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Thursday, April 27

Senior Menu: Roast beef, mashed potatoes with gravy, malibu blend vegetables, peach cobbler, whole wheat bread.

School Lunch: Popcorn chicken, smile potatoes, fruit, broccoli and dip.

School Breakfast: Bosco sticks, fruit, juice, milk.

10 a.m.: Girls Golf at Redfield

CANCELLED: 7th/8th grade track in Groton

7 p.m.: FCCLA Style Show

Friday, April 28

Senior Menu: Scalloped chicken, spinach, strawberry Jell-O with Mandarin oranges, Gingerbread with topping.

School Lunch: BBQ, baked chips, fruit, romaine salad.

School Breakfast: Cereal, yogurt, fruit, juice, milk.

1 p.m.: Track at Sisseton

6:30 p.m.: FFA Banquet

Saturday, April 29

4 p.m.: Piano recital at GHS Gym

Sunday, April 30

St. John's Lutheran: Worship at 9 a.m., Sunday School at 10 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship at 9 a.m., Sunday School at 10 a.m.

United Methodist: Jed Morehouse baptism/ blessings shower, Conde Worship at 9 a.m., Coffee Fellowship at 10 a.m., Groton Worship at 11 a.m., Sunday School begins after children's ser-

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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Game, Fish and Parks Law Enforcement Officers Now Equipped with Body Cameras

PIERRE, S.D. – South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) law enforcement officers will now be equipped with body cameras to increase transparency and enhance officer safety.

“Our officers already do a tremendous job,” said GFP department secretary Kelly Hepler. “It is our hope that the implementation of body cameras will ultimately make their jobs easier, and the work they do to serve and protect our natural resources as well as the public’s safety even better.”

Due to the nature of wildlife and park law enforcement, in-car video cameras are oftentimes not beneficial. Recent advancements in body-worn video cameras have given GFP officers another option. In addition, video documentation can assist with criminal prosecutions and improve protection against false allegations.

-GFP-

GFP Urges Anglers to be Aware of Fish Consumption Advisories

PIERRE, S.D. - The South Dakota departments of Game, Fish and Parks (GFP), Health (DOH) and Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) are reminding anglers to check the current list of fish consumption advisories as the 2017 fishing season begins.

Based on testing results from 2016, New Wall Lake in Pennington County has been added to the advisory list. Fish to avoid include black and white crappie over 13 inches and largemouth bass over 16 inches.

A complete list of all lake and species specific advisories can be found at: doh.sd.gov/food/Fish-Advisories.aspx. Recommended guidelines for eating fish from advisory and non-advisory waters can also be found at the link above.

Annual fish testing is a collaborative effort among all three government agencies noted previously. When test results exceed established values for certain sizes of fish in a water body, a consumption advisory is issued.

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WE'RE TICKLED PINK!
AND HAPPY TO SAY
A BABY GIRL IS ON THE WAY!

JOIN US FOR A COME AND GO
BABY SHOWER HONORING
MOM-TO-BE

McKinsey Smith
MAY 20, 2017
9:30 TO 11 A.M.
STEVE AND CAROL SMITH HOME
1104 North Main Street, Groton

McKinsey is registered at Target



50th Anniversary

Dave and Mary Blackmun are celebrating 50 years of marriage. Please join family and friends for an open house Saturday, April 29th, at Olive Grove golf course in Groton, SD from 2-4 pm. No gifts please.

GROTON KIWANIS CLUB NEWS

Tom Paepke, president, led the short business session for the Groton Kiwanis Club, on Wednesday noon. The annual Kiwanis sponsored track meet, set for Tuesday, April 25, was cancelled due to bad weather. Monday, May 1, will be the annual Kiwanis athletic banquet at GHS. Lee Schinkel introduced his guest, Anita Lowary, and proposed her for membership. Anita spoke on her retirement on June 30, and some of those experiences in 36 years, working for the city. She has worked for five different mayors. Anita stated that the new playground equipment will be installed at the ballpark soon. She will be writing a grant for a new water tower, which is 97 years old. Anita praised the baseball association for all they have done. The Kiwanis Club thanked Anita for speaking, and her 36 years of dedication to the city of Groton.

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Today in Weather History April 23, 2002:

April 27, 1968: A major snow storm raged over the northern Black Hills blocking many highways near Gillette and Moorcroft with an estimated three to four feet of snow. Winds in the Sturgis area were nearly 90 mph.

1898: The first Weather Bureau kite was launched in Topeka, Kansas to report daily, early morning, atmospheric observations. By year's end, 16 additional launch sites would be in operation.

1899 - A tornado struck Kirksville, MO, killing 34 persons and destroying 300 buildings. (David Ludlum)

1912: The April 27-28, 1912 outbreak was the climax of a wild, week-long period of severe weather that occurred in Oklahoma. Strong to violent tornadoes struck portions of central and north central Oklahoma on April 20, 1912. Also, a violent tornado hit Ponca City, OK on April 25, 1912. From the 27 through the 28th, 16 tornadoes rated F2 or greater touched down in the state with 6 of them rated F4. About 40 people were killed, and 120 people were injured by the storms.

1931 - The temperature at Pahala, located on the main island of Hawaii, soared to 100 degrees to establish a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1942 - A destructive tornado swept across Rogers County and Mayes County in Oklahoma. The tornado struck the town of Pryor killing 52 persons and causing two million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Forty-two cities in the western and south central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 87 degrees at Olympia WA was an April record, and highs of 92 degrees at Boise ID, 95 degrees at Monroe LA, and 96 degrees at Sacramento CA tied April records. (The National Weather Summary) More than 300 daily temperature records fell by the wayside during a two week long heat wave across thirty-four states in the southern and western U.S. Thirteen cities established records for the month of April. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1988 - Mount Washington NH reported seven feet of snow in ten days, pushing their snowfall total for the month past the previous record of 89.3 inches set in 1975. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from the Lower and Middle Mississippi Valley to Virginia and the Carolinas. Hail up to four and a half inches in diameter caused five million dollars damage around Omaha NE. Thunderstorms spawned eleven tornadoes, and there were 160 other reports of large hail and damaging winds. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)








1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in eastern Texas and the Lower Mississippi Valley. Severe thunderstorms spawned thirteen tornadoes in Texas and twelve in Louisiana. A tornado southwest of Coolidge TX injured eight persons and caused more than five million dollars damage. There were also eighty-five reports of large hail and damaging winds, with baseball size hail reported at Mexia TX and Shreveport LA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data) Forty-three cities in the eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Records highs included 94 degrees at Charleston WV, 95 degrees at Baltimore MD and 96 degrees at Richmond VA. (The National Weather Summary)

2003: For only the 11th time since records began in 1871, hail was observed in Key West Florida. A severe thunderstorm produced hail to 1.75 inches in diameter which easily broke the previous record of a half an inch in diameter which was set on May 10, 1961.

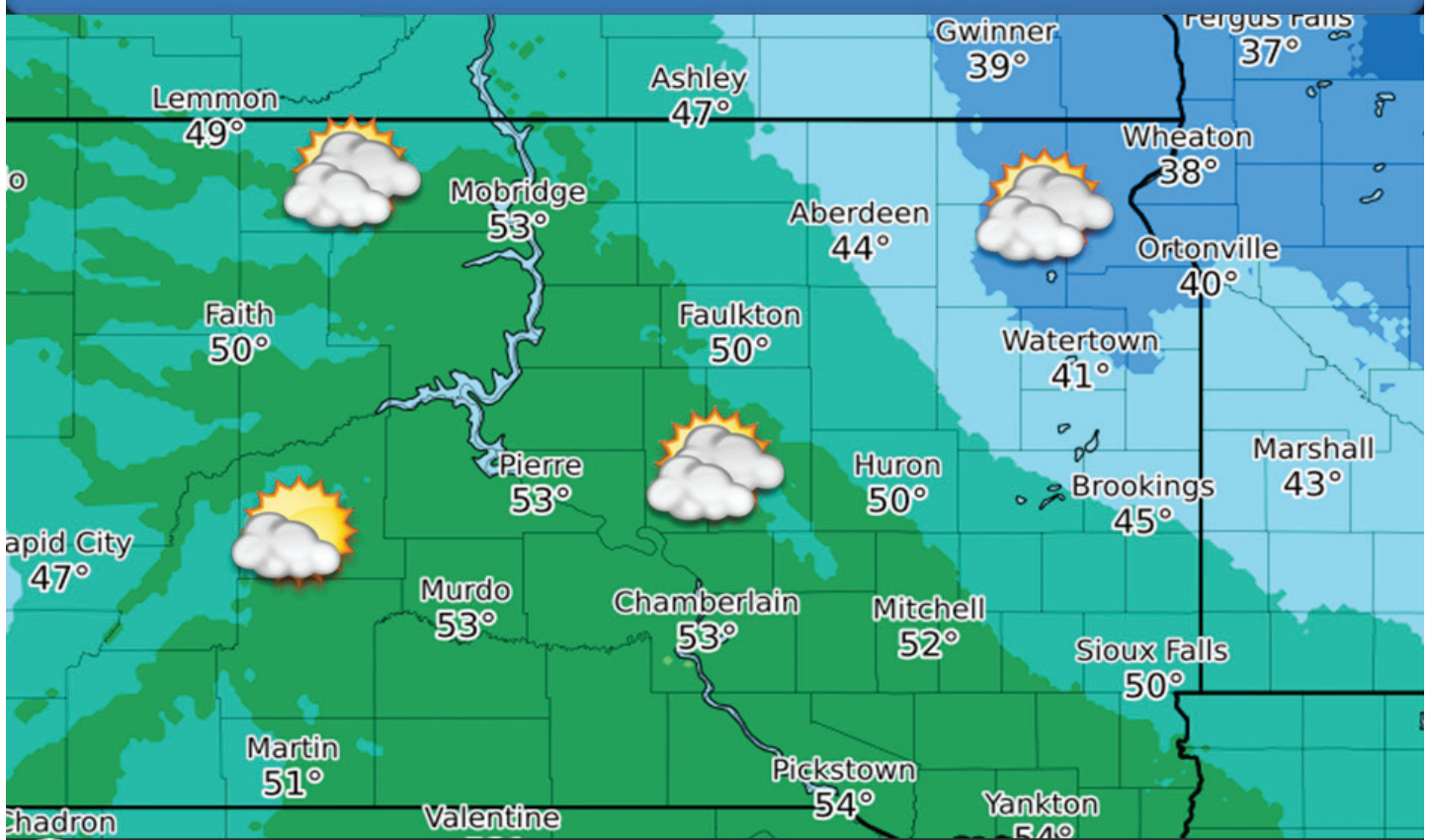
2011 - An estimated 305 tornados between the 27th and 28th sets a record for the largest outbreak ever recorded, including two EF-5s, four EF-4s and 21 EF-3s. Arkansas through Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, southern Tennessee, Virginia to Pennsylvania and New York were all affected. An estimated 300 died including 210 in Alabama alone. This brought the April total past 600, the most in any month in recorded US weather history.

