations with China or in building a united front against North Korea's nuclear and missile programs.

The two-day meeting at Trump's Florida estate, Mar-a-Lago, starts Thursday after yet another North Korean provocation: the latest test-launch of a ballistic missile. Although U.S. officials said the launch was a failure and didn't threaten North America, it underscored North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's intent to advance his weaponry in defiance of international law. The North may also be preparing for another nuclear test.

Trump warned this week, "If China is not going to solve North Korea, we will." He didn't elaborate, but his administration is looking at sanctions against Chinese banks and companies that provide North Korea access to the international financial system, a move strongly backed by Congress. And on a recent trip to Asia, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson reminded the region that the U.S. also retains the option of preemptive military force.

Trump discussed the issue Wednesday with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The White House said Trump "made clear that the United States will continue to strengthen its ability to deter and defend itself and its allies with the full range of its military capabilities."

Susan Thornton, the top U.S. diplomat for East Asia, on Wednesday called North Korea "an urgent and global threat."

And it's no longer one that just affects U.S. allies like South Korea and Japan, and the tens of thousands of American forces stationed in each. North Korea could develop a nuclear-tipped missile that can strike America within a few years. As that danger nears, Trump's diplomacy with Xi will only grow in importance.

Trump "is making it seem like we are prepared to go to war or use military action ... and I don't think that is going to be viable," said Kurt Campbell, top U.S. diplomat for the region during former President Barack Obama's first term. The devastation could be dramatic. South Korea's capital, Seoul, lies within retaliatory range of North Korean artillery and missiles.

"The key about using leverage in negotiation is that you have to be credible," Campbell said. Of Trump's ultimatum, he said, "I think the Chinese are likely to see through this."

In his two-and-a-half-months in office, Trump has backed off on one sensitive issue with China: Taiwan.

As president-elect, Trump said he didn't feel "bound" by existing U.S. policy toward the self-governing island that China considers part of its territory, demanding concessions from Beijing in trade and other areas. Within weeks, Trump reaffirmed Washington's commitment to the 4-decade-old "one China" policy, smoothing the way for a February phone call with Xi.

Asked if Taiwan was up for negotiation, Thornton said Wednesday: "We have basically moved on from there."

North Korea has faced some increased pressure from China, its main military and economic partner. Beijing has suspended imports of North Korean coal through the end of the year, cutting off a key source of revenue for Pyongyang. The Chinese are reluctant, however, to exert economic pressure that would destabilize its isolated neighbor and fears any effort that might lead to a U.S.-allied unified Korea on its border. It wants the U.S. to negotiate directly with North Korea.

Winston Lord, the U.S. ambassador to China under former President Ronald Reagan and top diplomat

to the region under former President Bill Clinton, said he assumes Trump isn't bluffing this time.

"Trump is right that China is a problem on North Korea and has got to do more. He's right to stir their anxieties on what the U.S. might do unilaterally if they don't act," Lord said. But he said Trump's back-pedaling on Taiwan made him look like a "paper tiger."

Dennis Wilder, a China specialist who served under former President George W. Bush and Obama, likened Trump's approach to Obama's before a Xi summit in 2015. Then, the U.S. was threatening sanctions unless China stopped commercial cyberthefts. A bilateral agreement ensued and has had some impact, though the problem persists.

Wilder said past U.S. administrations preferred to be toughest with Beijing behind closed doors — something he said Bush did effectively. But he said Trump's more forceful approach may now be necessary.

"We have been trying the softly-softly approach on the Chinese for years on North Korea," Wilder said. The Chinese have never gone far enough, as a result, to have "a meaningful impact on the situation," he said.

So can Trump succeed where his predecessors have failed?

He faces some disadvantages.

Beijing has highly skilled negotiators and their position on North Korea is deeply entrenched. Trump's administration, by comparison, is thinly staffed and divided on China, Campbell said.

Lord, who participated in historic U.S.-Chinese meetings in the 1970s, said an informal summit with Xi allows for strategy and red lines to be exchanged. But he worried about Trump's knowledge of the issues and ability to negotiate solo.

"I think he may end up being too soft," Lord said.

