

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Weekly DOT Report Live on GDILIVE.COM

or you can attend in person at the Groton Community Center at 1 p.m.

This week's report will probably include the closing down process of SD37

### Thursday, May 11

**Senior Menu:** Turkey, mashed potatoes with gravy, baby glazed carrots, cheesecake with strawberry glaze, dinner roll.

**School Lunch:** Cook's choice.

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

**Groton Schools:** Girls golf at Madison, 11 a.m.

### Friday, May 12

**Senior Menu:** Hearty Vegetable Beef SOup, chicken salad sandwich, Mandarin oranges, Oatmeal raisin cookie.

**School Lunch:** Ham and cheese, smiley potato, carrots and dip, fruit.

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

**Groton Schools:** NEC Track at Clark, 11 a.m.; D.A.R.E. graduation at 2 p.m.

### Sunday, May 14

**St. John's Lutheran:** Worship at 9 a.m. with graduation reception at 10 a.m.

**Emmanuel Lutheran:** Worship with communion at 9 a.m.

**United Methodist Church:** Conde worship with communion, 9 a.m.; coffee fellowship time, 10 a.m., Confirmation Sunday, 10 a.m.; Groton worship with communion at 11 a.m.; Sunday School starts after children's sermon.

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

**First Presbyterian:** Bible Study at 9:30 a.m., Worship at 11 a.m.

**Heaven Bound Ministries:** Worship in Pierpont at 10 a.m. with Communion.

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

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

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Oven Fresh Sandwiches   Hot Desserts   Snack Melts

**NEW DQ BAKES!**  
OVEN HOT

**DQ**  
Grill & Chill  
Orange Julius

11 E Hwy 12, Groton ~ 397-8627



**From left to right Mr. Austin Fordham, Kylie Kassube,  
Emily Thompson, and Mrs. Desiree Yeigh**

Courtesy Photo

## **HS Students receive honor of being accepted into All State Band**

On Saturday March 25th, Emily Thompson and Kylie Kassube proudly represented Groton Area in South Dakota's 66th Annual High School All State Band. The event was located in Sioux Falls, SD at O'Gorman High School. The audition process to be accepted into All State Band is very vigorous and competitive. Students attend a judged audition that consists of scales, playing a solo, playing a learned etude, and sight reading in front of a qualified judge. A written test is also required. Emily and Kylie spent about a year preparing for the audition process. Emily auditioned for the percussion section. Only fourteen students are selected and Emily was number five in the state. Kylie auditioned for clarinet the section. Forty students are selected and Kylie was number twenty five in the state. A total of 101 students auditioned for the clarinet section.

The guest conductors for this prestigious event was Dr. Myron Welch and Dr. Elva Kaye Lance. Emily and Kylie were both placed in the Lewis Band and were under the direction of Dr. Welch. Dr. Welch spent more of his teaching career at the University of Iowa for twenty eight years. Before teaching in Iowa Dr. Welch also taught at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio. Dr. Welch did an excellent job with the students and put on a fantastic concert that received a standing ovation. Welch was personable, humorous, and hardworking with the students.

Congratulations Emily and Kylie! You made Groton Area extremely proud!



## Choral commitment awards

Left to right front: Heather Lone, Macy Knecht, Erin Smith, Gabbie Kramer  
Back: Alex Kern, Thane Henschel, Truitt Rogers



## Choir Awards

**Outstanding senior vocalist:** Gabbie Kramer  
**Rising star award:** Tylan Glover  
**Outstanding show choir performer:** Jenifer Fjelstad  
**Choral director award:** Jenifer Fjelstad, Mitchell Koens  
**Outstanding show choir leader:** Erin Smith, Thane Henschel

## **Connecting Agriculture: Celebrating Wildfire Awareness Month** **By Mike Jaspers, South Dakota Secretary of Agriculture**

I spent some time this past weekend at the parts store picking up a new battery for my lawnmower. While there, I ran into some of my neighbors—a sure sign that spring is here and summer is close behind. As summer comes many of us will be spending more time outdoors, mowing the lawn, grilling, traveling and camping. Many of these outdoor activities come with increased fire danger. Therefore, it's fitting that, as we kick off the warm season in South Dakota, we also observe May as Wildfire Awareness Month.

The goal of Wildfire Awareness Month is to raise awareness of the dangers of wildfires and how people can protect themselves and their communities from these fires. The 2017 theme, 'Do Your Part Before Wildfires Start,' encourages homeowners to take steps to reduce the possible impacts of a wildland fire.

As we are out and about in the nice weather, there are a variety of things we can do to help guard our homes, buildings and trees from a wildfire:

- Clean out gutters, roofs and other areas where debris has settled
- Avoid burning on windy days and never leave a burn pile unattended
- Maintain equipment to reduce sparks and check that trailer chains do not drag
- Create an evacuation plan and practice the route with family members
- Practice campfire safety by ensuring your fire is completely extinguished before leaving the campsite
- Keep the space around your home clear of dense vegetation
- Take action in your community by organizing a wildfire preparedness event

Events and activities will take place across the state during May to mark Wildfire Awareness Month, including open houses at area fire departments and a visit to Mt. Rushmore by Smokey Bear. Additionally, the South Dakota Department of Agriculture's Wildland Fire Division, along with several partners, will be working with landowners to remove unsafe trees from their property through their 'Junk the Junipers' project.

To learn more about Wildland Fire Awareness Month, the 'Junk the Junipers' project and to see a schedule of planned events, go to: [www.sdwildfireawareness.com](http://www.sdwildfireawareness.com).

As you enjoy outdoor activities this month, I hope you can take part in some of the Wildfire Awareness Month activities and will take some time to make sure your home and family are 'firewise.' As Smokey Bear says, 'Only you can prevent wildfires.'

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## Today in Weather History

May 11, 1966: Late season snow fell in parts of north central and northeast South Dakota and into west central Minnesota. Amounts include; 4 inches in Timber Lake; 3 in Eureka, 2 NNW of Mobridge, and Roscoe; and 2 inches in Artichoke Lake MN, Pollock, and Waubay.

May 11, 1998: Torrential rains of 2 to 4 inches with some amounts nearing 5 inches fell across a large part of Brown, Marshall, Day, Spink, and Clark counties on the evening of the 11th. This round of heavy rain only exacerbated the already extensive flooding occurring from many years of above normal precipitation. Day County was most affected by this round of heavy rain where area lakes were already at new record levels. Blue Dog, Waubay, Rush, and Bitter Lake in Day County were just a few of the lakes hard hit. In fact, extensive sandbagging was done around Blue Dog Lake to save many homes. Some residents of Blue Dog Lake said they had never seen the lake so high in over 35 years of living there. Many more roads become flooded after this heavy rain event and will remain so for quite some time. Spots on U.S. Highway 12 and U.S. Highway 25 become flooded near Holmquist and Webster. Also, more of U.S. Highway 212, 4 miles east of Clark was flooded. There remained only one road opened to the town of Grenville in northeastern Day County. In all five counties, the rising water took away many more acres of farm and pastureland, as well as drowning many crops that had already been planted. One farmer in Spink County said sixty percent of his farm was under water. Some farmhouses and out-buildings became surrounded by water leaving some families stranded. After this heavy rain, around sixty percent of the crop and pastureland in Day County and one-third of it in Spink County had been inundated by a swollen water table and several years of above normal precipitation. Overall, the continued flooding has had a tremendous impact on the economy in the five county areas. Some rainfall amounts on this day include; 4.7 inches just north of Crocker in Clark County; 4.52 at Webster; 4.01 at Doland; 3.81 at Waubay NWR; 3.60 at Turton; 2.63 at Conde; 2.60 at Groton; 2.41 at Clark; and 2.18 inches at Aberdeen.

Additional heavy rain of 2 to 4 inches fell mainly during the evening of the 11th across southern and central Hand County. Many creeks in the area became rushing torrents through the night and the day of the 12th. Also, low-lying areas and a lot of crop and pastureland were flooded. Some businesses and homes in the Miller, Saint Lawrence, Ree Heights, and Vayland areas were flooded. Some sandbagging was done to try and save some properties in Miller. U.S. Highway 14 at the east end of Miller was flooded over for several hours along with many other streets, county and township roads in southern and central Hand County. Many of the roads were damaged as the result of the flooding. Some people in Miller said they had never seen it flood this bad in 35 years. Some rainfall amounts include; 3.99 inches at Miller; 3.10 inches 3 miles south of Ree Heights; and 2.65 at Ree Heights.








1865: A tornado touched down in Philadelphia around 6 PM ET, killing one person and injuring 15 others. There was great destruction to property, with 23 houses blown down, damage to the Reading Railroad depot, with the water tank, carried 150 yards. Fairmont Park was damaged to the amount of \$20,000.

1934: A tremendous dust storm affected the Plains as the Dust Bowl era was in full swing. According to The New York Times, dust "lodged itself in the eyes and throats of weeping and coughing New Yorkers," and even ships some 300 miles offshore sawdust collect on their decks.

1953: A terrifying F5 tornado rips through downtown Waco, Texas, killing 114 people and injuring nearly 600 more. More than 850 homes, 600 businesses, and 2,000 cars are destroyed or severely damaged. Losses have been estimated at \$41 million. The tornado is the deadliest in Texas history and the tenth deadliest in the US.

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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
						
Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Mostly Clear	Chance Showers
High: 74 °F	Low: 44 °F	High: 80 °F	Low: 49 °F	High: 85 °F	Low: 56 °F	High: 80 °F

## Warm & Dry Through Saturday

Highs In The Upper 60s - Mid 70s Today

Highs In The Mid 70s - Low 80s Friday

Highs In The 80s Saturday & Sunday

Chances For Moisture Sunday Into Next Week



National Weather Service - Aberdeen, SD

@NWSAberdeen



[www.weather.gov/Aberdeen](http://www.weather.gov/Aberdeen)

Updated: 5/11/2017 5:16 AM Central

Published on: 05/11/2017 at 5:19AM

Mild and dry conditions through Saturday with temperatures peaking Saturday in the Mid/Upper 80s. Moisture chances increase for next week.