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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
						
Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Partly Sunny
High: 44 °F	Low: 21 °F	High: 51 °F	Low: 23 °F	High: 56 °F	Low: 33 °F	High: 55 °F

Can't Shake the Cool Temperatures



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD



Updated: 4/27/2017 5:46 AM Central

Published on: 04/27/2017 at 5:53AM

Temperatures will remain cool today as the weather pattern keeps the Northern Plains cooler than average. We will dry out today, but clouds will be slow to exit for eastern areas. Highs will only rise into the upper 30s to lower 40s over northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota. With more sunshine expected for central South Dakota, expect highs there to rise into the 50s.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 32.5 F at 12:00 AM

Low Outside Temp: 28.3 F at 11:23 PM

High Gust: 23.0 Mph at 12:05 AM

Snow: 3" Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 91° in 1897

Record Low: 17° in 2005

Average High: 63°F

Average Low: 37°F

Average Precip in April.: 1.59

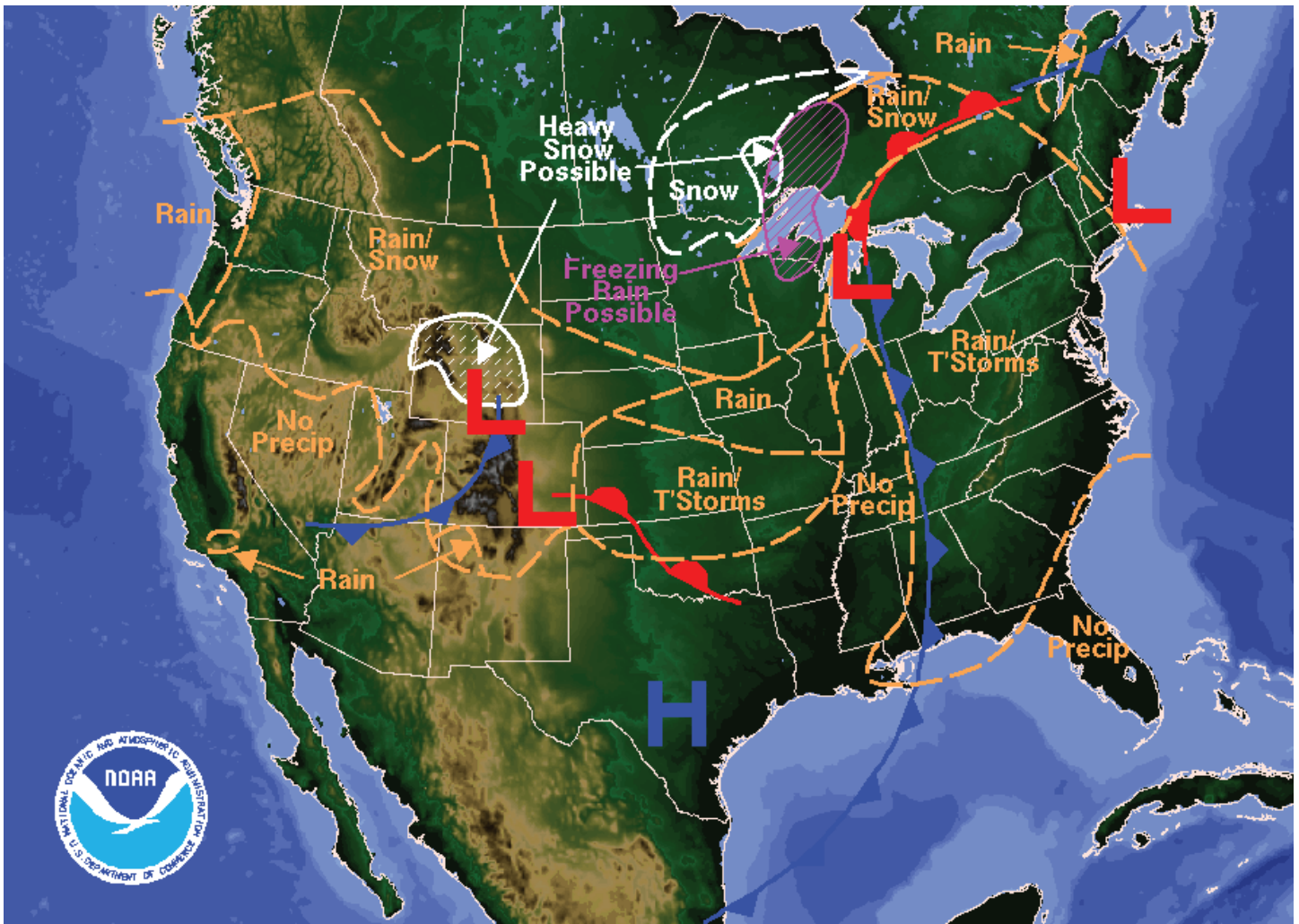
Precip to date in April.: 1.09

Average Precip to date: 3.77

Precip Year to Date: 1.68

Sunset Tonight: 8:35 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:26 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Thu, Apr 27, 2017, issued 4:42 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

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SHOULD IT BE FAITH OR FEELINGS?

Two best friends were walking home from church. It was a time for laughing and shoulder-nudging. Tim's Mom looked on approvingly as they enjoyed each other's company.

Suddenly, Tim caught Alex off-guard – looking in the wrong direction. To his left was a huge mud-puddle. Into the mud went Alex after a two-handed push from Tim.

"Why in the world did you do that, Tim?" asked his mother.

"Well," came his reply after a moment's thought, "the devil tricked me!"

"How?" she wondered. After all, they were walking home from church.

"Well," Tim said after thinking for a moment, "when the devil told me to do it, it felt so good I thought it was the Lord talking to me."

Scripture, Paul reminds us, is not only inspired by God, but was given to us to teach us "what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right!"

Feelings come and go but they are not facts that we can safely build our lives upon. There are times when our feelings encourage us to do what is right and avoid doing what is wrong. But there are many times when our feelings and emotions are distorted by temptations and could lead us in the wrong direction. That's why God gave us clearly defined directions to follow.

Prayer: Give us a faith, Lord, that is strong enough to take You at Your Word and follow You every day of our lives. May we accept and follow Your guidance. In Jesus' Name, Amen

Scripture for Today: 2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

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News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Dakota Cash

09-17-32-33-34

(nine, seventeen, thirty-two, thirty-three, thirty-four)

Estimated jackpot: \$108,000

Hot Lotto

06-16-20-35-36, Hot Ball: 13

(six, sixteen, twenty, thirty-five, thirty-six; Hot Ball: thirteen)

Estimated jackpot: \$5.89 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$61 million

Powerball

01-15-18-26-51, Powerball: 26, Power Play: 4

(one, fifteen, eighteen, twenty-six, fifty-one; Powerball: twenty-six; Power Play: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$100 million

Judge could rule soon to let beer stores keep licenses

By JULIA SHUMWAY, Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A judge could rule soon on whether to let four Nebraska stores near a South Dakota Indian reservation keep selling alcohol while they appeal a state regulator's decision not to renew their liquor licenses.

The stores sell millions of cans of beer each year in Whiteclay, an unincorporated village about 360 miles (580 kilometers) northwest of Omaha, and are set to lose their licenses Sunday. They are appealing a decision last week by the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission to deny their renewal applications based on concerns about inadequate law enforcement in the area. The judge could rule as soon as Thursday.

Andrew Snyder, an attorney representing the beer store owners, asked Lancaster County District Court Judge Andrew Jacobsen on Wednesday to stay the commission's decision and allow the stores to automatically renew their liquor licenses, as they have in previous years.

"Without a license, they can't run a business," Snyder said. "They're going to lose money."

Snyder said the commission's decision was arbitrary and did not consider all evidence. He said the commission erred by requiring his clients to turn in long-form renewal applications for their liquor licenses when nothing had changed.

Milissa Johnson-Wiles, an assistant attorney general representing the liquor control commission, said regulators found the stores were a threat to public health and safety. They sell beer and malt liquor

200 yards (180 meters) south of the dry Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, which still struggles with fetal alcoholism and one of the lowest life expectancies in the Western Hemisphere.

Advocates who want the stores closed said they often see displays of public drunkenness and human waste in the streets and have heard reports of sexual assault. The state Legislature gave final approval Tuesday to a bill creating a task force including senators, public health officials and the executive director of the Commission on Indian Affairs to investigate public health problems.

"In this case, as the commission's order shows, a lot has changed," Johnson-Wiles said.

She said an inquiry into the liquor stores was long overdue, and the commission would be in a difficult position if Jacobsen chooses to issue a stay and allow the beer stores to automatically renew their licenses.

Follow Julia Shumway on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/JMShumway>

South Dakota Democrats could consider replacing party chair

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Democrats will consider rule changes this weekend that could result in ousting the party's chair.

Central Committee members will vote Saturday on amending the party's constitution to shorten the terms of party officials and to push elections from winter months following gubernatorial elections to the spring of odd-numbered years.

The proposal comes amid the latest call to unseat South Dakota Democratic Party Chair Ann Tornberg.

Supporters of the rule change say it's needed to make the party more competitive. Opponents say it would damage consistency among Democrats' top ranks.

Tornberg tells the Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2pjDu7o>) she feels she has effectively managed the party since her election in 2014, despite the outcome of last year's elections.

Democrats have minorities in the state Legislature and don't hold any statewide offices.

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

Prominent powwow set to begin in wake of pipeline protests

By **RUSSELL CONTRERAS, Associated Press**

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — One of North America's most prominent powwows is set to begin in New Mexico in the wake of pipeline protests in North Dakota that became a historic display of Native American solidarity.

The Gathering of Nations is one of the world's largest gatherings of indigenous people. Last year's event attracted about 3,000 dancers from hundreds of tribes in the U.S., Canada and Mexico. It routinely draws at least 80,000 visitors.

The event that opens Thursday in Albuquerque is intended to be nonpolitical, but Larry Yazzie, its official announcer, said people will be reminded why they are coming together, and that the "water protectors" — those who joined the pipeline protests — will be acknowledged.

"There will be plenty of people there who have been to North Dakota," Yazzie said. "The spirit will be there."

The protests were staged after the Standing Rock Sioux and other tribes said the pipeline threatened their sovereignty, religious rights and water supply. The Crow tribe — a traditional foe of the Sioux — joined the demonstrations.

In August, authorities arrested about 750 demonstrators, including actress Shailene Woodley and Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein. In February, authorities dispersed the last remaining hold-outs in advance of spring flooding season.

The Gathering of Nations will be held at Expo New Mexico after the organization parted ways in a public spat with its longtime host — the University of New Mexico and its basketball arena.

The new venue also hosts the New Mexico State Fair and will give powwow vendors more space while providing visitors with a more intimate feeling amid a smaller powwow arena.

"It's going to have its growing pains. It's a change," Yazzie said. "But I think a lot of people are excited to see the new place, and we will have a lot of dancers ready to compete."

The Gathering of Nations began in 1983 in a gym at present-day St. Pius X High School and moved to Expo New Mexico soon after. The event then relocated to the University of New Mexico.

A character in the 1998 movie "Smoke Signals" said the Gathering of Nations was such a powerful pan-Indian event that it would have kept Columbus away had it been around in 1492.