Mounting confidence nerve gas was used in Syria attack

By PHILIP ISSA and SARAH EL DEEB, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Diplomats at the U.N. Security council sparred Wednesday over whether to hold President Bashar Assad's government responsible for a chemical weapons attack that killed more than 80 people in northern Syria, while U.S. intelligence officials, Doctors Without Borders and the U.N. health agency said evidence pointed to nerve gas exposure.

The Trump administration and other world leaders said the Syrian government was to blame, but Moscow, a key ally of Assad, said the assault was caused by a Syrian airstrike that hit a rebel stockpile of chemical arms.

Early U.S. assessments showed the use of chlorine gas and traces of the nerve agent sarin in the attack Tuesday that terrorized the Syrian town of Khan Sheikhoun, according to two U.S. officials who weren't authorized to speak publicly on the matter and demanded anonymity.

Israeli military intelligence officers also believe Syrian government forces were behind the attack, Israeli defense officials told the Associated Press. Israel believes Assad has tons of chemical weapons still in his arsenal, despite a concerted operation three years ago by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to rid the government of its stockpile, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to brief the media. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan also blamed the Syrian government for the attack.

In Khan Sheikhoun, rescue workers found terrified survivors still hiding in shelters as another wave of airstrikes battered the town Wednesday. Those strikes appeared to deliver only conventional weapons damage.

Among those discovered alive were two women and a boy found hiding in a shelter beneath their home, the Civil Defense search and rescue group told the AP.

The effects of the attack overwhelmed hospitals around the town, leading paramedics to send patients to medical facilities across rebel-held areas in northern Syria, as well as to Turkey. The Turkish Health Ministry said three victims died receiving treatment inside its borders. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group put the toll at 86 killed.

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Victims of the attack showed signs of nerve gas exposure, the World Health Organization and Doctors Without Borders said, including suffocation, foaming at the mouth, convulsions, constricted pupils and involuntary defecation. Paramedics were using fire hoses to wash the chemicals from the bodies of victims.

Medical teams also reported smelling bleach on survivors of the attack, suggesting chlorine gas was also used, Doctors Without Borders said.

The magnitude of the attack was reflected in the images of the dead — children piled in heaps for burial, a father carrying his lifeless young twins.

The visuals from the scene were reminiscent of a 2013 nerve gas attack on the suburbs of Damascus that left hundreds dead and prompted an agreement brokered by the U.S. and Russia to disarm Assad's chemical stockpile. Western nations blamed government forces for that attack, where effects were concentrated on opposition-held areas.

At the Vatican, Pope Francis said during his general audience that he was "watching with horror at the latest events in Syria," and that he "strongly deplored the unacceptable massacre."

Tuesday's attack happened just 100 kilometers (60 miles) from the Turkish border, and the Turkish government — a close ally of Syrian rebels — set up a decontamination center at a border crossing in the province of Hatay, where the victims were initially treated before being moved to hospitals.

At the United Nations, U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley warned the Trump administration would take action if the Security Council did not in response to the attack.

"When you kill innocent children, innocent babies — babies, little babies — with a chemical gas that is so lethal, people were shocked to hear what gas it was, that crosses many, many lines," Donald Trump said in the White House Rose Garden. The president declined to say what the U.S. would do in response, but he did say that his "attitude towards Syria and Assad has changed very much."

The council was convened in an emergency session to consider a resolution that would back an investigation by the chemical weapons watchdog into the attack and compel the Syrian government to cooperate with a probe. It was drafted by the U.S., Britain and France.

Syria's government denied it carried out any chemical attack on Khan Sheikhoun, but Russia's Defense Ministry said the toxic agents were released when a Syrian airstrike hit a rebel chemical weapons arsenal and munitions factory on the town's eastern outskirts.

British Ambassador Matthew Rycroft dismissed that account, saying the U.K. had seen nothing that would suggest rebels "have the sort of chemical weapons that are consistent with the symptoms that we saw yesterday."

Diplomats were also meeting in Brussels for a major donors' conference on the future of Syria and the region. Representatives from 70 countries were present.