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## Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 70.3 F at 4:55 PM

Low Outside Temp: 49.1 F at 11:59 PM

High Gust: 27.0 Mph at 5:54 PM

Snow: Precip: 0.00

## Today's Info

Record High: 95° in 1900

Record Low: 18° in 1946

Average High: 68°F

Average Low: 42°F

Average Precip in May: 1.13

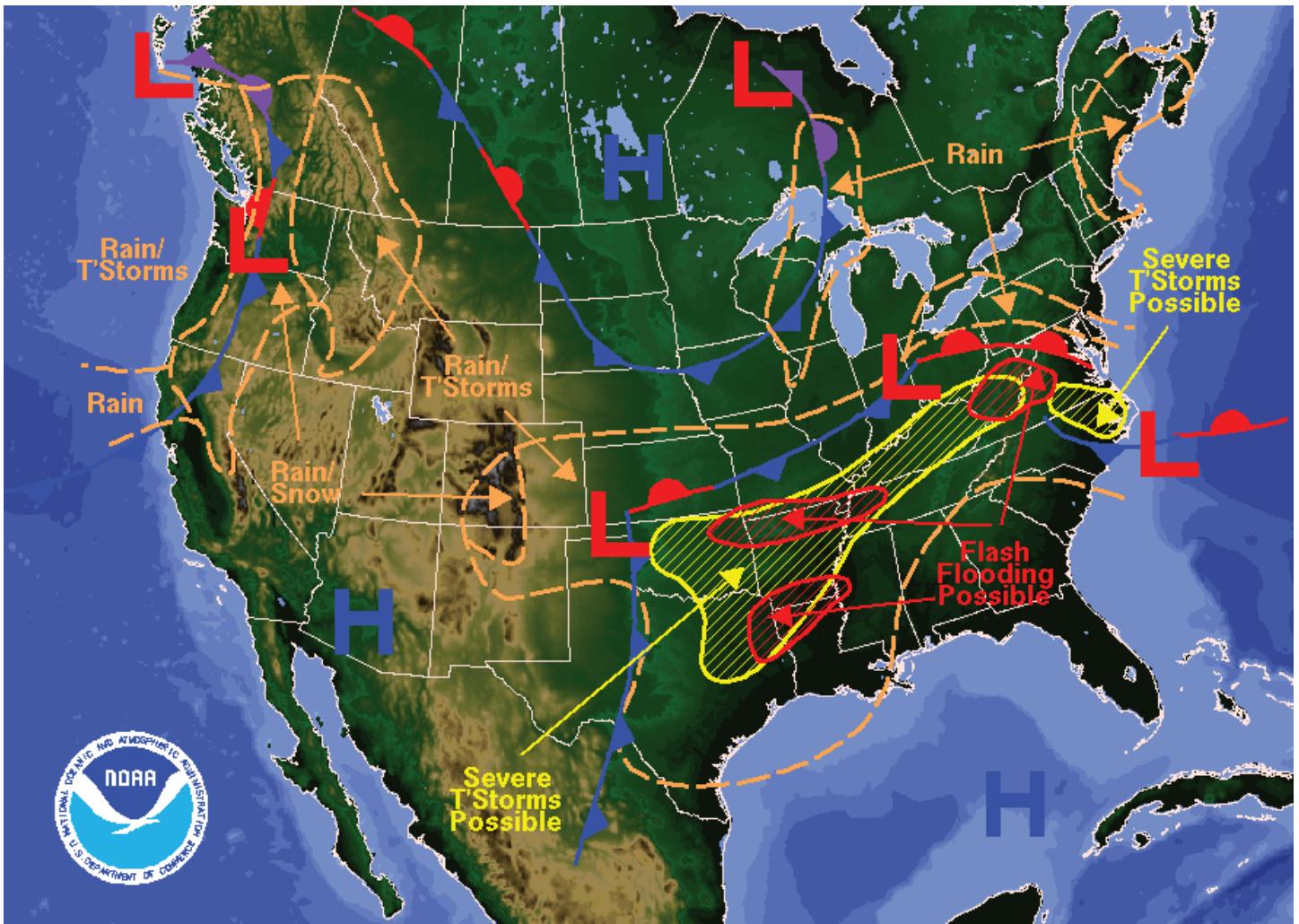
Precip to date in May: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 5.16

Precip Year to Date: 1.98

Sunset Tonight: 8:53 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:06 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Thu, May 11, 2017, issued 4:19 AM EDT  
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center  
Prepared by Mcreynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts



## CRITICISM - GOOD OR BAD?

Criticism can be very beneficial. It can help us correct a problem or avoid making the same mistake again and again. Or it may damage or destroy the hope that is within someone who is trying to do something good but makes a few mistakes along the way.

When the great Polish pianist, Paderewski, first chose to study the piano, his teacher embarrassed him and said, "Your hands are too small. You will never be able to master the piano."

When the great American evangelist, Moody, closed a service, a critic said, "I counted eighteen mistakes in your grammar tonight." Thinking for a moment, Moody graciously replied, "I am using all the grammar I know for the glory of God. Are you doing the same?"

The criticism directed at Paderewski and Moody did not cripple them, it challenged them. History records their stories and though they had their problems they went on to great things.

Criticism properly given and directed at something a person has the ability to change or improve on can be a gift from God. David wrote, "Let a righteous man strike me - it is a kindness; let him rebuke me - it is oil on my head. My head will not refuse it."

People who love us will want the best for us. They will offer us suggestions on what we can do to improve our witness, service or testimony to the Lord. It is important to listen patiently, willingly and openly. Notice one word: "righteous." People who are right with God want our best.

Prayer: Lord, we ask You to bring people into our lives who will help us to become our best and become like You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 141:5 5 Let a righteous man strike me—that is a kindness; let him rebuke me—that is oil on my head. My head will not refuse it, for my prayer will still be against the deeds of evildoers.



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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

02-05-21-26-27

(two, five, twenty-one, twenty-six, twenty-seven)

Estimated jackpot: \$140,000

#### Hot Lotto

04-05-07-12-40, Hot Ball: 14

(four, five, seven, twelve, forty; Hot Ball: fourteen)

Estimated jackpot: \$6.3 million

#### Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$30 million

#### Powerball

29-31-46-56-62, Powerball: 8, Power Play: 2

(twenty-nine, thirty-one, forty-six, fifty-six, sixty-two; Powerball: eight; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$165 million

### Man avoids jail time in sentence for machete attack

CHAMBERLAIN, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota man accused of assaulting someone with a machete has avoided jail time.

The Mitchell Daily Republic reports (<http://bit.ly/2q4bTK2>) that 49-year-old Rodney Rohrbach, of Chamberlain, was sentenced to 30 days in jail, which was all suspended. He was ordered to pay \$84 in fines and court costs.

Rohrbach pleaded guilty to simple assault.

Authorities say the assault happened at a Chamberlain residence in October. Rohrbach allegedly forced his way through a locked door and took the machete from the victim, who was using for protection, court documents state.

The victim suffered superficial cuts to his back and a cut to his hand during the incident.

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

### Authorities kill mountain lion after dog attack in Spearfish

SPEARFISH, S.D. (AP) — The Spearfish Police Department says a mountain lion has been killed by authorities after reports that the lion killed a dog.

Police received a call just before 10 p.m. Tuesday from a Spearfish resident who saw the mountain lion take the dog. The resident made a noise and the lion dropped the dog and ran away.

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The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks personnel called in a state trapper with dogs to track the lion Wednesday morning. The lion was found outside city limits and euthanized. Authorities say the animal was a sub-adult lion.

## Thune: Special prosecutor on Russia 'not going to happen'

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's all-Republican congressional delegation isn't joining calls for a special prosecutor to investigate Russia's interference in the presidential election after the firing of FBI Director James Comey.

Sen. John Thune said on Fox News that it's "not going to happen." But Thune says the timing of President Donald Trump's termination of Comey on Tuesday raises questions.

Sen. Mike Rounds says officials expect Russia probes to continue, adding that Comey's firing "will not be allowed to impede in these investigations."

Rep. Kristi Noem says she looks forward to getting more answers from the Trump administration about the decision so lawmakers can devote their full attention to the agenda they were sent to Washington to accomplish. The South Dakota Democratic Party had urged the delegation to call for an independent investigation.

## Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press

American News, Aberdeen, May 9

Law enforcement and a job well done

Bad news is rarely convenient. Crime doesn't always happen during bankers' hours, and fires don't wait until the sun comes up.

Today, we applaud law enforcement responders to last week's 14-hour chase and standoff and officer-involved shooting in McCook County.

Authorities worked an intense, lengthy shift under extreme circumstances. They were a model of good police work.

The incident started at about 1:30 a.m. May 3. A McCook County deputy — whose name was not released — tried to pull over a Ford Mustang for a traffic-related offense. The suspect drove off, initiating a pursuit. Gunfire was exchanged and the deputy was shot in the arm.

A manhunt began in the wee hours of the morning, leading to a standoff with the suspect, Matthew Rumbolz, 37, of Montrose. More than 12 hours later, Rumbolz was taken into custody about 3:30 p.m. without incident.

This all could have been much, much worse, but for law enforcement's handling of the event.

Officials had to mobilize quickly, likely with not a lot of information. They had to stay focused on the task at hand knowing that one of their brothers was injured. They had to get word out fast to the media, to schools, to other law agencies, to keep folks on high alert.

The Sioux Falls Argus Leader spoke with neighbor Karen Smith, who lives in the area of the incident. She said a county sheriff came to her door at 3 a.m. to apprise her of the situation, and give her options to stay in with the doors locked or leave for safety.

All this while a shooting suspect was on the loose; officials had to stay focused and diligent.

A standoff with an armed suspect can be a tedious, stressful event. From all reports, local and state authorities managed the incident properly, leading to a peaceful resolution — impressive, given that the man in custody is accused of shooting one of their own.

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During the event, authorities set up a command center and offered near-hourly briefings to media with updated information. In a situation like this, there might not be a whole heck of a lot to report. But creating a planned, regular media availability keeps police from being bogged down in questions, and puts the community's well-being and security above all else.

We must also applaud the media — the Argus Leader and Sioux Falls broadcast stations — who kept citizens in Madison and around the state up to date beginning in the early-morning hours. By using all available resources, including social media, South Dakota was kept well-informed.

We have been there, at those late-night police incidents, and know that covering them is not an easy task. Even local journalists are sometimes in harm's way, but that is part of the risk in keeping our citizens up to date.

One citizen certainly noticed; we saw media outlets tweeting to a good Samaritan who brought Diet Coke for journalists covering the standoff.

Not every event will end this way: the deputy who was shot is recovering; the suspect is taken into custody; with only minor inconveniences, citizens were able to safely go about their days. Everyone went back home to their families.

But in this case, good work led to good results.