Dan Mourning, general manager of Expo New Mexico, said officials have been working for a year to prepare for the revamped Gathering of Nations. Mourning expects attendees to embrace a new indoor Indian trading market and live entertainment at "Stage 49."

For the first time, a medical marijuana developer and dispensary will help sponsor the event. Representatives of Ultra Health will pass out pamphlets and brochures about medical marijuana and ways attendees can apply to the program.

Follow Russell Contreras on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/russcontreras> .

South Dakota cattle ranchers lose money in 2016

KIMBALL, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota ranchers who took part in a Mitchell Technical Institute program lost an average of \$100 per cow last year, after earning an average profit of \$150 per cow the year before.

The Daily Republic (<http://bit.ly/2pib0Lg>) reported the institute has 100 farms enrolled in its farm and ranch management program.

Lori Tonak, an instructor at the institute, says the cattle market is still shaken by price drops in 2015. Of the 45 producers she works with in central South Dakota, the most profitable earned \$12 per cow.

"Every cow-calf producer out there may not have lost money, but they didn't make much, if they made any," Tonak said.

Tonak said farmers can cut costs by grazing cattle longer on cover crops instead of placing them in a feedlot.

Farmer Gary Hoing made changes to his grazing tactics at the suggestion of his son, who is enrolled in the program. He now uses 4 acres per cow instead of 6 acres per cow, allowing him to slightly increase his herd size.

Hoing said it may take up to 10 years to make up the losses he saw last year.

"You can't control the weather and you can't control the markets, so you just deal with it as it comes," Hoing said.

Tonak said cattle markets bounce quite a bit before stabilizing and recent price increases for calves may be a promising sign.

"I'm hoping it stabilizes at some point, but I really don't want to predict. ... Nobody really seems to know what's going on," Tonak said.

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

Man accused of scalding infant gets 10-14 years in prison

HARTINGTON, Neb. (AP) — A man accused of scalding a year-old infant has been given 10 to 14 years in a Nebraska prison.

Court records say 22-year-old River Malatare was sentenced Monday in Cedar County District Court in Hartington. He'd pleaded no contest to attempted intentional child abuse and guilty to an unrelated charge of failing to register as a sex offender.

The records say Malatare lived in Yankton, South Dakota, and had been staying with the child's mother. He was baby-sitting the girl in March 2015 when she was scalded. He told a nurse at a Yankton hospital that he didn't know the bath water he'd drawn was so hot.

South Dakota records say Malatare was convicted in 2014 of statutory rape of a teenager.

Former Parkston prep coach sentenced for stealing from team

OLIVET, S.D. (AP) — A Sioux Falls man convicted of embezzling from the Parkston High School football team while serving as coach will spend about 2 ½ months in jail.

Thirty-year-old Tony Axtell pleaded no contest in February to embezzling about \$9,500 in the fall of 2015.

The team's checking account held donations for jerseys, equipment and team activities. Axtell was accused of moving money to his personal and work accounts, and using some of it to buy jerseys for a women's rugby team in Sioux Falls.

The Daily Republic reports <http://bit.ly/2oI3KYd> that Axtell was sentenced this week to five years in prison with all but 75 days suspended. He was fined \$1,000 and ordered to pay \$3,375 in restitution.

Axtell also taught physical education and physics in Parkston. He resigned a year ago.

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

3 sentenced to jail in binge drinking death

WATERTOWN, S.D. (AP) — Three Watertown college students have been sentenced to jail time in the death of a 19-year-old woman who was heavily intoxicated.

An autopsy showed the woman died of "positional asphyxia" last month due to a blood alcohol level of .33 — more than four times the legal limit for driving.

Twenty-one-year-old Kayla Juhnke will spend 11 days in jail for buying alcohol for an underage individual. Nineteen-year-old Brady Johnke was given 29 days in jail for giving the alcohol to the woman who died.

The Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2phOu5p>) says 19-year-old Logan Schilling was sentenced to 11 days in jail for hosting underage drinking. All three must pay restitution and funeral expenses and must make a presentation to high school students on the dangers of binge drinking.

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

Syrian media: Israel attacked installation near Damascus

By PHILIP ISSA, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Syrian state media blamed Israel on Thursday for an early morning missile attack on a military installation near Damascus International Airport that shook the capital with the force of the blasts.

Israeli Minister of Intelligence Yisrael Katz would not comment directly on the incident but said any similar strike would be in line with established policy to interrupt the transfer of weapons to the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah from Iran and Syria.

"It absolutely matches our declared policy, a policy that we also implement," Katz told Israel's Army Radio.

Israel is widely believed to have carried out several airstrikes in recent years on advanced weapons systems in Syria — including Russian-made anti-aircraft missiles and Iranian-made missiles — as well as Hezbollah positions. It rarely comments on such operations.

The widely followed Diaries of a Mortar Facebook page, which is run by activists in Damascus, reported several explosions at 3:42 a.m. that could be heard and felt across the capital.

Syria's state-run SANA news agency said Israel had fired several missiles from inside the Occupied Golan Heights south of the capital striking a military installation southwest of the airport, which serves both military and civilian flights. It reported several explosions and material damage but no casualties. It was not clear how Israel was identified as the culprit.

The blasts were felt at least 15 kilometers (9 miles) away.

"The buildings shook from the force of the blast," said a media activist who goes by Salam al-Ghoutawi, of the Ghouta Media Center, in the city's opposition-held northeastern suburbs. He said he heard the roar of jets in the distance at the time of the blasts.

A string of explosions could be seen silhouetted against the night sky in a video published by the Ghouta Media center, with blazing debris flying out of the blast. The light of the explosions illuminated the sizeable blast cloud that took shape nearby.

Hezbollah's al-Manar media station reported a blast at the fuel tanks and a warehouse next to the airport, which is 25 kilometers (16 miles) east of the city's center. It speculated the blast was likely caused by an Israeli strike.

Hezbollah is a steadfast ally of the Syrian government and has sent thousands of its militants to fight alongside government forces in Syria's six-year-long civil war.

The war between President Bashar Assad and his regional allies, against local and foreign opposition forces inside his country, has left more than 400,000 people dead.

Diary of a Mortar said the explosion near the airport road was followed by flames rising above the area. A pro-government site Damascus Now said the explosion was near the city's Seventh Bridge, which leads to the airport road.

The explosion comes a day after France said that the chemical analysis of samples taken from a deadly sarin gas attack in Syria earlier this month "bears the signature" Assad's government and shows it was responsible.

Russia, a close ally of Assad, denounced the report, saying the samples and the fact the nerve agent was used are not enough to prove who was behind it.

Associated Press writers Sara El Deeb in Beirut and Ian Deitch in Jerusalem contributed to this report.

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

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

1. TRUMP'S ABOUT-FACE ON NAFTA

Hours after the administration threatened to pull out of the trade pact, Mexico and Canada agreed to renegotiate the deal to "the benefit of all three countries."

2. LAWMAKERS NEAR DEAL ON SPENDING BILL

A breakthrough seems possible after the White House backs off a threat to withhold payments that help lower-income Americans under "Obamacare."

3. UNITED MAKES 'BUMPING' CHANGES

The embattled airline says it will raise the limit — to \$10,000 — on payments to customers who give up seats on oversold flights and will increase training for employees.

4. HOW NORTH KOREA HAS MASTERED BRINKSMANSHIP

The technique over the years has won the country a grudging respect from Washington and its allies, while sometimes filling Pyongyang's coffers with aid by relieved rivals.

5. AS TRUMP CALLS FOR WALL, A LOOK AT WORLD'S BARRIERS

While the structures are effective at protecting borders, they've also destroyed city neighborhoods, harm the environment and prevent innocent victims from reaching safety, an AP examination finds.

6. ANN COULTER'S BERKELEY SPEECH CANCELED

Still, the liberal California university is bracing for possible violence and protests whether the conservative pundit comes to the campus or not.

7. STANDOFF CONTINUES IN DELAWARE

A man suspected of shooting and killing a state trooper outside a convenience store remains barricaded — and trading fire with officers — inside his house.

8. SMALL BUSINESSES HAVE TAX BREAK WISH LISTS

But owners don't plan a hiring binge if the Trump administration's plan to lower tax rates becomes law.

9. 'YEP, I'M GAY'

Ellen DeGeneres made history 20 years ago as the first prime-time lead on network TV to come out.

10. WHERE THEY PLAY FOR PAY

Now that the NFL draft is here, LSU running back Leonard Fournette is one of several college stars ready to cash in.

United raising limit on payments to bumped flyers to \$10,000

By DAVID KOENIG, AP Airlines Writer

DALLAS (AP) — United Airlines says it will raise the limit — to \$10,000 — on payments to customers who give up seats on oversold flights and will increase training for employees as it deals with fallout from the video of a passenger being violently dragged from his seat.

United is also vowing to reduce, but not eliminate, overbooking — the selling of more tickets than there are seats on the plane.

The airline made the promises Thursday as it released a report detailing mistakes that led to the April 9 incident on a United Express plane in Chicago.

United isn't saying whether ticket sales have dropped since the removal of a 69-year-old passenger by three airport security officers, but the airline's CEO admits it could be damaging.

"I breached public trust with this event and how we responded," Oscar Munoz told The Associated

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Press. "People are upset, and I suspect that there are a lot of people potentially thinking of not flying us."

To head off customer defections, United had already announced that it will no longer call police to remove passengers from overbooked flights, and will require airline crews traveling for work to check in sooner. On Thursday, it added several other new policies including:

- Raising the limit on compensation to \$10,000 for customers who give up their seats. That is a maximum — it's unclear how many, if any, passengers would see that much. The current limit is \$1,350. Delta Air Lines earlier this month raised its limit to \$9,950.

- Sending displaced passengers or crew members to nearby airports, putting them on other airlines or arranging for car transportation to get them to their destinations.

- Giving gate agents annual refresher training in dealing with oversold flights. Munoz said he also wants agents and flight attendants to get more help at de-escalating tense situations.

For United, the timing of the viral video could hardly have been worse. The airline struggled badly after a 2010 merger with Continental, enduring several technology breakdowns that angered customers. In the past year, however, the airline has flown more on-time flights and lost fewer bags. It recently rolled out plans for expanding service this summer.

Instead of being commended for those signs of progress, however, it has faced more than two weeks of withering criticism and mockery. David Dao, the passenger injured when he was yanked from his seat, is almost certain to file a lawsuit.

Munoz apologized again and faulted his own initial response, in which he defended airline employees and called Dao belligerent.

"That first response was insensitive beyond belief," Munoz said. "It did not represent how I felt," saying that he got "caught up in facts and circumstances" that weren't initially clear, instead of expressing his shock.

In Thursday's report, United provided new details about the incident. It said Flight 3411 to Louisville, Kentucky, was oversold by one ticket, but a volunteer gave up his seat. After passengers boarded, four crew members of Republic Airline, which operates many United Express flights, showed up late after their Louisville-bound plane was delayed by a mechanical problem.

United said it was a mistake to let the Republic crew board late, which required removing four paying passengers; calling officers when there was no safety or security issue; and not offering enough money to entice volunteers to give up their seats.

"We could have spent a lot of \$10,000s and made that thing right," Munoz said.