A top Syrian rebel representative said he held U.N. mediator Staffan De Mistura "personally responsible" for the attack. Mohammad Alloush, the rebels' chief negotiator at U.N.-mediated talks with the Syrian government, said the envoy must begin labeling the Syrian government as responsible for killing civilians. He said the U.N.'s silence "legitimizes" the strategy.

"The true solution for Syria is to put Bashar Assad, the chemical weapons user, in court, and not at the negotiations table," said Alloush, who is an official in the Islam Army rebel faction.

Syria's rebels, and the Islam Army in particular, are also accused of human rights abuses in Syria, but rights watchdogs attribute the overwhelming portion of civilian casualties over the course of the six-year war to the actions of government forces and their allies.

Associated Press writers Bradley Klapper in Washington, Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations and Ian Deitch in Jerusalem contributed to this report.

Goal reached: US women's soccer team gets new contract

By ANNE M. PETERSON, AP Sports Writer

The U.S. women's national team believes its new contract is both fair and good for the future of the sport. The U.S. Soccer Federation and the team's union announced Wednesday that a labor deal had been struck to settle an at times contentious dispute in which the players sought equitable wages to their male counterparts.

The collective bargaining agreement runs through 2021, meaning the players will be under contract through the 2019 World Cup in France and the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

The women will receive raises in base pay and bonuses as well as better provisions for travel and accommodations, including increased per diems. It also gives the players some control of certain licensing and marketing rights.

"It felt very empowering," forward Alex Morgan said. "Because there is a whole issue going on in the country as far as equal pay and the fight for the gender pay gap. And I felt really happy with the agreement that we reached and the fact that we can now do what we came for and play soccer."

Specific details about deal were not disclosed, but it comes as the national team is preparing to play an exhibition match against Russia on Thursday in Frisco, Texas. The team faces Russia again Sunday in Houston.

The two sides convened for intense negotiations in Texas over the weekend. The contract was ratified by the players and the federation's board Tuesday.

The team had been playing under a memorandum of understanding that expired Dec. 31.

"This has been by far the most involved the team has been," Megan Rapinoe said before a training session on Wednesday afternoon. "And the most say that we've had in anything. The full group decision from a diverse group of voting members and I think that we're excited that we have a deal. For me the best thing that came out of the deal is how it sets us up going into the future."

The agreement was reached before the start of the National Women's Soccer League season on April 15. U.S. Soccer pays the wages of the national team players who are allocated across the domestic league, and the terms of those salaries are outlined in the collective bargaining agreement.

A year ago a group of players drew attention to the fight for a better contract when they filed a complaint with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission that alleged wage discrimination by the federation. The women maintained that players for the men's national team earned far more than they did in many cases despite comparable work.

U.S. Soccer took the players' association to court to clarify that the memorandum of understanding ran through Dec. 31, 2016, after the union maintained that players could strike. A federal judge ruled in June that the team remained bound by a no-strike provision from its 2005-12 CBA, heading off any labor action that could have affected last Olympics in Brazil.

Then late last year talks were stalled when the players split with the union's executive director. They picked up again over the last two months after U.S. Women's National Team Players Association brought in a new executive director and legal representation.

The USSF had maintained that much of the pay disparity between the men's and women's teams resulted from separate labor agreements. The women's team had set up its compensation structure, which included a guaranteed salary rather than a pay-for-play model like the men, in the last contract.

There has been no decision issued in the EEOC complaint, which was brought by Morgan, Rapinoe, Becky Sauerbrunn, Hope Solo and Carli Lloyd. All five were on the team that won the 2015 Women's World Cup in Canada.

It is unclear if the complaint is moot now that the sides have a new CBA.

"I think that the deal that we got is phenomenal. It's a great step for the team now," Sauerbrunn said Wednesday. "But (it's also) a great launching point for other CBA negotiations and for other eras of teams that will be negotiating."

The contract announcement follows an agreement between USA Hockey and its women's national team for better compensation following a threat by players to boycott the world championships.

The Irish women's national soccer team also said Tuesday it could skip an upcoming international match

because of a labor dispute. The players, many of them amateurs, say they aren't compensated for time off from their daily jobs. They say they don't even have their own team apparel, but share it with Ireland's youth teams.

AP freelancer Sean Shapiro in Texas contributed to this report.