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Rapid City Journal, Rapid City, May 7

It doesn't have to be us vs. them

"I resent putting my money on a road to service city folks. Let the city go ahead and fix it for their people."

George Ferebee

Pennington County Commissioner

While the statement above likely won't be etched into any marble monuments, it nonetheless reveals a state of mind as well as a lack of knowledge about the nature of property-tax collections that should alarm all county residents — even those who are not "city folks."

Ferebee, a retired rural Hill City resident, made his divisive comments Tuesday while the Pennington County Commission considered a proposal to spend \$98,000 to resurface a section of road on South Valley Drive that happens to take travelers to and from Rapid City.

Thomas Wilsey, the county highway superintendent, said at the meeting the road is in need of repairs and "we can save money by doing it now."

Ferebee, known for his combative nature, said he would rather see the asphalt removed than fix a road that benefits "city folks," a clear reference to Rapid City. He and Mark DiSanto, a longtime Rapid City resident who thinks he knows better than Wilsey about what roads need to be repaired next, voted against what many would consider a routine matter. Nonetheless, it passed on a 3-2 vote.

Ferebee's "my money" and "their people" references are troubling on a couple of counts.

First, the obvious one: Rapid City's approximately 70,000 residents do live in Pennington County, which has a population of around 100,000. In addition, property owners in Rapid City send about 30 percent of the property tax they pay to the county, which makes the city a significant contributor to its budget.

But more important than his apparent lack of knowledge about tax collections is Ferebee's attitude toward those he calls "city folks," a reference that oozes with disdain for the very people whose taxes also pave the streets he drives on and are now being used to pay off millions of dollars in bonds the county used to finance its numerous building projects.

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Ferebee's comments give voice to the destructive us-versus-them mentality so prevalent in politics today. While this is difficult enough to stomach on the national level, it has the potential to be quite harmful locally as it deters progress by undermining thoughtful growth that, among other things, can increase property values and thus property-tax collections that South Dakota is so dependent upon.

Instead of advocating tearing up a road that links the county and city, local elected officials need to build bridges through the process of collaboration and cooperation with the goal of improving our local economy and maximizing the public investment fueled by taxpayers.

This can only be done, however, if a commitment is made by the Rapid City Council and the Pennington County Commission to meet regularly to discuss and plan for a future that benefits rural and urban residents, which is a fine line in an area that has far more in common than Ferebee apparently recognizes.

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The Daily Republic, Mitchell, May 4

Lake manager is worth a second look

Perhaps the only flaw in a recently proposed lake manager position in Mitchell was its name.

On Monday, the Mitchell City Council narrowly defeated a proposal to create a lake manager job at a salary of approximately \$53,000. Before the 5-3 vote against the plan, Councilman Mel Olson suggested the public opposed the proposal, citing a belief that "none" of the many lakes in Minnesota have lake managers.

Maybe those sites don't have "lake managers," but any lake on public land surely has someone or a group managing it in some capacity. But what's most important to consider here is what's done in Minnesota isn't necessarily right for Mitchell, South Dakota.

Consider this: the lake manager post would add nothing to the city budget. Parks and Recreation Director Nathan Powell told the City Council the new post would be funded by not filling a vacant \$39,000 park specialist position, supporting the difference with available funds within the Lake Mitchell Campground budget.

Not sold yet? Now consider that the department has been thrust into serving as support staff for two huge projects approved by the City Council: the \$8 million indoor aquatic center and a \$73,000 preliminary restoration study for Lake Mitchell.

Regarding the former, the department intends to add no full-time staff to support the aquatic center. As far as the latter, we suspect the folks on the Lake Mitchell Advisory Committee who have volunteered the last two years carefully analyzing the need for a lake restoration plan would argue a person to help facilitate and oversee that project from the city's perspective would be of great value.

Not to mention the "lake manager" would also help manage the Lake Mitchell Campground, work on acquiring grants to improve bike and hiking trails and improve other recreation opportunities that improve our quality of life.

If Mitchell wants to improve one of its greatest assets — one that has become a growing problem due to an abundance of algae each summer — we will need all hands on deck. Call it whatever you want, but a lake manager post would help achieve the Lake Mitchell Advisory Committee's dream of a better lake while helping ease the burden placed on other Parks and Recreation Department employees who continue to take on task after task.

We're hoping the council sees this proposal one more time, because with the dedication to grant writing a lake manager could provide, the city could find itself spending a dime on the position in order to save a buck.

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## Tablets being distributed to men's prisons in South Dakota

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Tablet computers will soon be available to every inmate in South Dakota's prison system.

The program is aimed at helping inmates access educational programs and maintain ties to friends and family, which experts say can help decrease rates of recidivism. Taxpayers won't be footing the bill for the touchscreen tablets, which are being given to the state Department of Corrections by telephone provider Global Tel Link.

The tablets will be connected to a closed network, so inmates won't be able to access the internet or log into sites like Facebook or Twitter, The Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2q2LQTh> ) reported. For a charge, inmates will be able to talk to and text family and friends, though no photos or attachments will be allowed. Inmates also will have paid access to games, music and e-books through monthly subscriptions.

Colorado, Georgia and Indiana are among the states with similar programs.

Corrections officials said distribution of the tablets should be completed by mid-June at the men's prisons in Rapid City, Yankton, Springfield and Sioux Falls. Female inmates in Pierre already have the tablets.

Re-offense rates drop when inmates maintain family ties, so longer phone calls and messages through the tablets may be beneficial, according to state Department of Corrections Secretary Denny Kaemingk. He said tablets may also provide opportunities for GED and college-level courses, anger management programs and other instructional programs.

"Education's really going to be a strong feature for us here in South Dakota," Kaemingk said. "The more education someone receives, the lower the recidivism will be."

Phone calls and messages on tablets will be recorded and stored for potential monitoring.

Minnehaha County Jail also recently added some tablets. Lt. Mike Mattson of the local sheriff's office said with controls in place, the tablets are a clear positive for officers and inmates. He noted that unlike prison, where inmates have jobs to fill their time, jail inmates have little to do but sit.

"There's a lot of idle time in here," Mattson said. "If we can fill that idle time with positive things — or even just busy things — that's a lot better for us."

Department of Corrections policies will be uploaded to the tablets, along with legal libraries, complaint forms and all-prison messages. Inmates will have access to six websites: Fox News, CNN, NASA, the White House, the Smithsonian and a Christian website called Crosswalk.

The tablets will eventually be used to maintain inmate banking records and track purchases from the commissary.

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

## Dakota Access pipeline leaked 84 gallons of oil in April

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON, Associated Press**

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — The Dakota Access pipeline leaked 84 gallons of oil in South Dakota early last month, which an American Indian tribe says bolsters its argument that the pipeline jeopardizes its water supply and deserves further environmental review.

The April 4 spill was relatively small and was quickly cleaned up, and it didn't threaten any waterways. The state's Department of Environment and Natural Resources posted a report in its website's search-

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able database, but it didn't take any other steps to announce it to the public, despite an ongoing lawsuit by four Sioux tribes seeking to shut down the pipeline.

Brian Walsh, an environmental scientist with the agency, said Wednesday that the state doesn't issue news releases on spills unless there is a threat to public health, a fishery or a drinking water system. He said there was no such threat with the Dakota Access leak, which happened nearly 100 miles east of the Missouri River's Lake Oahe reservoir, which is the tribes' water supply.

"We realize Dakota Access gets a lot of attention. We also try to treat all of our spills in a consistent manner," Walsh said. "We treated this as we would treat any other 84-gallon oil spill."

The leak occurred at a rural pump station in the northeast of the state as crews worked to get the four-state pipeline fully operational, Walsh said. The oil was contained on site by a plastic liner and containment walls and quickly cleaned up. Some oil-contaminated gravel will be disposed of at an area landfill, he said.

Such incidents have happened with other pipelines in South Dakota, and the Dakota Access leak didn't come as a surprise, according to Walsh. The state is happy with the response of Texas-based pipeline developer Energy Transfer Partners and won't issue a fine, he said.

"Size-wise, an 84-gallon release is pretty small relative to a lot of other things we work on," Walsh said. "I would characterize it as a small operational spill that was cleaned up right away."

The Standing Rock Sioux tribe, which was the initial plaintiff in the lawsuit, said the leak proves that the pipeline is a threat to its water and cultural sites.

"These spills are going to be nonstop," tribal Chairman Dave Archambault said. "With 1,200 miles of pipeline, spills are going to happen. Nobody listened to us. Nobody wants to listen, because they're driven by money and greed."

Tribal attorney Jan Hasselman said the leak shows the need for more environmental study of the pipeline, which will move oil from North Dakota through South Dakota and Iowa to a distribution point in Illinois. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had planned additional study but scrapped the idea after President Donald Trump earlier this year pushed for completion of the pipeline that had been stalled by months of protests and lawsuits.

Energy Transfer Partners maintains that the pipeline is safe. Spokeswoman Vicki Granado issued a statement saying the spilled oil "stayed in the containment area as designed."

No other spills have been reported along the pipeline in South Dakota, according to Walsh. A federal spill report database does not show any reports from Energy Transfer Partners or its subsidiary Dakota Access LLC in any of the other states through which the pipeline passes.

Granado didn't comment on whether there have been any other problems as crews get the pipeline ready to be fully operational by June 1.

The Indigenous Environmental Network, which helped organize large-scale protests against the pipeline in North Dakota last year and earlier this year, issued a statement saying "the fact that this occurred before Dakota Access even becomes operational is all the more concerning."

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

## **With revenue lagging, Daugaard asks agencies to cut expenses**

**By JAMES NORD, Associated Press**

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Dennis Daugaard is calling for South Dakota agencies to cut as much as \$15 million in expenses to balance the state's budget by the end of June, despite a welcome uptick in tax collections last month.

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The Republican governor said he anticipates revenues will be between \$10 million and \$15 million short for the current state budget period that ends June 30. Daugaard said he doesn't want to tap reserves, so he's asking agencies to curb spending instead.

"We won't have collected that much money, but nor will we have spent that much money either, so we'll end the year balanced," Daugaard said.

According to figures released Wednesday, April tax collections came in about \$2.2 million higher than anticipated, which is welcome news for state officials. But year-to-date revenues are still roughly \$11.5 million — or nearly 1 percent — lower than lawmakers' anticipated in February when they set revenue estimates for the current budget period. The February targets had to be revised down by millions of dollars from previous projections.