United said it will reduce but not end the overbooking of flights. Munoz said if airlines can't overbook flights there will be more empty seats and fares will rise. Delta CEO Ed Bastian called overselling flights "a valid business process."

Politicians in Washington and elsewhere have called for a ban on overselling flights. Some critics have said airlines should leave a few seats empty if they think they will be needed by crew members.

"This overbooking needs to be softened," Dao's attorney, Thomas Demetrio, told the AP. "People really do believe when they buy their ticket they are good to go."

David Koenig can be reached at <http://twitter.com/airlinewriter>

White House says Trump won't immediately pull out of NAFTA

By JILL COLVIN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has told the leaders of Mexico and Canada that he will not pull out of the North American Free Trade Agreement at this time, just hours after administration officials said he was considering a draft executive order to do just that.

The White House made the surprise announcement Wednesday in a read-out of calls involving Trump, Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

"President Trump agreed not to terminate NAFTA at this time and the leaders agreed to proceed swiftly, according to their required internal procedures, to enable the renegotiation of the NAFTA deal to the benefit of all three countries," said the White House.

Trump said he believes "the end result will make all three countries stronger and better."

The Mexican government confirmed the conversation in a statement issued late Wednesday.

"The leaders agreed on the convenience of maintaining the North American Free Trade Agreement and working together with Canada to carry out a successful renegotiation for the benefit of all three countries," the statement read.

Trudeau's office issued a brief statement saying "the two leaders continued their dialogue on Canada-U.S. trade relations, with the Prime Minister reinforcing the importance of stability and job growth in our trade relations."

The White House announcement came hours after administration officials said Trump was considering a draft executive order to withdraw the U.S. from the deal — though administration officials cautioned it was just one of a number of options being discussed by the president and his staff.

Some saw the threat as posturing by Trump to gain leverage over Mexico and Canada as he tries to negotiate changes to the deal. Trump railed against the decades-old trade deal during his campaign, describing it as a "disaster."

Senior White House officials had spent recent days discussing steps that could be taken to start the process of renegotiating or withdrawing from NAFTA before the end of Trump's first 100 days in office, according to a person familiar with the president's thinking.

But the person, along with an administration official, who both spoke on the condition of anonymity in order to discuss internal deliberations, had said a number of options remained on the table, and stressed discussions are ongoing about the best way to proceed.

White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer declined to comment on the order, which was first reported by Politico.

"The president has made addressing the problems of NAFTA a priority throughout the campaign, and once the president makes a decision about how he wants to address that, we'll let you know," he said.

The administration appeared to be divided Wednesday over how and when to proceed, as officials balanced a newfound cautiousness with the desire to rack up accomplishments before Trump's 100th day on the job.

Some were gunning for Trump to sign a draft order this week, while others were weighing the complications surrounding withdrawing from or renegotiating the deal without Congress fully on board. The debate played out in the press Wednesday as some outlets quoted officials insisting the signing was imminent, while other officials dismissed the reports as "just a rumor."

"My practice is to comment on things we've actually done or are doing as opposed to commenting on rumors," Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross told reporters at an unrelated White House briefing Wednesday evening.

Trump could withdraw from NAFTA — but he would have to give six months' notice. And it is unclear

what would happen next. The law Congress passed to enact the trade pact might remain in place, forcing Trump to wrangle with lawmakers and raising questions about the president's authority to raise tariffs on Mexican and Canadian imports.

The decision came days after the administration announced it would slap hefty tariffs on softwood lumber being imported from Canada. Trump has also been railing against changes in Canadian milk product pricing that he says are hurting the American dairy industry.

Trump told The Associated Press in an interview last week that he planned to either renegotiate or terminate NAFTA, which he and other critics blame for wiping out U.S. manufacturing jobs because it allowed companies to move factories to Mexico to take advantage of low-wage labor.

"I am very upset with NAFTA. I think NAFTA has been a catastrophic trade deal for the United States, trading agreement for the United States. It hurts us with Canada, and it hurts us with Mexico," he said.

Another senior White House official declined to comment on "rumors" of specific actions. But that official said NAFTA has been a top priority for the president since day one and said the administration has been working on it since taking office. That person also spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the administration's thinking.

The Trump administration last month submitted a vague set of guidelines to Congress for renegotiating NAFTA, disappointing those who were expecting Trump to demand a major overhaul.

In an eight-page draft letter to Congress, acting U.S. Trade Representative Stephen Vaughn wrote that the administration intended to start talking with Mexico and Canada about making changes to the pact, which took effect in 1994.

The letter spelled out few details and stuck with broad principles. But it appeared to keep much of the existing agreement in place, including private tribunals that allow companies to challenge national laws on the grounds that they inhibit trade — a provision that critics say allows companies to get around environmental and labor laws.

Reports Wednesday of the possible move drew objections from some in Congress, including Sen. John McCain of Arizona.

"Withdrawing from #NAFTA would be a disaster for #Arizona jobs & economy," he tweeted. "@POTUS shouldn't abandon this vital trade agreement."

Associated Press writer Paul Wiseman contributed to this report.

White House backs off as lawmakers work to avert shutdown

By ERICA WERNER, AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Lawmakers are nearing agreement on sweeping spending legislation to keep the lights on in government, after the White House backed off a threat to withhold payments that help lower-income Americans pay their medical bills.

It was the latest concession by the White House, which had earlier dropped a demand for money for President Donald Trump's border wall. Even with Republicans in control of both chambers of Congress and the White House, the Trump administration is learning that Democrats retain significant leverage when their votes are needed on must-pass legislation.

A temporary funding bill expires Friday at midnight, and GOP leaders late Wednesday unveiled another short-term spending bill to prevent a government shutdown this weekend, something Republicans are determined to avoid.

There appears little chance of that as lawmakers worked to resolve final stumbling blocks on issues

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like the environment, though a short-term extension of existing funding levels is likely.

"The fundamental issue is keeping the government open, that's our focus," said Rep. Patrick McHenry, R-N.C., a top member of the vote-counting team in the House.

At the same time, House Republicans had a breakthrough on their moribund health care legislation as a key group of conservatives, the House Freedom Caucus, announced it would support a revised version of the bill. Freedom Caucus opposition was a key ingredient in the legislation's collapse a month ago, a humiliating episode for Republicans that called into question their ability to govern given that they've been promising for seven years to repeal and replace former President Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act.

Yet whether the Freedom Caucus support would be enough remained uncertain. One key moderate, GOP Rep. Charlie Dent of Pennsylvania, dismissed the Freedom Caucus about-face as "a matter of blame-shifting and face-saving" for a bill going nowhere. Even if the legislation passes the House it will face major hurdles in the Senate and is certain to be extensively revised if it survives at all.

The changes in the bill would let states escape requirements under Obama's health care law that insurers charge healthy and seriously ill customers the same rates, and cover a list of specified services like maternity care. Conservatives embraced the revisions as a way to lower people's health care expenses, but moderates saw them as diminishing coverage.

Despite some optimism among House leaders for a quick vote on the health bill, the outcome was difficult to predict. The White House has been exerting intense pressure on House GOP leaders to deliver any tangible legislative accomplishments ahead of Trump's 100-day mark, something that has yet to occur aside from Senate confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch.

The massive spending measure, which would wrap together 11 unfinished spending bills into a single "omnibus" bill, represents the first real bipartisan legislation of Trump's presidency.

Democratic votes are needed to pass the measure over tea party opposition in the House and to provide enough support to clear a filibuster hurdle in the Senate, which has led negotiators to strip away controversial policy riders and ignore an \$18 billion roster of unpopular spending cuts submitted by White House budget director Mick Mulvaney.

The outlines of a potential agreement remained fuzzy, but aides familiar with the talks said Trump would emerge with border security funding that's unrelated to the wall and a \$15 billion down payment for military readiness accounts on top of \$578 billion in already-negotiated Pentagon funding. Democrats won funding for medical research, Pell Grants and foreign aid.

But negotiators rejected Trump's demands for \$1 billion to begin construction of his promised wall along the length of the 2,000-mile (3218.54-kilometer) U.S.-Mexico border. And after a dispute between Mulvaney and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, the administration agreed to keep funding cost-sharing payments under Obamacare that go to reimburse health insurers for reducing deductibles and co-payments for lower-income people.

Associated Press writers Andrew Taylor and Alan Fram contributed to this report.

Coulter's Berkeley speech canceled, police prep for violence

By JOCELYN GECKER, Associated Press

BERKELEY, Calif. (AP) — Ann Coulter said Wednesday that she was forced to cancel her speaking event Thursday at the University of California, Berkeley amid concerns of violence but might still "swing by to say hello" to all her supporters.

Police and university officials said they were bracing for possible trouble whether Coulter comes to

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campus or not, citing intelligence and online chatter by groups threatening to instigate violence.

In emails to The Associated Press, Coulter confirmed Wednesday that her planned speech on illegal immigration, followed by a question-answer session, was canceled. But she remained coy about what she might do instead.

"I'm not speaking. But I'm going to be near there, so I might swing by to say hello to my supporters who have flown in from all around the country," Coulter said in an email. "I thought I might stroll around the graveyard of the First Amendment."

Officials at UC Berkeley said last week they feared renewed violence on campus if Coulter followed through with plans to speak. They cited "very specific intelligence" of threats that could endanger Coulter and students, as Berkeley becomes a platform for extremist protesters on both sides of the political spectrum.

Efforts by the university to cancel or delay the event dealt a blow to Berkeley's image as a bastion of tolerance and free speech.

Chancellor Nicholas B. Dirks sent a letter to the campus Wednesday saying the university is committed to defending free speech but also to protecting its students.

"This is a university, not a battlefield," Dirks said in the letter. "The university has two non-negotiable commitments, one to Free Speech the other to the safety of our campus community."

Berkeley's reputation as one of the country's most liberal universities, in one of America's most liberal cities, has made it a flashpoint for the nation's political divisions in the era of Donald Trump.

Earlier this month, a bloody brawl broke out in downtown Berkeley at a pro-Trump protest that featured speeches by members of the white nationalist right. They clashed with a group of Trump critics who called themselves anti-fascists.

Similar violent clashes also erupted at the same site, a public park, on March 4.

In February, violent protesters forced the cancellation of a speech by right-wing writer Milo Yiannopoulos, who like Coulter was invited by campus Republicans.

The Berkeley College Republicans and the Young America's Foundation, a conservative group that had helped book Coulter's campus speaking events, both pulled their support Tuesday citing fears of violence. They blamed the university for failing to ensure protection of conservative speakers.

"Berkeley College Republicans do not want to endanger people's lives so because of the university's unwillingness to do their job we are forced to cancel the event," Troy Worden, president of the campus Republicans, said Wednesday.

Coulter echoed the blame on Twitter: "I'm very sad about Berkeley's cancellation, but my sadness is greater than that. It's a dark day for free speech in America."

Capt. Alex Yao of the Berkeley campus police force said police presence will be strong Thursday.

"You will see a high number of highly visible law enforcement. We're going to have a very, very low tolerance for any violence," he told a news conference. He said Berkeley police had reached out to local and state police forces "to let them know we might be calling for assistance."