High court may re-examine Civil Rights Act after LGBT ruling

By MICHAEL TARM, AP Legal Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — A ruling by a U.S. appeals court in Chicago reopens the question of whether the 1964 Civil Rights Act's protections apply to LGBT workers in the same way they bar discrimination based on someone's race, religion or national origin.

The immediate impact of the 7th Circuit's decision Tuesday is that employers in Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin — the states under the court's jurisdiction — would be breaking federal law by showing bias against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender employees.

But because the ruling conflicts with all the others made by federal appellate courts since the 1970s, the U.S. Supreme Court may ultimately have to decide whether to uphold the Chicago ruling as national precedent or strike it down as judicial overreach.

Here's a look on how that might happen on a court currently operating with eight justices pending the Senate confirmation of President Donald Trump's nominee, Neil Gorsuch:

THE RULING

Eleven 7th Circuit judges heard arguments in November in a lawsuit by an Indiana teacher, Kimberly Hively, who alleged that Ivy Tech Community College in South Bend didn't hire her full time because she is a lesbian.

After deliberating for four months, the court ruled decisively — 8 to 3 — that the 53-year-old law most closely associated with prohibitions on racial discrimination also barred discrimination against LGBT workers.

In the past four decades, nine other federal appellate courts nationwide heard similar cases and invariably reached conclusions opposite to the Chicago-based court.

CORE ARGUMENTS

The issue largely hinges on one word in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act: "Sex." That's the relevant section outlawing discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin or sex.

Previous decisions concluded lawmakers in 1964 clearly intended for "sex" to refer only to whether someone was male or female. But the 7th Circuit found the word "sex" can just as well mean "sexual orientation."

In an opinion concurring with the majority, Judge Richard Posner wrote that changing norms call for a change in interpretation.

"We understand the words of Title VII differently, not because we're smarter than the statute's framers and ratifiers but because we live in a different era, a different culture," Posner wrote.

ROAD TO THE HIGH COURT

The Supreme Court typically agrees to take up an issue when it sees judicial discord between the nation's 13 U.S. circuit courts. Now that the 7th Circuit's interpretation of the Civil Rights Act stands alone, the odds improve that the Supreme Court will take it on one day.

The more immediate ripple effect of the 7th Circuit ruling will be on other U.S. courts of appeal, explained Greg Nevins, of Lambda Legal, which brought the case on behalf of the Indiana teacher.

When similar cases come before them, they'll have to account for findings of the 7th Circuit, which Nevins said is well-respected for the intellectual rigor of its judges and so has tremendous influence on other courts.

"Courts elsewhere can't just sit back and rely on rulings over 15 or 20 years as being the last word," he said.

While the 7th Circuit is forcing a reexamination of the law and will likely influence other courts, the Hively

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case will likely not be the one that goes before the high court. Ivy Tech, which denies ever discriminating against Hively, has indicated since Tuesday that it doesn't intend to appeal to the Supreme Court.

THE GORSUCH FACTOR

The nation's highest court has tended to split between liberals and conservatives on the hot-button social issues. That's frequently left the deciding vote to moderate Justice Anthony Kennedy, including when he cast the decisive vote in a 2015 ruling that gave same-sex couples the right under federal law to marry.

It's likely that by the time any such case makes it to the high court, Neil Gorsuch — Trump's nominee to fill a vacancy on the nine-member court left by Antonin Scalia's 2016 death — will have taken his seat.

A Supreme Court with Gorsuch on the bench would mean five justices appointed by Republican presidents and four by Democrats, though the 7th Circuit's ruling demonstrates that who makes the appointments isn't always a reliable indication of how judges vote. Out of the eight appellate judges who agreed the Civil Rights Act should incorporate bias against LGBT workers, five were Republican.

Gorsuch's judicial philosophy of focusing on the original texts to resolve conflicts over the law suggests he'd sympathize with the views of the three dissenting 7th Circuit judges. The dissenting opinion accused the majority of making law, not interpreting it, adding: "Legislative change is arduous and can be slow to come. But we're not authorized to amend Title VII by interpretation."