A bright spot among the April collections was the sales tax, which exceeded expectations by more than \$1.3 million. Sales tax is the state's main revenue source, and Bureau of Finance and Management Commissioner Liza Clark said officials hope that increase continues.

"All of our economic indicators show that everything is moving in a positive direction, so we're cautiously optimistic, I would say, for continued revenue growth, and sales tax growth," Clark said.

South Dakota lawmakers during the 2017 legislative session dealt with sluggish state tax collections caused by low inflation, less spending in the farm economy and e-commerce transactions that avoid sales taxes.

Before heading home in March, lawmakers passed a state budget for the upcoming fiscal year that includes roughly \$1.59 billion in general state spending, nearly \$30 million — or about 1.7 percent — below the budget plan Daugaard proposed in December.

## Ramkota buys Aberdeen Convention Center

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — The Aberdeen Convention Center has a new owner.

The building's adjoining hotel, Ramkota Best Western, has purchased the center from the Lamont Cos., which bought it three years ago from the city for \$475,000. The latest purchase price was not disclosed.

Aberdeen American News says that while Lamont scheduled events at the center, Ramkota operated the center. The Aberdeen Convention Center was built in conjunction with the Ramkota and city in 1984.

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

## Federal jury awards surgeon over \$1.1M in peer review case

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A federal jury has awarded more than \$1.1 million to a former Huron surgeon after determining that her past employer had breached her contract.

The Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2qqS00a>) reports the jury found that Huron Regional Medical Center violated due process rights under its bylaws afforded to Dr. Linda Miller as part of her contract with the clinic.

The award came over six years after Miller had to put in her resignation to the center. Ken Barker, an attorney for Miller, says it's a "victory for the jury process."

Three doctors reviewed the outcomes of some of Miller's cases during the medical peer review process. Contrary to the clinic's bylaws, she wasn't allowed to participate.

Barker says the clinic's board manipulated the process to get rid of Miller.

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

## Great Plains Newspaper Contest winners announced

By The Associated Press

Final winners have been announced in the Associated Press Great Plains News and Photo Contest.

Eleven newspapers from Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota submitted 351 entries in the contest which featured news, feature and sports stories and photos published during 2016. A list of winners can be found at <http://discover.ap.org/contests/great-plains>

The Associated Press is a not-for-profit news cooperative representing 1,400 newspapers and 5,000 broadcast stations in the United States.

Winners in the 2016 AP Great Plains News and Photos Contest:

### DIVISION I:

Spot News: 1, Tammy Real-McKeighan, Fremont Tribune, "Men's Heroic Actions Save Area Woman's Life"; 2, Tammy Real-McKeighan, Fremont Tribune, "Storm Tears Steeple off Church"; 3, Mark Watson, The (Spearfish) Black Hills Pioneer, "Sanctuary Director Injured, Tiger Killed."

Feature: 1, Melanie Wilkinson, York News-Times, "A Mother's Last Wish"; 2, Steve Moseley, York News-Times, "Miracle of Modern Medicine"; 3, Tammy Real-McKeighan, Fremont Tribune, "Woman Remembers Life in Ukraine."

General News: 1, Nick Lowrey, Pierre Capital Journal, "The Search for Salmon: GFP Struggling to Collect Enough Eggs for Oahe Salmon Program"; 2, Steve Moseley, York News-Times, "York Loses Bag 'N Save"; 3, Sam Pimper, Fremont Tribune, "First Guests Stay at Fairfield Inn."

Enterprise: 1, Melanie Wilkinson, York News-Times, "Third Plume in Far North York"; 2, Melanie Wilkinson, York News-Times, "Contamination Plumes"; 3, Mark Watson, The (Spearfish) Black Hills Pioneer, "Spirit of the Hills Wildlife Sanctuary Loses Animals."

Spot Sports: 1, Ken Kush, York News-Times, "It Was Our Turn to Win"; 2, Steve Marik, York News-Times, "A Change For The Better"; 3, Brent Wasenius, Fremont Tribune, "MU Coach McMahon Dies at 70."

Sports Feature: 1, Steve Marik, York News-Times, "Highlight of My Day"; 2, Brent Wasenius, Fremont Tribune, "Father-Son Duo Leading"; 3, Ken Kush, York News-Times, "Nebraska is Home."

Personal Column: 1, Tammy Real-McKeighan, Fremont Tribune, "God Can Free Us From Tombs"; 2, Steve Moseley, York News-Times, "Thumbs Up or Down"; 3, Melanie Wilkinson, York News-Times, "The End of an Era."

Sports Column: 1, Nick Lowrey, Pierre Capital Journal, "What a Difference a Dog Makes"; 2, Nick Lowrey, Pierre Capital Journal, "These Lands Are Our Lands"; 3, Brent Wasenius, Fremont Tribune, "No Doubt About It, FHS Ends a Winner."

Editorial: 1, Gene Fischer, York News-Times, "Sustainable Tax Base"; 2, Gene Fischer, York News-Times, "State Sanctioned Discrimination"; 3, Gene Fischer, York News-Times, "Of Caucuses and Elites."

Headline Writing: 1, Steve Moseley, York News-Times, "Hubbard Handled a Horde of Heads"; 2, Steve Moseley, York News-Times, "What's This Stuff?"; 3, Steve Moseley, York News-Times, "Glam and Shazam."

Spot News Photo: 1, Tracy Buffington, Fremont Tribune, "Firefighters Fight Garage Fire"; 2, Steve Moseley, York News-Times, "Rescue Staffs from York and Waco"; 3, Steve Moseley, York News-Times, "Tractor Tumbles, Kills One."

Feature Photo: 1, Jaci Conrad Pearson, The (Spearfish) Black Hills Pioneer, "Final Resting Place for Early Deadwood Pioneer"; 2, Steve Moseley, York News-Times, "Kids Live and Learn at Wessels"; 3,



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Kaija Swisher, The (Spearfish) Black Hills Pioneer, "An American Buffalo Hunt."

Sports Action Photo: 1, Jason Gross, The (Spearfish) Black Hills Pioneer, "High-Flying Bronc Rides Thrill Rodeo Crowds"; 2, Ken Kush, York News-Times, "Softball Action"; 3, Steve Marik, York News-Times, "Out at Third."

General News Photo: 1, Steve Moseley, York News-Times, "Online Predators"; 2, Mark Watson, The (Spearfish) Black Hills Pioneer, "Study Checks Survivability on Youngest Deer"; 3, Mark Watson, The (Spearfish) Black Hills Pioneer, "Type 2 Team Takes Command of Crow Peak Fire."

Website: 1, Eric Eckert, York News-Times, "yorknewstimes.com."

## DIVISION II:

Spot News: 1, Shauna Marlette and Randy Dockendorf, Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, "USD First Lady Colette Abbott Dies"; 2, Caitlynn Peetz, The (Mitchell) Daily Republic, "Wicked Winds in Springfield"; 3, Tammy Bain and Kamie Stephen, The North Platte Telegraph, "Collision Kills 3."

Feature: 1, Sara Bertsch, The (Mitchell) Daily Republic, "Becoming Royalty"; 2, Job Vigil, The North Platte Telegraph, "A Life in Focus"; 3, Steve Frederick, Scottsbluff Star-Herald, "Hale and Hearty."

General News: 1, Sara Bertsch, The (Mitchell) Daily Republic, "Thankful for a Kidney Transplant"; 2, Kamie Stephen, The North Platte Telegraph, "Murderer to Find Home in Nebraska Penitentiary"; 3, Irene North, Scottsbluff Star-Herald, "Where do Your Taxes Go?."

Enterprise: 1, The (Mitchell) Daily Republic, "Meth Series"; 2, Kamie Stephen, The North Platte Telegraph, "Searching for a Hero"; 3, Sara Bertsch and Caitlynn Peetz, The (Mitchell) Daily Republic, "Teacher Salaries in Small Schools."

Spot Sports: 1, Jeremy Hoeck, Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, "Early Start Helps Players Succeed"; 2, James Cimburek, Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, "Bucks End Season With Victory Over Harrisburg"; 3, Marcus Traxler, The (Mitchell) Daily Republic, "Mighty Mitchell Makes it Three."

Sports Feature: 1, Marcus Traxler, The (Mitchell) Daily Republic, "Munsen Coaching Tree"; 2, Andrew Bottrell, The North Platte Telegraph, "Unbeaten"; 3, Andrew Bottrell, The North Platte Telegraph, "Carrying Tradition."

Personal Column: 1, Kamie Stephen, The North Platte Telegraph, "A Year Later, Pain of Tragedy Still Lingers"; 2, Kelly Hertz, Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, "A Very Good Investment"; 3, Irene North, Scottsbluff Star-Herald, "Irene North."

Sports Column: 1, Luke Hagen, The (Mitchell) Daily Republic, "The Book of Munsen"; 2, Kelly Hertz, Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, "A Change Of Fortunes"; 3, Jeremy Hoeck, Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, "The Baffling Case of Alex Kneeland."

Editorial: 1, Luke Hagen, The (Mitchell) Daily Republic, "Surprising Phone Call About Black DWU Student Was Wrong"; 2, Todd von Kampen, The North Platte Telegraph, "Upset by Tax Bill? Do Homework - but Check Math"; 3, Evan Hendershot, The (Mitchell) Daily Republic, "Amendment V."

Headline Writing: 1, Aly Rinehart, The North Platte Telegraph, "Aly Rinehart Headlines"; 2, Luke Hagen, The (Mitchell) Daily Republic, "Luke's Headlines"; 3, Mikayla Wiseman, The North Platte Telegraph, "Mikayla Wiseman Headlines."

Spot News Photo: 1, Tammy Bain, The North Platte Telegraph, "Fire Destroys Home"; 2, Kamie Stephen, The North Platte Telegraph, "Collision Kills 3"; 3, Brad Staman, Scottsbluff Star-Herald, "Blaze."

Feature Photo: 1, Matt Gade, The (Mitchell) Daily Republic, "Wesleyan at Nationals"; 2, Kelly Hertz, Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, "Dreaming of a White Easter"; 3, Irene North, Scottsbluff Star-Herald, "Petting Zoo."

Sports Action Photo: 1, Matt Gade, The (Mitchell) Daily Republic, "One-Handed Catch"; 2, Matt Gade, The (Mitchell) Daily Republic, "Steer Wrestling"; 3, James Cimburek, Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan,

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"Oh, Shoe-t!!!"

General News Photo: 1, Matt Gade, The (Mitchell) Daily Republic, "Walk through Delmont"; 2, Matt Gade, The (Mitchell) Daily Republic, "Soldiers Return Home"; 3, Kelly Hertz, Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, "Western Swing!"