Trooper ambush killer sentenced to death in Pennsylvania

By MICHAEL RUBINKAM, Associated Press

MILFORD, Pa. (AP) — The bell atop the Pike County Courthouse last tolled the fate of a condemned killer in the 1980s.

On Wednesday, it rang again.

Eric Frein, the would-be revolutionary who shot two Pennsylvania troopers, one fatally, in a late-night

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attack at their barracks, was sentenced to death late Wednesday. The jury's decision that Frein should die by lethal injection brought a shouted "yes!" from a gallery that included high-ranking state police brass, the slain officer's mother and the trooper who suffered debilitating injuries after Frein shot him with a high-powered rifle.

"Jurors have delivered full justice in this case and issued the penalty that is so richly deserved by Eric Frein," said District Attorney Ray Tonkin.

Frein, 33, did not react visibly to the sentence.

Minutes after the jury issued it, a Pike County's sheriff climbed the courthouse cupola and rang the bell eight times, following a tradition that dates to the 19th century.

Prosecutors said Frein was hoping to start an uprising against the government when he opened fire on the Blooming Grove barracks in the Pocono Mountains on Sept. 12, 2014. Cpl. Bryon Dickson II, a Marine veteran and married father of two, was killed, and Trooper Alex Douglass was critically wounded.

Frein led police on a 48-day manhunt after the ambush, and for a time he was among America's most wanted criminals.

Prosecutors portrayed him as a remorseless killer who attacked troopers at random in hopes of fomenting rebellion.

Frein kept a journal in which he coolly described shooting Dickson twice and watching him fall "still and quiet." In a letter to his parents, written while he was on the run but never sent, he complained about lost liberties, spoke of revolution and said, "The time seems right for a spark to ignite a fire in the hearts of men."

Frein showed "wickedness of heart" when he "made a choice to pull that cold trigger again, again, again and again," Tonkin said in his closing argument Wednesday.

The gunman likely won't face execution for decades, if ever. Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf has imposed a moratorium on the death penalty, and Pennsylvania's last execution took place in 1999. The state has executed only three people since the U.S. Supreme Court restored the death penalty in 1976.

Frein's lawyers promised to tie up his case in appeals.

Defense lawyer Bill Ruzzo told reporters he was disappointed by the death sentence, and surprised the jury failed to find a single mitigating circumstance that would point to a sentence of life without parole. His lawyers had urged jurors to spare Frein's life, telling them he'd grown up in a dysfunctional home.

"The jury has rejected our defense, so we'll go back to the drawing board," Ruzzo said.

Col. Tyree Blocker, the state police commissioner, thanked the jury for delivering justice.

"Cpl. Dickson will always remain in the hearts of all members of the Pennsylvania State Police, forever," he said outside the courthouse.

Douglass, who has endured 18 surgeries and might lose his lower leg, smiled broadly as the sentenced was pronounced but did not comment afterward.

As Trump calls for wall, a look at the world's barriers

By The Associated Press

As President Donald Trump marks 100 days in office, he is vowing to keep his campaign promise to build a wall along the border with Mexico.

Despite widespread skepticism and Mexico's refusal to pay for the wall, as Trump has demanded, the U.S. government has been soliciting bids and test sections could be built as soon as this summer.

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Physical barriers are as old as humanity and have proven to be effective over the centuries at protecting borders. But fences can also have unwanted consequences, like destroying city neighborhoods, harming the environment and preventing innocent victims from reaching safety.

Here is a look at some of the world's barriers. Some are rather simple, while others are massive enterprises that cost billions. Generally they have been paid for through standard budgeting procedures, with none sparking a funding dispute of the kind that has emerged with Mexico. For more video, images and detail on each, visit <https://apnews.com/tag/WorldWalls> .

THE UNITED STATES AND MEXICO

A third of the U.S.-Mexico border is already studded with an assortment of fences, but closing off the rest will be no easy task.

Much of the border in Texas is blocked by the Rio Grande or other natural barriers, or runs along land owned by private citizens, many of whom oppose the wall.

There also is much skepticism over whether the fence would stem drug trafficking, illegal immigration or gang violence.

ISRAEL AND THE WEST BANK

Israel began construction of its 150-mile (250-kilometer) separation barrier in 2002 in response to Palestinian suicide bombings that killed more than 1,500 people.

Israel says the structure is a crucial defense measure. But because it frequently juts into the occupied West Bank, the Palestinians see it as a land grab that impedes their dream of establishing an independent state.

KASHMIR

India needed just two years to build a 550-kilometer (340-mile) fence along the disputed border area with Pakistan a decade ago. Now a high-tech barrier, it is laced with thermal imaging devices, motion sensors and lighting systems along a mined strip of land between two rows of coiled razor wire.

The Indian military calls it an "anti-infiltration obstacle system," designed to keep Pakistan-based rebels from crossing over in their fight for Kashmir's independence or merger with Pakistan.

Hundreds of thousands of soldiers are deployed on both sides, sometimes standing eye to eye, making it one of the world's most militarized areas.

CYPRUS

A U.N.-controlled buffer zone and frontier stretches 180 kilometers (120 miles) from coast to coast across the tiny island, separating the breakaway Turkish Cypriot north from the internationally recognized south. The division dates to 1974, when Turkey invaded following a coup by supporters of union with Greece.

The frontier is rarely marked by a physical wall, with the notable exception of the capital, Nicosia, where one runs through the heart of the Old City. At its narrowest point, just a few meters (yards) separate Greek Cypriot national guardsmen from Turkish and Turkish Cypriot troops.

Decrepit, crumbling buildings inhabiting this no-man's land stand in stark contrast to the trendy bars and coffee shops that have sprouted up nearby.

THE KOREAN PENINSULA

The Demilitarized Zone, a Cold War vestige, was created in 1953 after the Korean War ended with an

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armistice. Running from coast to coast, the 4-kilometer (2 1/2-mile)-wide, 248-kilometer (154-mile)-long DMZ bisects the peninsula and forms the de-facto border between the Koreas.

Mined on both sides, with a razor-wire fence, tank traps and hundreds of thousands of troops, the DMZ is the world's most heavily fortified border. More than a million mines are believed to be buried within it. Some 28,500 U.S. troops are stationed in South Korea as deterrence against potential aggression from North Korea.

The DMZ also includes the truce village of Panmunjom, which despite animosities is a popular tourist spot drawing visitors on both sides.

KENYA AND SOMALIA

Kenya decided to erect a wall along its Somalia border after an April 2015 attack by Islamic extremists killed 148 people, most students, at a university.

Initially the Kenyan government announced a 700-kilometer (435-mile) wall, but officials say just 30 kilometers (18 miles) of fencing have been completed.

Some doubt whether the wall will be effective given the busy cross-border smuggling trade, which benefits powerful officials on both sides.

HUNGARY

Hungary built fences along its southern borders with Serbia and Croatia in 2015, when thousands of migrants were passing through each day headed to Germany and other destinations in western Europe.

Prime Minister Viktor Orban is a staunch opponent of migration, and Hungary has been accepting only a few hundred asylum-seekers a year.

Human rights groups and U.N. agencies have been critical of the fences and the country's restrictive asylum policies. There are increasing reports from aid groups about police brutality against migrants being pushed back to Serbia, allegations Hungary denies.

FRANCE

A concrete wall, one kilometer (half a mile) long and four meters (13 feet) high, is the finishing touch on an already elaborate defense system against migrants in the northern French port city of Calais.

Britain doled out the 2.7 million euros (\$2.9 million) to pay for the edifice along the highway leading to the Calais port, much used by truckers crossing the English Channel.

Migrants flocked to Calais for years, hoping to sneak into Britain, often in freight trucks. A huge makeshift camp was dismantled in October, with thousands of migrants bused to special centers.

SPAIN

Spain has built six-meter (20-foot) layered border fences around its two North African enclaves, Ceuta and Melilla, to dissuade migrants, now mostly from sub-Saharan countries, from entering them via Morocco.

The fences, along with cooperation between Spain and Morocco, have helped keep out migrants. But rights groups say both Spanish and Moroccan security forces have beaten migrants caught scaling the wall. They also criticize Spain's use of razor-blade coils — which have caused many injuries — and its expelling those who make it over without letting them apply for asylum.

Rumors rife as gas restrictions in N. Korean capital drag on

By ERIC TALMADGE, Associated Press

PYONGYANG, North Korea (AP) — An acute shortage of gasoline in the North Korean capital of Pyongyang that has sparked price hikes and hoarding is raising fears of potentially crippling pain at the pumps if things don't get better soon — and driving rumors that China is to blame.

The shortage, which is extremely unusual if not unprecedented, began last week when signs went up at gas stations around the city informing customers that restrictions on sales would be put in place until further notice. With no indication as of Wednesday night of when the restrictions might be lifted — or why they have been imposed — drivers continue to scramble to fill up their tanks and whatever other containers they can find.

Prices, meanwhile, have shot up. They had been fairly stable, typically at about 70-80 cents a kilogram, but on Wednesday at least one station was charging \$1.40. Gasoline is sold by the kilogram in North Korean filling stations. One kilogram is roughly equivalent to one liter, so a gallon at the station costs about \$5.30.

China supplies most of energy-poor North Korea's fuel, and in lieu of official explanations, rumors are rife that Beijing is behind the shortage. The concerns are adding to a tense and uncertain mood on the Korean Peninsula since U.S. President Donald Trump assumed office with repeated calls for Beijing — Pyongyang's economic lifeline — to get tough on North Korea, which has responded with counterclaims Washington is pushing for a nuclear war.

Though trade between North Korea and China appears to be solid, and possibly even growing, there are indications Beijing has been quietly tightening enforcement of some international sanctions aimed at getting Pyongyang to abandon its development of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles.

Limiting the oil supply has been openly discussed in Beijing as one option. Whether that is actually happening is unclear.

David von Hippel, a senior associate with the Nautilus Institute who specializes in energy and environmental issues, said supplies of crude oil and oil products would drop markedly without Chinese imports. But he stressed other factors could just as well be involved.

"The shortages and price rises being seen may be due to a combination of factors, including both actual shortages of products, more products being routed to other users — specific ministries, key factories, or the military, for example — and, or, more product being placed into government storage facilities," he said in an email. "I do not have a sense, at present, of which of these options, and in what combination, is the driver for the price rises and sales restrictions."

But two days after the restrictions were announced, North Korea's state-run Korean Central News Agency carried an unusually acerbic, and even threatening, editorial denouncing "a country around the DPRK," an obvious if not explicit reference to China. DPRK is short for North Korea's official name — the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

"The DPRK's nuclear deterrence for self-defense ... is by no means a bargaining chip for getting something," the commentary said, adding that if "the country" keeps applying economic sanctions "while dancing to the tune of someone ... it may be applauded by the enemies of the DPRK but it should get itself ready to face the catastrophic consequences in the relations with the DPRK."

It is unclear whether the gas shortage has affected North Korea's military, state ministries and major projects, all of which get priority access to the state-controlled supply. But the North this month has staged a huge military parade, unveiled a sprawling high-rise residential district and on Tuesday conducted its biggest-ever live-fire air, land and sea military drill. It is also believed to be prepared to

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conduct what would be its sixth underground nuclear test.