That strongly echoes pronouncements by Gorsuch. He wrote in a 2015 opinion that there was always a remedy if existing law is unclear: "It's called legislation. ... Admittedly, the legislative process can be an arduous one. But that's no bug in the constitutional design: It is the very point of the design."

New GOP health plan could raise premiums; no vote scheduled

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR and ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican leaders prepared Wednesday to send lawmakers home for a two-week recess without voting on their troubled health care bill, as prospects for a quick deal among party factions moved farther out of reach.

Meanwhile, policy experts said the latest GOP health care idea could mean going back to a time when people with medical problems were charged much higher premiums for individual policies.

Thursday's House floor schedule from Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., makes no mention of a health care vote.

Conservatives and moderates blamed each other for failure to come to an agreement. Already in jeopardy, the GOP drive to repeal "Obamacare" could get more complicated as weeks go by with no resolution of internal differences.

"I've heard nothing of substance at this point that would break the logjam," said Rep. Mark Sanford, R-S.C., a member of the conservative Freedom Caucus.

A new idea roughed out in negotiations this week between the White House and leaders of the Freedom Caucus illustrates the problems Republicans are having. It would allow states to seek waivers of two requirements in the 2010 Affordable Care Act. One, known as community rating, forbids insurers from charging higher premiums on account of people's medical problems or pre-existing conditions. The other is the essential health benefits provision that spells out categories of benefits all insurance plans must cover.

Conservatives who want the federal government out of health care argue that those provisions have driven up premiums and decreased choice. The idea is to put states back in charge of insurance rules, reasoning that that would increase the availability of plans with lower premiums, attractive to younger, healthier customers.

But health care industry consultant Robert Laszewski said it would also open a "back door" to a system where the sick can get priced out of coverage.

"It's hard for me to believe that any state would take us back ... when it comes to the protections that consumers have for pre-existing conditions," Laszewski said. "There is no doubt that Obamacare as a system is not working very well, but nobody wants to go backward."

Republicans say their bill includes a fallback option for people with health problems. It would create a \$100 billion fund that states can use for a variety of purposes, including high-risk insurance pools where

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people with medical problems can get coverage.

But Trish Riley, executive director of the National Academy for State Health Policy, said those didn't work well in the past. Patients tended to be very sick, and premiums were often too expensive.

"There would be real challenges for people with illnesses to get affordable coverage," Riley said. "You will get guaranteed access to coverage, but you won't be able to afford it." Her nonpartisan organization offers policy advice to states.

A former Obama administration insurance regulator said it's likely that the companies would press states to seek waivers under the latest Republican idea. That's because the broader GOP legislation would repeal unpopular ACA penalties on people who don't get covered, a move that insurers fear would let people postpone getting coverage until they are sick.

"Insurers are going to want some other filter to keep out people," said Karen Pollitz, an expert on individual health insurance, now with the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation.

Trump administration officials and leading GOP legislators said they are not giving up trying to find common ground between conservatives and moderates.

Democrats were dismissive. "It's as if the president and Paul Ryan went to some of the Republicans and the Freedom Caucus and said, 'We can make this worse,'" Rep. Jan Schakowsky of Illinois said.

Ryan's office, however, seemed to be keeping arms-length from the negotiations. Congress leaves town shortly for a two-week recess, when lawmakers could face antagonistic grilling from voters at town hall meetings and the entire GOP drive might lose more momentum.

Some conservatives said it might be good for lawmakers to go home and get an earful from constituents. Michael Needham, CEO of the advocacy group Heritage Action, accused House moderates of "intransigence" and said they "clearly want to keep Obamacare in place."

But a poll released earlier this week by the Kaiser Family Foundation offered reinforcement for lawmakers reluctant to forge ahead. It showed that 3 in 4 Americans want the Trump administration to make the law work. About 2 in 3 said they were glad the House GOP bill didn't pass last month. But people split evenly between wanting to keep or repeal the statute.

Associated Press writer Kevin Freking contributed to this report.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, April 6, the 96th day of 2017. There are 269 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 6, 1917, the United States entered World War I as the House joined the Senate in approving a declaration of war against Germany that was then signed by President Woodrow Wilson.

On this date:

In 1830, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized by Joseph Smith in Fayette, New York.