Website: 1, Sarah Barclay, The (Mitchell) Daily Republic, "Mitchell Website"; 2, Kamie Stephen and Lesli Torres, The North Platte Telegraph, "North Platte Telegraph Website."

DIVISION III:

Spot News: 1, Omaha World-Herald, "Historic M's Pub is Gone; Extent of Damage to Old Market Corner Unknown"; 2, Tiffany Tan and Candy DenOuden, Rapid City Journal, "Murder for Hire Plot"; 3, Todd Cooper, Omaha World-Herald, "On Garcia Trial's First Day of Testimony, Father Describes Horror of Discovering Slaying Victims, One His Young Son."

Feature: 1, Dirk Chatelain, Omaha World-Herald, "Breaking the Sound Barrier"; 2, Matthew Hansen, Omaha World-Herald, "The New Cuba: Day 1"; 3, Cindy Lange-Kubick, Lincoln Journal Star, "The Life and Death of a Marine."

General News: 1, Lincoln Journal Star, "Opioids - A Painful Reality"; 2, Chris Peters, Omaha World-Herald, "Why Doesn't the Henry Doorly Zoo Have Pandas?"; 3, Todd Cooper, Omaha World-Herald, "Five Calls to 911."

Enterprise: 1, Henry J. Cordes and Matthew Hansen, Omaha World-Herald, "Goodwill Omaha"; 2, Seth Tupper, Rapid City Journal, "From Salvation to Starvation"; 3, Paul Goodsell and Christopher Burbach, Omaha World-Herald, "Douglas County Property Values: Trouble at Every Corner."

Spot Sports: 1, Brian Rosenthal and Brent C. Wagner, Lincoln Journal Star, "Yori Resigns Following Athletic Department Investigation"; 2, Sam McKewon, Omaha World-Herald, "Husker Punter Sam Foltz--'Universally Loved and Respected by Everyone He Touched'--Dies in Car Wreck"; 3, Brian Christopherson, Lincoln Journal Star, "Authentic' Foltz Mourned Following Crash in Wisconsin."

Sports Feature: 1, Dirk Chatelain, Omaha World-Herald, "Breaking the Sound Barrier"; 2, Brian Christopherson, Lincoln Journal Star, "Love for Foltz Easy as a Big Red N to See in His Hometown."

Personal Column: 1, Cindy Lange-Kubick, Lincoln Journal Star, "Dear Gold Star Parents - Another Donald with Another Point of View"; 2, Erin Grace, Omaha World-Herald, "Imagine Lying in Bed . . . for Weeks or Months Waiting to Suffocate"; 3, Matthew Hansen, Omaha World-Herald, "Telling a Woman to Smile May Seem Like an Innocent Request."

Sports Column: 1, Tom Shatel, Omaha World-Herald, "An All-Too-Sudden Farewell"; 2, Steven M. Sipple, Lincoln Journal Star, "Yori's Fall Troubling, Not Necessarily Surprising"; 3, Rich Anderson, Rapid City Journal, "Like Mother, Like Son."

Editorial: 1, Omaha World-Herald, "Working Poor Caught in Gap"; 2, Omaha World-Herald, "More Transparent Campaign Finance Laws Needed"; 3, Gordon Winters, Lincoln Journal Star, "Sen. Kintner Has Lost All Effectiveness."

Headline Writing: 1, Tim Sacco, Omaha World-Herald, "Tim Sacco Headlines"; 2, Haylee Pearl, Omaha World-Herald, "Haylee Pearl Headlines"; 3, Rich Mills, Omaha World-Herald, "Rich Mills Headlines."

Spot News Photo: 1, Chris Huber, Rapid City Journal, "Fire and Dog"; 2, Chris Machian, Omaha World-Herald, "Shooting"; 3, Chris Machian, Omaha World-Herald, "Tornado."

Feature Photo: 1, Calla Kessler, Lincoln Journal Star, "Arianna's Bath"; 2, Chris Huber, Rapid City Journal, "Memorial Day"; 3, Chris Huber, Rapid City Journal, "Rider in the Storm."

Sports Action Photo: 1, Ryan Soderlin, Omaha World-Herald, "Flag"; 2, Francis Gardler, Lincoln Journal Star, "Dig It"; 3, Chris Machian, Omaha World-Herald, "Fall."

General News Photo: 1, Kent Sievers, Omaha World-Herald, "Remembering"; 2, Gwyneth Roberts, Lincoln Journal Star, "Goodbye"; 3, Calla Kessler, Lincoln Journal Star, "Make America Great Again."

Website: 1, Omaha World-Herald, "Omaha.com"; 2, Candy DenOuden, Rapid City Journal, "Rapid City Journal"; 3, Lincoln Journal Star, "JournalStar.com: Lincoln's Source for News, Sports, Entertainment and More."

## **Comey's firing: Trump frustration finally boiled into action**

**By JONATHAN LEMIRE and NANCY BENAC, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — For weeks, President Donald Trump had been seething.

The swirling questions about possible contacts between his presidential campaign team and Russia just wouldn't stop, and he felt it was overshadowing his early achievements.

Who was to blame? In Trump's view, FBI Director James Comey.

Comey had allowed the bureau's investigation to play out in the press, the president told those close to him, and hadn't done enough to stop leaks about it.

Those simmering frustrations, described by people with knowledge of the president's conversations, culminated with Trump's surprise announcement late Tuesday that he was firing Comey. The people recounting the behind-the-scenes activity spoke only on condition of anonymity to disclose private discussions.

White House officials offered a somewhat different version Wednesday of how Trump came to fire Comey, casting his decision as one that reflected an "erosion of confidence" that had long been in the making.

"Frankly, he'd been considering letting Director Comey go since the day he was elected," said White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders. She also expressed the White House hope that the Russia investigation would wrap soon. "We'd love for that to be completed so that we can all move on."

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But for weeks, the Russia investigation has not appeared to be going away.

Comey confirmed in March that the FBI was looking into possible coordination between the Russians and Trump associates. As Trump's presidency hit its 100-day mark, reporters were still asking questions.

Just last week, Comey answered more questions about it at hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee. That testimony — during which Comey noted he felt "mildly nauseous" at the thought that his actions in the Hillary Clinton email case influenced the election — made Trump increasingly convinced he wanted Comey gone, according to a White House official.

That's around the time Comey was asking the Justice Department for more resources to pour into the Russia investigation — an indication the questions will be continuing.

The embattled top lawman told lawmakers he made the request for more help in a meeting with Rod Rosenstein, the deputy attorney general overseeing the Russia probe, according to three U.S. officials. The Justice Department denies there was such a request.

The White House would not say whether Trump knew.

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Some allies had been warning Trump since before his inauguration to get rid of Comey, describing him as a Republican who would criticize and do in fellow Republicans, according to one Trump associate.

But a final straw, said Sanders, landed in a Monday meeting among the president, Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Rosenstein, in which the two Justice officials expressed deep concern about Comey's leadership.

They had been at the White House on other business when Trump called them in to talk about Comey and asked, "So what do you think?" according to a senior White House official.

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The president got an earful, according to Sanders, and told them to put their concerns in writing.

Rosenstein answered with a three-page memo that amounted to a scathing takedown of the FBI director, calling his 2016 disclosures about the bureau's investigation into Hillary Clinton's use of a personal email server a "textbook example of what federal prosecutors and agents are taught not to do."

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Around 5 p.m. Tuesday, Trump called a number of legislators, including Democratic Sen. Chuck Schumer, a fellow New Yorker, to relay the stunning news that he was firing Comey.

"With all due respect, you're making a big mistake," Schumer told Trump.

The president was taken aback, according to a person with knowledge of the call. Apparently the White House had expected Democrats to largely welcome the decision, given their outrage over Comey's handling of the Clinton email investigation.

Democrats, though, and even some Republicans are openly skeptical of the notion that Trump decided to fire Comey because of how he'd treated Clinton. They note that Trump last October had publicly praised Comey for having the "guts" to raise new questions late in the campaign about Clinton's email situation.

As recently as last week, the White House had said Comey had Trump's confidence.

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As for Comey, he was speaking to agents at the FBI's field office in Los Angeles when news of his firing broke.

The White House had a Trump bodyguard deliver a copy of Trump's dismissal letter to the Justice Department and sent Comey an email as well, according to a senior administration official. But it's unclear whether Comey got the word before his ouster was publicly announced.

Television screens in the Los Angeles field office began flashing the news as he spoke, and he initially chuckled. He continued his speech to the agents, finished and headed into an office, according to a law enforcement official who was present.

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As commentators on cable TV called Trump's move an abuse of power, the president was startled and infuriated by how his action was being received, according to a person with knowledge of his reaction.

The White House also did not appear to be prepared for the firestorm. Aides scrambled to rush out a statement on Comey's firing. But the White House's email system was running slowly. Journalists raced to Press Secretary Sean Spicer's office to confirm the news, prompting him to read the statement out loud before disappearing into his office.

Initial reaction from lawmakers was muted, and the White House appeared inclined to let the day finish without sending the president or top aides on television.

But as the response grew more critical, Trump ordered his press staff to get out and defend him.

A trio of senior aides, including Spicer, hastily headed out for TV interviews on the North Lawn of the White House.

That chore completed, Spicer still had to deal with a horde of other reporters. He took a step out of the White House hedges, where he had been waiting after finishing a TV interview, and demanded that the cameras and their lights be turned off.

At the end of a long day, only the dim lights from reporters' cellphones lit the scene as the White House press secretary spoke, largely in the dark.

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Associated Press writers Julie Pace, Vivian Salama, Ken Thomas, Eric Tucker and Catherine Lucey

contributed to this report.

Follow Jonathan Lemire on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/@JonLemire> ; follow Nancy Benac on Twitter at <http://twitter.com> .

## 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. GOP CONCERNS ON TRUMP AND COMEY POSE THREAT TO THEIR AGENDA

Several Republican senators question the timing of the firing of the FBI director, but most are dismissing Democratic calls for a special counsel.

### 2. SENATE PANEL SUBPOENAS FLYNN DOCUMENTS IN RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Sens. Richard Burr and Mark Warner say the panel acted after Flynn, Trump's former national security adviser, declined to cooperate with an April 28 request to turn over the documents.

### 3. SAUDIS PAID US VETERANS WHO CAMPAIGNED AGAINST 9/11 LAWSUIT LAW

The veterans' lobbying effort began within a month after Congress voted for the law, which allows Sept. 11 victims' families to sue Saudi Arabia in U.S. court.