Several chains of gas stations are operated under different state-run enterprises — some, for example, are operated by Air Koryo, the national flagship airline — and prices can vary.

North Korea gasoline customers usually purchase coupons at a cashier's booth to fill up. Leftover coupons can be used on later visits until their expiration date. A common amount for the coupons is 15 kilograms (19.65 liters or 5.2 U.S. gallons).

The number of North Korean gas stations has grown steadily in recent years, mainly in Pyongyang, provincial capitals and along major highways. Pyongyang traffic has gotten significantly heavier since Kim Jong Un assumed power in late 2011. The greater number of cars, including swelling fleets of taxis, has been seen as an indication of greater economic activity.

Many of the vehicles are used for business purposes, such as transporting people or goods.

"When I last visited in 2005, they were filling up our bus with gas rations from buckets," said Curtis Melvin, a researcher at the US-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins University and a contributor to the 38 North website. "Things have definitely changed."

Melvin added that the growth of an actual domestic market for gasoline has made it possible to see when there is a problem, since prices are posted at the gas stations, making trends publicly trackable. There is also less rationing than in the past.

If the apparent shortages are being caused by China, he said, the most likely explanation would be that less fuel is flowing across the border via pipeline.

Such a slowdown or stoppage would have an immediate impact on prices and would take time to compensate for by ships, trucks or trains. The primary place for North Korea pipeline storage tanks in China is in the border city of Dandong. But it was also not clear if North Korean tankers were picking up as much fuel as usual.

France: Analysis shows Syrian government behind sarin attack

By THOMAS ADAMSON and NATALIYA VASILYEVA, Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — France said that the chemical analysis of samples taken from a deadly sarin gas attack in Syria earlier this month "bears the signature" of President Bashar Assad's government and shows it was responsible.

Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault said France came to this conclusion after comparing samples from a 2013 sarin attack in Syria that matched the new ones. The findings came in a six-page report published Wednesday.

In Damascus, Syrian opposition activists and a monitor reported Thursday that a large explosion rocked the Syrian capital, followed by a fire near Damascus airport.

The head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights Rami Abdurrahman said the explosion was heard across the capital, jolting residents awake. He said the explosion is reported to have occurred near the Damascus airport road.

Activist-operated Diary of a Mortar, which reports from Damascus, said the blast near the airport road was followed by flames rising above the area. The pro-government site Damascus Now said the explosion was near the city's Seventh Bridge, which leads to the airport road.

Russia, a close ally of Assad, promptly denounced the French report Wednesday, saying the samples and the fact the nerve agent was used are not enough to prove who was behind it. Assad has repeatedly denied that his forces used chemical weapons and claimed that myriad evidence of a poison gas attack is made up.

But Ayrault said France knows "from sure sources" that "the manufacturing process of the sarin that

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was sampled is typical of the method developed in Syrian laboratories.”

“This method bears the signature of the regime and that is what allows us to establish its responsibility in this attack,” he added, saying that France is working to bring those behind the “criminal” atrocities to international justice.

France’s Foreign Ministry said blood samples were taken from a victim in Syria on the day of the April 4 attack in the opposition-held town of Khan Sheikhoun, which killed more than 80 people.

Environmental samples, the French ministry said, show the weapons were made “according to the same production process as the one used in the sarin attack perpetrated by the Syrian regime in Saraqeb” on April 29, 2013.

Ayrault said French intelligence showed that only Syrian government forces could have launched such an attack — by a bomber taking off from the Shayrat air base, which was later targeted in a retaliatory U.S. missile strike.

France’s presidency said the country’s intelligence services presented evidence showing the Syrian government “still holds chemical warfare agents, in violation of the commitments to eliminate them that it took in 2013.” It said that information will be made public, without offering details.

It’s thought that Assad’s government still has a stockpile of tons of chemical weapons, despite saying it had handed over all of them.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia’s position on the attack is “unchanged,” and that “that the only way to establish the truth about what happened... is an impartial international investigation.”

Russia has previously called for an international probe, and Peskov expressed regret that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, or OPCW, has turned down the Syrian government’s offers to visit the site of the attack and investigate.

The French minister’s comments came as the OPCW, which is investigating the April 4 attack, held a ceremony in The Hague marking the 20th anniversary of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In a video message to the ceremony, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the organization’s progress over two decades seeking to eliminate chemical weapons is now under threat.

“In the Middle East, belligerents are breaking the norm against chemical weapons,” he said. “The recent attack in Syria was a horrific reminder of the stakes. There can be no impunity for these crimes.”

The United States has also blamed Assad’s government for the April 4 attack. The Trump administration ordered the cruise missile attack on the air base and issued sanctions on 271 people linked to the Syrian agency said to be responsible for producing non-conventional weapons. Syria has strongly denied the accusations.

Earlier Wednesday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said the U.S. strike damaged the prospects of a political settlement for the war-torn country.

Lavrov told a security conference in Moscow the U.S. response “pushes the prospect for a wide international front on terror even further away.”

He also dismissed claims that international experts cannot visit the site in Khan Sheikhoun because of security precautions and criticized the OPCW for failing to go there. Lavrov says claims that the experts were warned by a U.N. body against traveling to the location because it’s unsafe are “lies,” adding that Moscow went back to the U.N. and found out that there was no such warning.

Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said Russia had to boost security measures at its air base in Syria after the U.S. strike at the Syrian base. Russia has been waging an air campaign since 2015 to help Assad’s forces in the civil war.

Vasilyeva reported from Moscow. Associated Press writers Mike Corder in The Hague, Netherlands,

and Philip Issa in Beirut contributed to this report.

Dispute over health payments defused, spending bill on track

By ANDREW TAYLOR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House and congressional Democrats on Wednesday defused a tense standoff over payments for the working poor under the health care law, keeping a massive government spending bill on track just days ahead of a shutdown deadline.

President Donald Trump on Wednesday backed away from a threat to immediately withhold payments to help people with modest incomes with out-of-pocket medical expenses under Democrat Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act.

The dispute with Democrats, especially House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, threatened to hold up the \$1 trillion-plus spending bill. A temporary funding bill expires Friday at midnight, and GOP leaders late Wednesday unveiled another short-term spending bill to prevent a government shutdown this weekend — Trump's 100th day in office.

The weeks-long sniping over the health care issue had snagged the talks, which have progressed steadily for weeks and gained momentum earlier this week after Trump dropped demands for immediate money for building his long-promised border wall.

"Our major concerns in these negotiations have been about funding for the wall and uncertainty about the ... payments crucial to the stability of the marketplaces under the Affordable Care Act," Pelosi said in a statement. "We've now made progress on both of these fronts."

Partisan disagreements over the environment, abortion and GOP efforts to reverse Obama-era financial regulations continue to dog the negotiations, but both the administration and many congressional Democrats were hopeful of sealing an agreement relatively soon.

The massive spending measure, which would wrap together 11 unfinished spending bills into a single omnibus bill, represents the first real bipartisan legislation of Trump's presidency.

Democratic votes are needed to pass the measure over tea party opposition in the House and to provide enough support to clear a filibuster hurdle in the Senate, which has led negotiators to strip away controversial policy riders and ignore an \$18 billion roster of unpopular spending cuts submitted by White House budget director Mick Mulvaney.

The irony is that even though Republicans have voted numerous times to gut Obamacare, many are opposed to cutting off the cost-sharing payments right away, which could cause the Affordable Care Act's insurance marketplaces to abruptly collapse.

At issue is the \$175 billion the government is paying to reimburse health insurers over a decade to reduce deductibles and co-payments for lower-income people. In a lawsuit, the House argued that Congress never specifically appropriated that money, and a federal judge agreed that the administration exceeded its constitutional authority by spending it anyway. The Obama administration appealed, but after Trump won the election last year the case was put on hold.

The outlines of a potential agreement remained fuzzy, but congressional aides familiar with the talks said Trump would emerge with border security funding that's unrelated to the wall and a \$15 billion down payment for the military on top of \$578 billion in already-negotiated Pentagon funding. Democrats won funding for medical research, Pell Grants and foreign aid.

But negotiators rejected Trump's demands for \$1 billion to begin construction of his promised wall along the length of the 2,000-mile U.S.-Mexico border, a high-profile loss on the very week Trump's White House sought to rack up accomplishments before his administration hits the 100-day mark on

Saturday.

The aides spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private negotiations.

The White House and House Republican are also hoping to show progress in their troubled effort to repeal and replace Obama's health law. The hard-right House Freedom Caucus endorsed a newly revised GOP health care bill, seeking to put the measure back on track after the group's opposition helped derail it a month ago.

But neither the spending bill nor the health care measure are likely to receive votes prior to the symbolic 100-day mark. Instead, Trump's wins on Capitol Hill have been limited to about a dozen measures repealing 11th hour regulations issued by Obama and the confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch.

The spending measure also appeared likely to extend health benefits for more than 22,000 retired miners and widows whose medical coverage is set to expire Sunday. A permanent fix to the long-festering miners' health issue, costing \$1.3 billion over 10 years, was a priority for Democrats like Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Sherrod Brown of Ohio, along with Republicans representing parts of Appalachia, such as Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

Mulvaney sparred with Pelosi over the phone on Tuesday evening over health care and in a series of public statements on Wednesday. Ultimately, Pelosi turned to White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus to obtain assurances that the administration would continue to provide the payments.

Pelosi had demanded that the cost-sharing payments be guaranteed through an add-on to the must-pass spending bill. Republicans refused, in part because adding the issue to the spending bill would have simply been too toxic for conservatives already uncomfortable with having to vote for it.

Here's what could be next for Trump's sanctuary cities order

By **SUDHIN THANAWALA** and **ERIC TUCKER**, Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — President Donald Trump is lashing out at a judge's ruling blocking his attempt to strip funds from "sanctuary cities" that don't cooperate with U.S. immigration authorities, calling it "ridiculous" and vowing to go to the U.S. Supreme Court.

It was the third Trump executive order on immigration to be thwarted by the federal courts.

Here is a look at Tuesday's ruling and what lies ahead:

WHAT DID THE FEDERAL JUDGE SAY ABOUT THE SANCTUARY CITIES ORDER?

U.S. District Judge William Orrick in San Francisco said the president has no authority to attach new conditions of his own to spending that was approved by Congress.

The judge further ruled that Trump's order threatened a wide swath of funding — not the relatively small amount the Justice Department claimed — and that the government cannot cut off funding if there is no clear connection between the money and the policy at issue.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions said late Wednesday the president was well within his power to issue the executive order and the DOJ would continue to fight the cases in court. It was not clear, however, whether he planned to appeal Orrick's ruling.

WHAT COULD TRUMP DO NEXT?

Trump could appeal to the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. But that was the court that blocked the president's first travel ban against seven Muslim countries. Eighteen of the 25 active judges on the court were appointed by Democrats. Trump has said he wants to go to the U.S. Supreme Court, which would have the final say if it decided to take up the case.

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Trump could also revise his executive order to explicitly tie it to the three relatively modest Justice Department and Homeland Security grants that the administration argued were at stake.