In 1886, the Canadian city of Vancouver, British Columbia, was incorporated.

In 1896, the first modern Olympic games formally opened in Athens, Greece.

In 1909, American explorers Robert E. Peary and Matthew A. Henson and four Inuits became the first men to reach the North Pole.

In 1947, the first Tony Awards were held in New York; this event, focusing on individual achievement rather than specific works, honored Ingrid Bergman, Helen Hayes, Jose Ferrer, Fredric March and playwright Arthur Miller, among others.

In 1954, Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy, R-Wis., responding to CBS newsman Edward R. Murrow's broadside against him on "See It Now," said in remarks filmed for the program that Murrow had, in the past, "engaged in propaganda for Communist causes."

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In 1965, the United States launched Intelsat I, also known as the "Early Bird" communications satellite, into geosynchronous orbit.

In 1971, Russian-born composer Igor Stravinsky, 88, died in New York City.

In 1980, 3M introduced its "Post-it Notes," a re-branding of a product formerly known as "Press 'n Peel."

In 1992, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled a Nebraska farmer had been entrapped by postal agents into buying mail-order child pornography. The four-year siege of Sarajevo by Bosnian Serb forces began. Science-fiction author Isaac Asimov died in New York at age 72.

In 1998, country singer Tammy Wynette died at her Nashville home at age 55.

In 2014, actor Mickey Rooney, 93, died in North Hollywood.

Ten years ago: British sailors and marines back home after being freed by Iran said they were blindfolded, isolated in cold stone cells and tricked into fearing execution while being coerced into falsely saying they had entered Iranian waters. A suicide bomber smashed a truck loaded with TNT and toxic chlorine gas into a police checkpoint in Ramadi, Iraq, killing 27 people.

Five years ago: Five black people were shot, three fatally, in Tulsa, Oklahoma; Jake England and Alvin Watts, who admitted targeting the victims because of race, pleaded guilty to murder, and were sentenced to life in prison without parole. A Navy F18 Hornet jet whose pilots were forced to eject crashed in a spectacular fireball into a big apartment complex in Virginia Beach, Virginia; miraculously, no one died. Fang Lizhi (fahng lee-juhr), 76, who was one of China's best-known dissidents, died in Tucson, Arizona. Painter Thomas Kinkadee, 54, died in Monte Sereno, California.

One year ago: A federal judge in Charleston, West Virginia, sentenced former coal executive Don Blankenship to a year in prison for his role in the 2010 Upper Big Branch Mine explosion that killed 29 men in America's deadliest mining disaster in four decades; Blankenship maintained that he had committed no crime. Country giant Merle Haggard died in Palo Cedro, California, on his 79th birthday.

Today's Birthdays: Nobel Prize-winning scientist James D. Watson is 89. Composer-conductor Andre Previn is 88. Actor Billy Dee Williams is 80. Actor Roy Thinnes is 79. Movie director Barry Levinson is 75. Actor John Ratzenberger is 70. Actress Patrika Darbo is 69. Baseball Hall of Famer Bert Blyleven is 66. Actress Marilu Henner is 65. Olympic bronze medal figure skater Janet Lynn is 64. Actor Michael Rooker is 62. Former U.S. Rep. Michele Bachmann, R-Minn., is 61. Rock musician Warren Haynes is 57. Rock singer-musician Frank Black is 52. Actress Ari Meyers is 48. Actor Paul Rudd is 48. Actor-producer Jason Hervey is 45. Rock musician Markku Lappalainen (mar-KOO' lap-uh-LAN'-en) is 44. Actor Zach Braff is 42. Actor Joel Garland is 42. Actress Candace Cameron Bure (buhr-RAY') is 41. Actor Teddy Sears is 40. Jazz and rhythm-and-blues musician Robert Glasper is 39. Actress Eliza Coupe is 36. Folk singer-musician Kenneth Pattengale (Milk Carton Kids) is 35. Actor Bret Harrison is 35. Actor Charlie McDermott is 27.

Thought for Today: "To be really cosmopolitan, a man must be at home even in his own country." — Thomas Wentworth Higginson, American clergyman-author (1823-1911).