### 4. WHY CHINA'S 'NEW SILK ROAD' PROJECT STIRS WORRIES

Governments from Washington to Moscow to New Delhi worry that Beijing is trying to build its own political influence and erode theirs.

### 5. WHEN VETERAN HOMELESSNESS MIGHT END

New Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin says the goal is achievable, but will take years longer than his predecessor predicted.

### 6. EIGHT ARCTIC NATIONS MEET IN ALASKA AMID DRILLING WORRIES

U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov are among those attending the gathering in Fairbanks.

### 7. ONE KILLED, DOZENS INJURED IN ANOTHER DAY OF CLASHES IN VENEZUELA

National guardsmen launch tear gas and a group of armed pro-government militiamen harass protesters as they try to march to the Supreme Court to demand elections.

### 8. WHO WAS BOOED WHILE GIVING A COMMENCEMENT SPEECH

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos plows through her speech at Bethune-Cookman, a historically black university, through shouts of "liar!" and "just go" by graduating students.

### 9. STALLED GROWTH FOR SNAPCHAT IN THE SHADOW OF FACEBOOK

Parent company Snap Inc.'s revenue fell below Wall Street's expectations in its first quarterly earnings since its initial public offering of stock.

### 10. WHAT ROBOCARS MUST LEARN BEFORE HITTING ROAD

Well-behaved, self-driving cars must learn how to share the road with human drivers who routinely speed and break other traffic rules.

## North Korea says it will seek extradition of plot culprits

PYONGYANG, North Korea (AP) — Pyongyang will seek the extradition of anyone involved in what it says was a CIA-backed plot to kill leader Kim Jung Un last month with a biochemical poison, a top North Korean foreign ministry official said Thursday.

Han Song Ryol, the vice foreign minister, called a meeting of foreign diplomats in Pyongyang on

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Thursday to outline the North's allegation that the CIA and South Korea's intelligence agency bribed and coerced a North Korean man into joining in the assassination plot, which the North's Ministry of State Security has suggested was thwarted last month.

The North's state media have been running stories about the plot since last week. The security ministry has vowed to "ferret out" anyone involved in the alleged plot, which it called "state-sponsored terrorism."

Han took that a step further on Thursday with the extradition statement.

"According to our law, the Central Public Prosecutor's Office of the DPRK will use all available methods to start to work to demand the handover of the criminals involved, so as to punish the organizers, conspirators and followers of this terrible state-sponsored terrorism," he said.

North Korea claims the primary suspect is a man it has identified only by the ubiquitous surname "Kim." It says he is a North Korean resident of Pyongyang who worked for a time in the Russian Far East. State media said he was involved in the timber industry in Khabarovsk, which is one of the primary places North Koreans can go overseas to work.

The North further said that a South Korean agent named Jo Ki Chol and a "secret agent" named Xu Guanghai, director general of the Qingdao NAZCA Trade Co. Ltd., met Kim in Dandong, on North Korea's border with China, to give him communications equipment and cash. The North also said "a guy surnamed Han" taught Kim how to enlist accomplices.

"These terrorists plotted and planned in detail for the use of biochemical substances including radioactive and poisonous substances as the means of assassination," Vice Minister Han said, reading from a prepared statement. "These biochemical substances were to be provided with the assistance of the CIA ... while the South Korean Intelligence Service was going to provide necessary support and funding for this attempt at assassination on our supreme leader."

In statements for foreign distribution, North Korea often refers to its leader Kim Jong Un without naming him, instead using the phrase "supreme leadership" or "supreme dignity."

The last time that Han appeared to brief foreign diplomats in Pyongyang was last December, to present North Korea's response to the latest round of U.N. sanctions after the September 2016 nuclear test.

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This story has been corrected to show that North Korea has named other suspects.

## Officials from Arctic nations meet amid drilling concerns

By MARK THIESSEN, Associated Press

FAIRBANKS, Alaska (AP) — High-level officials from the world's eight Arctic nations will meet in Alaska amid concerns about the future of the sensitive region after President Donald Trump called for more oil drilling and development.

Among those expected to attend the meeting of the Arctic Council beginning Thursday in Fairbanks are U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who met Wednesday with Trump and Tillerson in Washington.

No formal discussions were set in Alaska but key issues such as climate change, development and drilling will provide a backdrop as the chairmanship of the council passes from the U.S. to Finland.

"We are unsure what the Trump administration thinks about the Arctic region in general, about the Arctic Council in particular and about its role," said Victoria Herrmann, president of The Arctic Institute, a Washington, D.C.-based group that provides research to shape Arctic policy.

The Arctic Council is an advisory body that promotes cooperation among member nations and indigenous groups. Its focus is sustainable development and environmental protection of the Arctic.

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It does not make policy or allocate resources, and its decisions must be unanimous.

"In terms of being a reflection of a nation's priorities, it can only go so far since all eight have to agree to the same thing," said Nils Andreassen, executive director of the Anchorage-based Institute of the North, a non-partisan organization focused on Arctic resources.

Tillerson arrived late Wednesday afternoon in Fairbanks and immediately held a meeting with a congressional delegation as well as Arctic representatives from Alaska's indigenous people.

Protesters gathered in a city park nearby to denounce the presence of Tillerson, who was president of Exxon Mobil Corp.

"My message for Rex Tillerson is: Alaska shouldn't be for sale for what's in our earth," said Hannah Hill, 36, who works at a Fairbanks soup kitchen. "This place is beautiful, and this place is delicate, and what already is happening on in the Arctic will affect the rest of the Earth. And that is science."

Pat Lambert, a retired University of Alaska math professor, attended the rally because he believes climate change is a serious problem.

He suggested Tillerson "should get away from his cronies in the oil business and start listening to the people of Alaska, for instance, and the people of the world who are so interested in these issues."

After the rally, the protesters marched behind a sign reading, "Welcome to the frontline of climate change," to the building where the Arctic Council welcoming celebration was being held.

The United States — an Arctic country because of the state of Alaska — is joined on the council by Canada, Russia, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

The U.S. began chairing the council two years ago. Much of the council's work during that time stemmed from the policies of President Barack Obama, who made climate change and the Arctic priorities of his administration.

Obama became the first sitting president to travel above the Arctic Circle when he went to the largely Inupiat community of Kotzebue.

The U.S. highlighted three areas during its two-year chairmanship — improved living conditions and economies for those living in the Arctic, stewardship of the Arctic Ocean and climate change.

David Balton, a deputy assistant secretary of State, said other accomplishments included an agreement for scientific cooperation among Arctic nations, an assessment of improvements needed for better telecommunications, and implementation of a database of ships passing through the Arctic.

One of the council's last official acts before the chairmanship is handed to Finland will be issuing the Fairbanks Declaration, which in part will outline the focus of upcoming work by the Arctic Council during the next two years.

Andreassen said the document should provide some understanding of how the U.S. is approaching the Arctic.

Christina-Alexa Liakos of Greenpeace USA, said her group will watch the meeting with an eye toward U.S. policy on broader environmental issues, such as the Paris Climate Agreement.

"The biggest thing we are really pushing is to make sure that (during) any negotiations in this meeting, the U.S. essentially doesn't bully the other Arctic nations or pressure them into taking out language around keeping the Paris agreement," Liakos said.

## **Australia warns travelers to not bring in hitchhiking toads**

**By ROD McGUIRK, Associated Press**

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Australian quarantine authorities on Thursday urged travelers through Asia to avoid bringing in hitchhiking amphibians after a passenger arrived at an airport with a dead

Indonesian toad in his shoe.

The Department of Agriculture of Water Resources warned travelers to check their luggage and other belongings for biohazards after toads from Thailand and Indonesia were found recently at three Australian airports. Authorities are confident that all the passengers were unaware they were carrying toads and were not smuggling wildlife.

The department's head of biosecurity Lyn O'Connor said a sniffer dog reacted to a shoe that an Australian was wearing as he arrived at Cairns Airport in northeast Australia.

The black-spined toad found by a biosecurity officer inside the shoe had only recently died and was probably alive when the passenger put the shoe on in Indonesia, O'Connor said in a statement.

A live banded bullfrog was found in a passenger's shoe at Perth Airport on Australia's west coast after a flight from Thailand, the department said. Officials could not immediately say on Thursday whether the passenger was wearing the shoe or had packed it in luggage.

A live black-spined toad arrived on a flight from Thailand at Melbourne Airport in southeast Australia where it was found in a woman's luggage, the department said.

The black-spined toad could significantly damage the Australian environment and could carry exotic parasites or disease, O'Connor said.

Australia has some of the world's toughest quarantine regulations in a bid to keep pests and diseases from infiltrating its isolated borders and destroying the country's unique wildlife. The strict quarantine policies captured global attention in 2015, when Johnny Depp and his then-wife, Amber Heard, were charged with illegally bringing their pet Yorkshire terriers into Australia, where Depp was working on a movie.

They subsequently made an awkward apology video that warned others about violating the quarantine rules and avoided jail.

## **GOP concerns on Trump and Comey pose threat to their agenda**

**By ERICA WERNER, AP Congressional Correspondent**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Several Republican senators are questioning the timing of President Donald Trump's firing of FBI Director James Comey. But even as the issue emerges as a potential distraction from the GOP's legislative agenda, most are dismissing Democratic calls for a special counsel, and their hand-wringing looks unlikely to lead to any concrete action.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., moved swiftly to reject Democrats' demands for a special prosecutor to investigate Russian meddling in the 2016 election and ties with the Trump campaign. Such an appointment "could only serve to impede the current work being done" by the Senate intelligence committee and the FBI itself, McConnell said.

Democrats argued that an independent, outside inquiry led by a special prosecutor was a necessary next step, given Trump's decision to oust Comey in the midst of the FBI's Russia investigation. The firing came not long after Comey had requested additional resources for the investigation, according to U.S. officials, although the Justice Department disputed that.

"All we are seeking is some assurance that the subject of this investigation is not able to influence it or, God forbid, quash it," said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y.

But Senate intelligence committee Chairman Richard Burr, R-N.C., insisted that his panel has "got the jurisdictional responsibility to investigate this. We are going to do that."

"I think this made our task a little more difficult but it didn't make it impossible so we'll continue," Burr added of the Comey firing. "I'm very confident we can get to the bottom of it, but we've got to be given the time and access to interview the right people." Burr said the timing and rationale for Comey's firing



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“doesn’t make sense to me.”