Orrick said his ruling does not affect the administration's ability to enforce existing conditions on federal grants.

WHAT ELSE COULD THE ADMINISTRATION DO?

Trump could push Congress to pass a law giving him clear authority to revoke certain funding, said Margo Schlanger, a University of Michigan law professor and former head of civil rights at Homeland Security during the Obama administration.

But Schlanger said whatever action is taken may not survive court scrutiny if it's seen as unduly coercive.

"Suppose you said you can't have any money at all unless you participate fully in immigration arrests," she said. "That would be so big it would be coercive."

Additionally, for the law to survive, there must be a connection between the money at stake and the immigration policy the president is seeking to enforce, Schlanger said.

It is not clear how close that link has to be, but Trump presumably would not be allowed to withdraw funding for, say, highway construction to force a city to stop protecting immigrants from deportation.

WHAT OTHER CHALLENGES LIE AHEAD FOR THE SANCTUARY CITIES ORDER?

Orrick ruled on two cases brought by the city of San Francisco and California's Santa Clara County. Seattle and two cities in Massachusetts, Lawrence and Chelsea, have also sued.

WHAT WAS THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION'S STAND ON FUNDING FOR SANCTUARY CITIES?

Last year, the Justice Department notified recipients of criminal justice grants that they must obey a federal law that says local governments cannot forbid their employees from cooperating with U.S. immigration authorities.

Recipients were reminded that that they could face penalties, such as the loss of grants, for not complying.

An inspector general's memo from last year said authorities were unaware of any legal action taken by the Obama administration to compel states or local governments to cooperate.

Tucker reported from Washington.

Coulter's Berkeley speech canceled, police prep for violence

By JOCELYN GECKER, Associated Press

BERKELEY, Calif. (AP) — Ann Coulter said Wednesday that she was forced to cancel her speaking event Thursday at the University of California, Berkeley amid concerns of violence but might still "swing by to say hello" to all her supporters.

Police and university officials said they were bracing for possible trouble whether Coulter comes to campus or not, citing intelligence and online chatter by groups threatening to instigate violence.

In emails to The Associated Press, Coulter confirmed that her planned speech on illegal immigration, followed by a question-answer session, was canceled. But she remained coy about what she might do instead.

"I'm not speaking. But I'm going to be near there, so I might swing by to say hello to my supporters who have flown in from all around the country," Coulter said in an email. "I thought I might stroll around the graveyard of the First Amendment."

Officials at UC Berkeley said last week they feared renewed violence on campus if Coulter followed

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through with plans to speak. They cited "very specific intelligence" of threats that could endanger Coulter and students, as Berkeley becomes a platform for extremist protesters on both sides of the political spectrum.

Efforts by the university to cancel or delay the event dealt a blow to Berkeley's image as a bastion of tolerance and free speech.

Chancellor Nicholas B. Dirks sent a letter to the campus Wednesday saying the university is committed to defending free speech but also to protecting its students.

"This is a university, not a battlefield," Dirks said in the letter. "The university has two non-negotiable commitments, one to Free Speech the other to the safety of our campus community."

Berkeley's reputation as one of the country's most liberal universities, in one of America's most liberal cities, has made it a flashpoint for the nation's political divisions in the era of Donald Trump.

Earlier this month, a bloody brawl broke out in downtown Berkeley at a pro-Trump protest that featured speeches by members of the white nationalist right. They clashed with a group of Trump critics who called themselves anti-fascists.

Similar violent clashes also erupted at the same site, a public park, on March 4.

In February, violent protesters forced the cancellation of a speech by right-wing writer Milo Yiannopoulos, who like Coulter was invited by campus Republicans.

The Berkeley College Republicans and the Young America's Foundation, a conservative group that had helped book Coulter's campus speaking events, both pulled their support Tuesday citing fears of violence. They blamed the university for failing to ensure protection of conservative speakers.

"Berkeley College Republicans do not want to endanger people's lives so because of the university's unwillingness to do their job we are forced to cancel the event," Troy Worden, president of the campus Republicans, said Wednesday.

Coulter echoed the blame on Twitter: "I'm very sad about Berkeley's cancellation, but my sadness is greater than that. It's a dark day for free speech in America."

Capt. Alex Yao of the Berkeley campus police force said police presence will be strong Thursday.

"You will see a high number of highly visible law enforcement. We're going to have a very, very low tolerance for any violence," he told a news conference. He said Berkeley police had reached out to local and state police forces "to let them know we might be calling for assistance."

This story has been corrected to show the president of the Berkeley College Republicans is Troy Worden.

Trump tax plan could be good news for many, bad for deficit

By JOSH BOAK and STEPHEN OHLEMACHER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Dismissing concerns about ballooning federal deficits, President Donald Trump on Wednesday proposed dramatic tax cuts for U.S. businesses and individuals — outlining an overhaul his administration promises will spur economic growth and simplify America's tangle of tax code rules.

His proposal, a one-page sketch short on detail, would reduce the top corporate tax rate by 20 percentage points and allow private business owners to claim the new lower rate for their take-home pay. It would whittle the number of tax brackets for individuals from seven to three, lower the top tax rate from 39.6 percent to 35 percent and double the standard amount taxpayers could deduct.

It would eliminate the estate tax and reduce taxes on investments, typically paid by the rich. It would further reduce the tax burden for the wealthy by eliminating the catch-all alternative minimum tax, which takes an additional bite out of high-income Americans.

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More lower-income Americans would pay no tax at all, and there would be relief — still undefined — for families with child care expenses.

The plan does not propose any budget cuts or tax increases that might offset the lost revenue, a choice that alarms some fiscal conservatives in Trump's party who have spent years railing about the dangers of deficit spending.

It also does not fully embrace tax proposals backed by Republican House Speaker Paul Ryan, an essential ally if the president is to make good on his promise to deliver a tax overhaul that creates growth and brings jobs to struggling parts of the country.

Still, "I would never, ever bet against this president. He will get this done for the American people," said Gary Cohn, director of the White House National Economic Council. "He understands that there are a lot of people who work hard and feel like they're not getting ahead."

The president's proposal marks a rehash of an economic theory popularized in the 1980s. Trump officials essentially argue that benefits from the tax cuts will trickle down from higher profits for companies into stronger pay raises for workers and greater consumer spending. This expected surge in growth, in theory, would be enough to keep the federal budget deficit from shooting upward.

Some economists agree, but most budget experts say it's unlikely.

"Unfortunately, it seems the administration is using economic growth like magic beans — the cheap solution to all our problems," said Maya MacGuineas, president of the non-partisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget. "But there is no golden goose at the top of the tax cut beanstalk, just mountains of debt."

Trump's plan resembles aspects of the tax ideas he campaigned on last year. The right-leaning Tax Foundation estimated that, even after accounting for growth, the Trump campaign plan would put a \$2.6 to \$3.9 trillion hole in the budget over 10 years.

"We know this is difficult," Cohn said. "We know what we're asking for is a big bite."

Despite the details provided Wednesday, the proposal leaves significant open questions that could affect its impact on taxpayers and the economy.

The administration has yet to decide the incomes at which the new personal tax rates — 10 percent, 25 percent and 35 percent — would apply, meaning that some Americans might see their taxes increase if they get bumped into a higher bracket. It also has yet to spell out how the plan would stop wealthier Americans from exploiting a lower corporate rate to reduce their own taxes.

Administration officials intend to finalize details with members of the House and Senate in the coming weeks for what would be the first massive rewrite of the U.S. tax code since 1986.

The possibility of a deficit increase, unacceptable to some Republicans, means that Trump would need to attract Democratic support to make the overhaul permanent.

Senate Democrats say his plan tilts its benefits to the wealthy, including Trump himself. The real estate magnate might save millions of dollars in his personal taxes because of the changes.

"This is an unprincipled tax plan that will result in cuts for the one percent, conflicts for the president, crippling debt for America and crumbs for the working people," said Sen. Ron Wyden, of Oregon, ranking Democrat on the Finance Committee.

The Trump proposal would double the standard deduction for married couples to more than \$24,000, while keeping deductions for charitable giving and mortgage interest payments.

On the other hand, it would trim other deductions, including for state and local tax payments, a change that could alienate lawmakers in states such as California and New York with higher state taxes.

"It's not the federal government's job to be subsidizing the states," said Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin.

The administration has emphasized that the plan is focused on simplifying the tax code and helping middle class Americans. The median U.S. household income is slightly above \$50,000 annually.

In a boon for wealthier taxpayers, it would repeal the 3.8 percent tax on investment income from President Barack Obama's health care law

The proposal has yet to be vetted for its precise impact on top earners, as several specifics are still being determined.

On the corporate side, the top marginal tax rate would fall from 35 percent to 15 percent. Small businesses that account for their owners' personal incomes would see their top tax rate go from 39.6 percent to that corporate tax rate of 15 percent. Mnuchin said the change for small business owners — a group that under the current definition could include doctors, lawyers and even major real estate companies — would be done in a way that would ensure wealthier Americans could not exploit the change to pay less than intended in taxes.

Police: Captive woman found crying in pit in neighbor's shed

By LISA CORNWELL and JOHN MINCHILLO, Associated Press

BLANCHESTER, Ohio (AP) — A man with mental health problems kidnapped a neighbor who had reported receiving harassing phone calls from him and kept her trapped in a small pit in his backyard shed, where her cries for help alerted others and led to her rescue, police said.

Police in Blanchester, about 40 miles (64 kilometers) northeast of Cincinnati, said the owner of the shed, Dennis Dunn, was arrested Wednesday morning and was jailed. They said Dunn has a history of mental health issues.

The woman's mother initially reported her missing about 2 a.m. and called police about 4 a.m. to report cries from a shed behind Dunn's house, police said. A responding officer arrived to find the woman in the shed, crouching in a pit about 2 feet wide by 2 feet long and about 3 1/2 feet deep (0.6 meters wide by 0.6 meters long and 1 meter deep) with wood over the top of it.

Police Chief Scott Reinbolt said heavy objects, including lawn equipment, had been placed on the wood, preventing the woman from getting out.

The woman appeared to be having a seizure and was taken to a hospital, where she was treated and released, police said.

"She didn't appear to have any obvious signs of physical trauma," Reinbolt said.

Police stayed outside Dunn's darkened house while waiting for a search warrant and called a tactical team after neighbors said Dunn might have an assault rifle. But while officers were waiting, Dunn came to the front door "nonchalantly" about 8 a.m. and was arrested without incident, Reinbolt said.

"I don't think he grasped the severity of the situation," the chief said.

Police didn't know how long the woman had been in the pit. They said she hadn't been seen since about 11:30 Tuesday night.

The chief said the woman in October 2016 had reported receiving harassing phone calls and text messages from Dunn, who she and her family had known for some time. The woman declined to participate in any prosecution of Dunn at that time.

Dunn couldn't be reached for comment while in custody Wednesday, and it couldn't be determined whether he had an attorney who could comment on the accusations against him.

Dunn was charged earlier this month with misdemeanor counts of disorderly conduct and possession of marijuana, court records show. Police said he had repeatedly called them to his home because he heard voices or thought people were trying to get in. Officers checked the home each time but found

no one around it.