For Republicans who have generally avoided criticizing Trump throughout various controversies, the expressions of concern coming from well over a dozen Senate Republicans were noteworthy. Rank-and-file lawmakers and committee chairs alike said the timing was questionable and the administration must give an accounting of what occurred. Yet Republicans did not appear poised to take any particular action to force the issue.

“While this was ultimately a judgment call by the president, I think there are questions about timing that the administration and Justice Department are going to need to answer in the days ahead,” said Sen. John Thune of South Dakota, the No. 3 Senate Republican.

The issue also threatened to consume time Republicans would prefer to devote to their efforts to repeal and replace former President Barack Obama’s health law. Instead a contentious fight looms over confirming whomever Trump nominates to replace Comey, although it will take only a simple majority in the 100-member Senate and therefore no Democratic votes will be needed.

The intelligence committee announced it had invited Comey to appear next week, ensuring continued focus on the FBI and Russia instead of health care and taxes.

The administration’s stated reason for the firing was that Trump had lost confidence in Comey, and administration officials pointed to a letter from Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein harshly criticizing Comey’s leadership of the Hillary Clinton email investigation. White House officials noted that Democrats themselves had voiced complaints about Comey or called for his ouster, an argument McConnell and some other Republicans echoed.

Democrats, with little recourse in the minority, cast about for tactics to draw attention to their demand for a special prosecutor or keep up pressure on Republicans. They called a special caucus meeting, convened as a group on the Senate floor, and threatened to use procedural tactics to slow Senate business to a crawl.

“I think the Democrats are engaged in a partisan fishing expedition,” complained Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas.

But others voiced concerns for the administration and the path ahead.

“I think the White House, after multiple conversations with many people over the last 12-14 hours, understands that they’ve created a really difficult situation for themselves,” said Sen. Bob Corker, R-Tenn., chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. “And to move beyond this in a way that gives the American people faith, and Republicans and Democrats in the House and Senate faith in future efforts, is going to be a really tough and narrow path for them to follow.”

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Associated Press writers Mary Clare Jalonick, Alan Fram, Andrew Taylor and Richard Lardner contributed.

## Lawmakers reach agreement on stalled VA accountability bill

By HOPE YEN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congressional Republicans and Democrats have reached agreement on a bill to make it easier for the Department of Veterans Affairs to fire its employees, part of an accountability effort touted by President Donald Trump.

The deal being announced early Thursday could smooth the way for final passage on an issue that had been largely stalled since the 2014 wait-time scandal at the Phoenix VA medical center. As many as 40 veterans died while waiting months for appointments as VA employees created secret waiting lists and other falsehoods to cover up delays.

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The Hill deal followed a fresh warning from the VA inspector general's office of continuing patient safety problems at another facility, the VA medical center in Washington D.C. After warning of serious problems there last month, the IG's "rapid response" team visited the facility again on Wednesday and found a patient prepped for vascular surgery in an operating room, under anesthesia, whose surgery was postponed because "the surgeon did not have a particular sterile instrument necessary to perform the surgery."

The team also found "surgical instruments that had color stains of unknown origin in sterile packs," according to the IG's letter sent Wednesday to the VA. The IG again urged the department to take immediate action to ensure patients "are not placed at unnecessary risk."

The new accountability measure, led by Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., softens portions of a bill that had passed the House in March, which Democrats criticized as unfairly harsh on workers. Sens. Jon Tester of Montana and Johnny Isakson of Georgia, the top Democrat and the Republican chair on the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, agreed to back the new bill after modifications that would give VA employees added time to appeal disciplinary actions.

House Veterans Affairs' Committee Chairman Phil Roe, sponsor of the House measure, said he would support the revisions.

"To fully reform the VA and provide our nation's veterans with the quality care they were promised and deserve, we must ensure the department can efficiently dismiss employees who are not able or willing to do their jobs," Rubio told The Associated Press.

It comes after Trump last month signed an executive order to create a VA Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection, with an aim of identifying "barriers" that make it difficult for the VA to fire or reassign bad managers or employees. VA Secretary David Shulkin had urged the Senate to act quickly to pass legislation.

The GOP-controlled House previously approved an accountability bill mostly along party lines. Rep. Tim Walz, D-Minn., argued the House should embrace language instead from a bipartisan bill by Isakson from last year with added due process protections for workers.

The Senate bill to be introduced Thursday adopts several portions of that previous Isakson bill, including a longer appeal process than provided in the House bill — 180 days vs. 45 days, though workers would not be paid during that appeal. VA executives would be held to a tougher standard than rank-and-file employees for discipline. The Senate bill also codifies into law the VA accountability office created under Trump's order, but with changes to give the head of the office more independent authority and require the office to submit regular updates to Congress.

Conservative groups praised the bill.

"These new measures will disincentivize bad behavior within the VA and further protect those who bravely expose wrongdoing," said Dan Caldwell, policy director of Concerned Veterans for America, pointing to a "toxic culture" at VA.

The agreement comes in a week in which Senate Democrats are standing apart from Trump on a separate issue affecting veterans, the GOP bill passed by the House to repeal and replace the nation's health care law. Sen. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., warned the House measure would strip away explicit protections to ensure that as many as 8 million veterans who are eligible for VA care but opt to use private insurance would still receive tax credits.

Many veterans use a private insurer if they feel a VA facility is too far away, or if they don't qualify for fuller VA coverage because they have higher incomes or ailments unrelated to their time in service, said Duckworth, a combat veteran who lost her legs and partial use of her right arm during the Iraq war. A group of GOP senators is working to craft their own health bill.

"Trumpcare threatens to rip health care out of their hands," Duckworth said at a news briefing this week. "The question left is what will Senate Republicans do?"

Congress has had difficulty coming to agreement on an accountability bill after the Phoenix VA scandal. A 2014 law gave the VA greater power to discipline executives, but the department stopped using that authority after the Obama Justice Department deemed it likely unconstitutional.

Critics have since complained that few employees were fired for various VA malfeasance, including rising cases of opioid drug theft, first reported by the AP.

Follow Hope Yen on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/hopeyen1>

## Senate intel panel subpoenas Michael Flynn documents

By CHAD DAY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate intelligence committee subpoenaed former Trump national security adviser Michael Flynn for documents related to the panel's investigation into Russia's election meddling.

Sen. Richard Burr, the Republican chairman, and Sen. Mark Warner, the committee's Democratic vice chairman, issued a joint statement saying the panel decided to issue the subpoena after Flynn, through his lawyer, declined to cooperate with an April 28 request to turn over the documents.

Flynn and other associates of President Donald Trump have received similar requests from the committee for information and documents over the past few weeks.

Copies of request letters sent to longtime Trump associate Roger Stone and former Trump foreign policy adviser Carter Page were shared with The Associated Press. Those letters, which were nearly identical, sought emails, text messages, letters, phone records or any other relevant information they have about meetings or contacts that they or any other individual affiliated with the Trump campaign had with Russian officials or representatives of Russian business interests. They also ask for information about any financial or real estate holdings related to Russia, including any since divested or sold.

Stone, Page, Flynn and former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort all received similar requests for information, a person familiar with the Senate investigation said. That person spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the details of the committee's investigation.

The requests sent to Stone and Page covered documents and information from June 2015 through Jan. 20 of this year. During that period, Flynn accepted tens of thousands of dollars from a Russian state-sponsored television network. He later worked as a foreign agent on behalf of a Turkish businessman, while serving as a top Trump campaign adviser. It also covers the post-election time period in which Trump and his transition team decided to appoint Flynn as national security adviser.

Flynn was fired by Trump after less than one month on the job. The White House said Flynn misled Vice President Mike Pence and other top officials about his communications during the presidential transition with Russia's ambassador to the United States.

The subpoena comes as both the Senate committee and its counterpart in the House are investigating Russia's interference in the 2016 election and whether Trump associates colluded with those attempts to sway the election. Flynn's Russia ties are also being scrutinized by the FBI as it conducts a similar investigation.

Flynn attorney Robert Kelner declined to comment on the newly issued subpoena or say why Flynn declined to provide the information earlier. Flynn had previously been in talks with the committee about agreeing to be interviewed as long as he was granted immunity.

In March, Kelner said in a statement that Flynn had a "story to tell," but said no reasonable person

would agree to be questioned by the committee without "assurances against unfair prosecution."

Other congressional committees and the Pentagon's inspector general are also separately examining whether Flynn was fully forthcoming about his foreign contacts and earnings from organizations linked to the governments of Russia and Turkey.

The top Democrat and Republican on a House oversight committee have said that Flynn likely broke federal law by failing to get approval from the U.S. government to accept foreign payments and not disclosing them after accepting them.

Among the payments they cited were more than \$33,000 from RT, a Russian state-sponsored television network that U.S. intelligence officials have branded as a propaganda front for Russia's government. The network paid Flynn for attending a December 2015 gala in Moscow during which Flynn was seated next to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The Turkish payments under scrutiny are part of \$530,000 worth of lobbying and investigative work that Flynn's company, Flynn Intel Group, performed for a Turkish businessman. In March, Flynn and his firm belatedly registered as a foreign agent with the Justice Department for the work, acknowledging it could have benefited the Turkish government.

On Wednesday, The Associated Press reported that Flynn is at odds with his former Turkish client over two unusual payments totaling \$80,000 that Flynn's firm sent back last year to the client.

Flynn's company, Flynn Intel Group, told the Justice Department in March that the two \$40,000 payments were consulting fees for unspecified work. But Turkish businessman Ekim Alptekin has told the AP that the payments from Flynn's firm were refunds for unperformed lobbying. The difference matters because Flynn's foreign business relationships and the veracity of his disclosures are under scrutiny by congressional, military and intelligence inquiries.

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Associated Press writers Eileen Sullivan and Julie Pace contributed to this report.

## **Before the ax, Comey was pushing Trump-Russia probe harder**

**By JULIE PACE, AP White House Correspondent**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Days before he was fired by Donald Trump, FBI Director James Comey requested more resources to pursue his investigation into Russia's election meddling and the possible involvement of Trump associates, U.S. officials say, fueling concerns that Trump was trying to undermine a probe that could threaten his presidency.

It was unclear whether word of the Comey request, put to Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, ever made its way to Trump. But the revelation intensified the pressure on the White House from both political parties to explain the motives behind Comey's stunning ouster.