Neighbors, on April 2, reported Dunn in the yard with a pistol in his hand, and he told police someone was trying to enter his home. He was taken to a hospital for a psychiatric evaluation and later was released, Reinbolt said.

The chief said Dunn phoned police on April 4 to report someone pounding on his windows, but no one was found.

Court records show Dunn is scheduled for a hearing on the earlier misdemeanor charges in May.

A former neighbor, Sue Whitaker, said Dunn was "strange-acting."

"He gave me the willies," she said.

Lester Turner, who also lives in the city of about 4,500 residents, described it as a good community.

"Everybody knows everybody by name," he said. "It's that kind of small town."

This story has been corrected to show the man was taken to a jail, not a hospital.

Cornwell reported from Cincinnati. Associated Press writer Dan Sewell in Cincinnati contributed to this report.

In Demme's eclectic career, a nonstop rock 'n' roll beat

By JAKE COYLE, AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Through Jonathan Demme's freewheeling filmmaking life sounded a steady rock 'n' roll beat.

Music was his first love and his first credit. Long before he was an Oscar-winning director, he was music coordinator for a little-seen 1970 thriller called "Sudden Terror."

And Demme's death Wednesday morning at the age of 73 means that the final scenes he shot in his adventurous, hopscotching career were musical, too. His last full-length documentary was a Justin Timberlake concert film. The last scene of his final feature, "Ricki and the Flash," was Meryl Streep, as an aging rocker, bringing down the house with Tom Petty's "American Girl."

Few filmmakers have been so drawn to the marrying of music and image the way Demme, a self-avowed "fanatical rock 'n' roller," was. He stuffed 49 songs into "Something Wild." Springsteen's "The Streets of Philadelphia" gave his "Philadelphia" its melancholy heart. And, of course, his seminal Talking Heads concert film, "Stop Making Sense," deftly captured the swell of David Byrne's art-funk spectacular.

Demme, and his films, were never so alive as when the music was playing — and playing loud.

"I've come to believe, and I kind of felt this when we did 'Stop Making Sense,' that shooting live music is kind of like the purest form of filmmaking," Demme told The Associated Press last year. "There's no script to worry about. It's not a documentary, so you don't have to wonder where this story is going and what we can use. It's just: Here come the musicians. Here come the dancers. The curtain goes up. They have at it and we get to respond in the best way possible to what they're doing up there."

The filmmaker died Wednesday morning of complications from esophageal cancer in his New York apartment, surrounded by his wife, Joanna, and three children, said Demme's publicist, Annalee Paulo.

Demme broke into moviemaking under the B-movie master Roger Corman in the early 1970s, and his prodigious, wide-ranging body of work always kept the agile curiosity of a low-budget independent filmmaker. His career spanned documentaries, screwball comedies and tales of social justice. Yet his most famous films were a pair of Oscar-winners.

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"The Silence of the Lambs," the 1991 thriller starring Anthony Hopkins as Hannibal Lecter and Jodie Foster as an FBI analyst, earned him a directing Oscar, as well as best picture. He followed that up with "Philadelphia" (1993), with Tom Hanks and Denzel Washington, the first major Hollywood film to confront the AIDS crisis. It remains a landmark film in the portrayal of gay life and injustice, subjects Hollywood has previously largely turned a blind eye toward.

Hopkins, Foster and Hanks all earned Academy Awards for their performances in those films. Demme's sensitive, alert eye help produce countless other acclaimed performance, too, from Melanie Griffith ("Something Wild") to Anne Hathaway ("Rachel Getting Married").

"Just as passionate about music as he was about art, he was and will always be a champion of the soul," said Foster. Hanks called him "the grandest of men." "Jonathan taught us how big a heart a person can have, and how it will guide how we live and what we do for a living," said the actor.

Martin Scorsese, in remembering "my young friend," praised Demme's use of music, from Buddy Holly to Miklos Rozsa. "His pictures have an inner lyricism that just lifts them off the ground — even a story like 'The Silence of the Lambs.'"

If there was one commonality in Demme's varied filmography, it was music. He made films with Neil Young, the Pretenders and Robyn Hitchcock. (He also memorably documented Spalding Grey performing a monologue in "Swimming to Cambodia.")

"I can't play any instrument and I have a hideous voice," Demme said. "But I've discovered that when I shoot music, I actually feel like I've become part of the band and I have something to do with the creation of music, which is a very good feeling for someone who loves music as much as I do."

Byrne said he was originally drawn to Demme for the way he'd "slip a reggae artist's song or a Haitian recording into a narrative film in ways that were often joyous and unexpected."

On the making of 1984's "Stop Making Sense," Byrne said: "Jonathan's skill was to see the show almost as a theatrical ensemble piece, in which the characters and their quirks would be introduced to the audience, and you'd get to know the band as people, each with their distinct personalities. They became your friends, in a sense."

Robert Jonathan Demme was born on Long Island on Feb. 22, 1944. After his family moved to Miami, he attended the University of Florida where he wrote movie reviews for the school paper. In 1971, he went to work for Corman, first as a unit publicist on "Von Richthofen and Brown" and later directing his own films: the women's prison movie "Caged Heart"; "Crazy Mama" with Cloris Leachman; and "Fighting Mad," with Peter Fonda as a farmer.

Demme's breakthrough came with the Oscar-nominated "Melvin and Howard" (1980), starring Jason Robards as Howard Hughes. It's about a Nevada service station owner who claims to be the beneficiary of the billionaire. From early on, music played a central role in his films, especially in 1986's music-stuffed road-trip comedy "Something Wild," in which Jeff Daniels starred a tax consultant drawn into the wilder orbit of Melanie Griffith.

Some films were misfires. Demme's 1988 adaptation of Toni Morrison's "Beloved," didn't click with critics, nor did his 2004 big-budget remake of "The Manchurian Candidate."

But 2008's "Rachel Getting Married," starring Hathaway playing a young woman released from rehab for her sister's wedding, was a return to form that seemed to combine many of Demme's talents — his buoyant, natural humanism, his joy in music performance, his fondness for troubled outsiders.

Demme most recently directed an episode of the Fox police drama "Shots Fired," scheduled to air Wednesday, and a film for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, to debut July 1.

Demme was initially married to Evelyn Purcell, before divorcing. He is survived by his second wife, artist Joanne Howard, and their three children: Brooklyn, Ramona and Jos. His family requests that in

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lieu of flowers, donations be made to the Americans for Immigrant Justice.

AP writer Lindsey Bahr and Mesfin Fekadu contributed to this report. Bahr reported from Los Angeles.

Follow AP Film Writer Jake Coyle on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/jakecoyleAP>

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, April 27, the 117th day of 2017. There are 248 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 27, 1967, Canada's Universal and International Exhibition, also known as "Expo 67," began a six-month run as it was officially opened in Montreal by Canadian Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson.

On this date:

In 1509, Pope Julius II excommunicated the Republic of Venice for refusing to give up lands claimed by the Papal States. (The pope lifted the interdict in February 1510.)

In 1521, Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan was killed by natives in the Philippines.

In 1777, the only land battle in Connecticut during the Revolutionary War, the Battle of Ridgefield, resulted in a limited British victory.

In 1822, the 18th president of the United States, Ulysses S. Grant, was born in Point Pleasant, Ohio.

In 1865, the steamer Sultana, carrying freed Union prisoners of war, exploded on the Mississippi River near Memphis, Tennessee; death toll estimates vary from 1,500 to 2,000.

In 1925, the song "Yes, Sir! That's My Baby" by Walter Donaldson and Gus Kahn was published by Irving Berlin, Inc. of New York.

In 1938, King Zog I of the Albanians married Countess Geraldine Apponyi de Nagy-Apponyi.

In 1941, German forces occupied Athens during World War II.

In 1950, Britain formally recognized the state of Israel.

In 1973, Acting FBI Director L. Patrick Gray resigned after it was revealed that he'd destroyed files removed from the safe of Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt.

In 1982, the trial of John W. Hinckley Jr., who had shot four people, including President Ronald Reagan, began in Washington. (The trial ended with Hinckley's acquittal by reason of insanity.)

In 1992, the new Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was proclaimed in Belgrade by the republic of Serbia and its lone ally, Montenegro. Russia and 12 other former Soviet republics won entry into the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Betty Boothroyd became the first female Speaker of Britain's House of Commons.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush and visiting Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (shin-zoh ah-bay) threatened stronger punitive actions against North Korea if it reneged on a promise to padlock its sole nuclear reactor. A judge in Madrid indicted three U.S. soldiers in the 2003 death of Jose Couso, a Spanish journalist who was killed when their tank opened fire at a hotel in Baghdad. (The U.S., which found the use of force was justified, refused to hand over the soldiers.) The government reported economic growth slowed to a near crawl of 1.3 percent in the first quarter of 2007. Master cellist Mstislav Rostropovich (mis-teh-SLAHV' rah-stroh-POH'-vich) died in Moscow at age 80.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama signed an order aimed at addressing growing complaints about fraudulent marketing and recruiting practices aimed at military families eligible for federal educa-

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tion aid under the GI Bill. The space shuttle Enterprise, mounted atop a jumbo jet, sailed over the New York City skyline on its final flight before becoming a museum piece aboard the USS Intrepid.

One year ago: Former House Speaker Dennis Hastert was sentenced in Chicago to more than a year in prison in a hush-money case that revealed accusations he'd sexually abused teenagers while coaching high school wrestling. Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam signed a bill allowing mental health counselors to refuse to treat patients based on the therapist's religious or personal beliefs. Philip Kives, the tireless TV pitchman whose commercials implored viewers to "wait, there's more!" while selling everything from vegetable slicers to hit music compilations on vinyl, died in Winnipeg at age 87.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Anouk Aimee is 85. Rock musician Jim Keltner is 75. Singer Ann Peebles is 70. Rock singer Kate Pierson (The B-52's) is 69. Rhythm-and-blues singer Herbie Murrell (The Stylistics) is 68. Actor Douglas Sheehan is 68. Rock musician Ace Frehley is 66. Pop singer Sheena Easton is 58. Actor James Le Gros (groh) is 55. Rock musician Rob Squires (Big Head Todd and the Monsters) is 52. Singer Mica (MEE'-shah) Paris is 48. Actor David Lascher is 45. Actress Maura West is 45. Actress Sally Hawkins is 41. Rock singer Jim James (My Morning Jacket) is 39. Rock musician Patrick Hallahan (My Morning Jacket) is 39. Rock singer-musician Travis Meeks (Days of the New) is 38. Neo-soul musician Joseph Pope III (Nathaniel Rateliff & the Night Sweats) is 38. Country musician John Osborne (Brothers Osborne) is 35. Actress Ari Graynor is 34. Rock singer-musician Patrick Stump (Fall Out Boy) is 33. Actress Sheila Vand is 32. Actress Jenna Coleman is 31. Pop singer Nick Noonan (Karmin) is 31. Actor William Moseley is 30. Actress Emily Rios is 28. Singer Allison Iraheta is 25.

Thought for Today: "Difficulty is the excuse history never accepts." — Edward R. Murrow, American broadcast journalist (born 1908, died this date in 1965).