Trump is the first president since Richard Nixon to fire a law enforcement official overseeing an investigation with ties to the White House. Democrats quickly accused Trump of using Comey's handling of the Hillary Clinton email investigation as a pretext and called for a special prosecutor into the Russia probe. Republican leaders brushed off the idea as unnecessary.

Defending the firing, White House officials said Trump's confidence in Comey had been eroding for months. They suggested Trump was persuaded to take the step by Justice Department officials and a scathing memo, written by Rosenstein, criticizing the director's role in the Clinton investigation.

"Frankly, he'd been considering letting Director Comey go since the day he was elected," White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said, a sharply different explanation from the day before, when officials put the emphasis on new Justice complaints about Comey.

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Trump's action left the fate of the Russia probe deeply uncertain. The investigation has shadowed Trump from the outset of his presidency, though he's denied any ties to Russia or knowledge of campaign coordination with Moscow.

Trump, in a letter to Comey dated Tuesday, contended that the director had told him "three times" that he was not personally under investigation. The White House refused Wednesday to provide any evidence or greater detail. Former FBI agents said such a statement by the director would be all but unthinkable.

Outraged Democrats called for an independent investigation into the Trump campaign's possible ties to Russia's election interference, and a handful of prominent Republican senators left open that possibility. But Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, with the support of the White House, brushed aside those calls, saying a new investigation would only "impede the current work being done."

The Senate intelligence committee on Wednesday subpoenaed former Trump national security adviser Michael Flynn for documents related to its investigation into Russia's election meddling. Flynn's Russia ties are also being scrutinized by the FBI.

The White House appeared caught off guard by the intense response to Comey's firing, given that the FBI director had become a pariah among Democrats for his role in the Clinton investigation. In defending the decision, officials leaned heavily on a memo from Rosenstein, the deputy attorney general, that criticized Comey's handling of the Clinton investigation.

But Rosenstein's own role in Comey's firing became increasingly murky Wednesday.

Three U.S. officials said Comey recently asked Rosenstein for more manpower to help with the Russia investigation. Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., said that while he couldn't be certain the request triggered Comey's dismissal, he said he believed the FBI "was breathing down the neck of the Trump campaign and their operatives and this was an effort to slow down the investigation."

Justice Department spokeswoman Sarah Isgur Flores denied that Comey had asked Rosenstein for more resources for the Russia investigation.

Trump advisers said the president met with Rosenstein, as well as Attorney General Jeff Sessions, on Monday after learning that they were at the White House for other meetings. One official said Trump asked Rosenstein and Sessions for their views on Comey, then asked the deputy attorney general to synthesize his thoughts in a memo.

The president fired Comey the following day. The White House informed Comey by sending him an email with several documents, including Rosenstein's memo.

It's unclear whether Rosenstein was aware his report would be used to justify the director's ouster.

White House and other U.S. officials insisted on anonymity to disclose private conversations.

A farewell letter from Comey that circulated among friends and colleagues said he does not plan to dwell on the decision to fire him or on "the way it was executed."

Trump is only the second president to fire an FBI director, underscoring the highly unusual nature of his decision. President Bill Clinton dismissed William Sessions amid allegations of ethical lapses in 1993.

The White House said the Justice Department was interviewing candidates to serve as interim FBI director while Trump weighs a permanent replacement. Sanders said the White House would "encourage" the next FBI chief to complete the Russia investigation.

"Nobody wants this to be finished and completed more than us," she said.

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AP writers Darlene Superville, Ken Thomas, Vivian Salama, Catherine Lucey and Eric Tucker in Washington contributed to this report.

## Snapchat's growth stalls in Facebook's shadow in 1Q report

By BARBARA ORTUTAY, AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Facebook has been bent on copying Snapchat ever since the social media giant tried unsuccessfully in 2013 to buy what was then an ephemeral photo-messaging app.

Now, the company behind Snapchat is hoping to copy some of its larger rival's own practices, at least with respect to courting new users — and, with them, advertisers.

But it's not going so well.

On Wednesday, Snap Inc. announced a massive loss and a continued slowdown in user growth, while revenue fell below Wall Street's expectations in its first earnings report as a public company. Just a week earlier, Facebook posted double-digit revenue growth for the first quarter — much as it has consistently since its initial public offering in 2012.

Snapchat reported 166 million daily active users in the latest quarter, an increase of just 36 percent from a year earlier. In its first post-IPO report in 2012, Facebook also disappointed investors when its daily user base grew by only 32 percent. But at that point, Facebook had 552 million regular users, more than three times as many as Snapchat.

### WHERE THE MONEY WENT

Almost \$2 billion of Snap's \$2.2 billion loss in the January-March period involved stock compensation costs related to the company's initial offering. Facebook had similar costs of roughly \$1.3 billion.

But Facebook's revenue was \$1.18 billion in its first quarter as a public company. Although Snap's revenue nearly quadrupled in the latest quarter, it only rose to \$150 million. And that still undershot the \$158 million analysts polled by FactSet had expected.

Snap's stock fell \$5.50, or 24 percent, to \$17.48 in after-hours trading.

### COPYCATS

Growth in Snapchat's user base began to slow down last year after Facebook's Instagram copied Snapchat's "stories" feature, which lets users post short video clips that disappear after 24 hours. Not to miss out on the trend, Facebook also launched disappearing stories this year.

And let's not forget about WhatsApp, the Facebook-owned messaging service that came out with "status," which lets people post photos and videos that disappear after 24 hours. See a trend here?

### ALL ABOUT THE MESSAGING

Matt Britton, CEO of social media marketing company Crowdtap and an expert on millennials, believes Snapchat has "gotten ahead of itself" in pushing out new features, when what it does best — and what it's most used for — is one-on-one messaging.

"If you ask any teen how they use Snapchat, (most) say they use it to text people," Britton said. He said he's seen a lot of teens replace the telephone icon at the bottom of their phones' most-used apps with the Snapchat app. Why call when you can snap, after all?

### NOT A SOCIAL NETWORK

Snapchat's Stanford-dropout CEO, Evan Spiegel, has long insisted that his company is not a social network but a "camera company." Unlike Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, Snapchat isn't connecting networks of people. You could use it with just one other person, if you wanted.

Britton sees challenges for Snapchat's non-messaging features, such as stories and a "discover" option that lets users keep up with news, sports or celebrities. These features aren't what many users go to Snapchat for.

Snapchat, like Facebook, is also experimenting with augmented reality, a blending of the virtual and physical worlds, but it's still hard to tell how that will make money or have broad appeal.

In Wednesday's conference call with analysts, Spiegel sought again to distance Snapchat from the

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likes of Facebook, pointing out that its main focus was not to get as many users to sign up as possible.

"If we had just in the beginning encouraged snapchatters to add all their friends in (their) contact book instead of just few of them, they might be really uncomfortable creating snaps and adding them to their stories," he said, according to a transcript of the call.

## GROWING UP

As popular as Snapchat is with young people, they won't be young forever. If the company wants to expand its user base, it will have to broaden its reach to include older people.

"Right now they clearly have a loyal user base in the younger population, but the over 30 year old demographic is one of the most attractive segments for advertisers because of their spending power," Eric Kim, managing partner at venture capital firm Goodwater Capital, wrote in a report.

Teens, though, don't necessarily want to use the same messaging and socializing tools that their parents and grandparents are using. So Snapchat can either keep up with the younger generations and "their evolving behaviors and attitudes," or grow up with its original audience as it ages, said Jessica Liu, an analyst at Forrester Research.

"If they attempt to tackle both, Snapchat will discover that meeting the needs of a 15 year old vs. a 30 year old will be very different," Liu said in an email.

## TO COPY OR BUY?

As Facebook keeps copying Snapchat, what can Snapchat do to stay ahead?

"They need to acquire the next Snapchat — companies that are doing one thing right," Britton said. This could be an app such as Houseparty, a group video chat app that's popular with teens, or Musical.ly, a video social network that lets people create and share short music videos.

Of course, Facebook presumably won't be far behind in copying that, either.

## **Penguins shut out Capitals in Game 7, advance to East final**

**By STEPHEN WHYNO, AP Hockey Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Marc-Andre Fleury thanked his stick and flashed a smile so wide it could be seen through his mask.

This was vintage Fleury, and he has the Pittsburgh Penguins one step closer to another Stanley Cup.

Fleury stopped all 29 shots in a turn-back-the-clock performance to shut out the Washington Capitals 2-0 in Game 7 on Wednesday night, sending Pittsburgh to the Eastern Conference finals to face the Ottawa Senators.

This was the Fleury who backstopped the Penguins to the Cup in 2009 and was almost unbeatable early in the second-round series, and his return was all they needed to eliminate the Presidents' Trophy winners in a meeting of the NHL's top two teams.

"We're not in this position moving on if he doesn't play the way he did," said captain Sidney Crosby, who assisted on Bryan Rust's opening goal. "There were times where they had sustained pressure throughout games and he made some big saves that allowed us to stay in the game and allowed us to stay patient. He was huge for us all series long."

Fleury thought it was the Penguins' best team game of the playoffs, a theory that teammates and coach Mike Sullivan echoed. They were again outshot as they were in every game of the series, this time only 29-28, but Rust and Patric Hornqvist scored on Braden Holtby, and Fleury shut the door.

It was as complete a game as Pittsburgh has had through two rounds, even though it was without injured defenseman Trevor Daley and winger Carl Hagelin. Crosby looked like himself again in his third game back from a concussion, and the rest of the team followed.

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"They just always find a way to respond the right way to any of the challenges or the adversities that this league throws at us, and they did it again tonight," Sullivan said. "I think these guys are at their best when the stakes are high. ... I thought that was the closest thing to the Penguins identity that we've seen in the playoffs so far."

It was far from Capitals hockey, which was on display in victories in Games 5 and 6. Chances came and went as Washington failed to get beyond the second round for the seventh time in as many chances in the Alex Ovechkin era.

"Without goals, you can't win the game," said Ovechkin, who played the seventh-most of any Capitals forward at 18:22 and was on the ice for each goal. "Plenty of chance to score. Just didn't do it. Made a couple mistakes, and it cost us."

Mistakes by Ovechkin and defensemen Matt Niskanen and Kevin Shattenkirk in clearing the puck out of the defensive zone led to Rust's goal 8:49 into the second and Hornqvist's 4:14 into the third. Ovechkin had one of the Capitals' best scoring chances of the game from the slot, and his shot went off the shaft of Fleury's stick.

It was so close Ovechkin raised his arms thinking he'd scored. That's when Fleury smiled and said something — but not to a teammate.

"I talk to my stick, maybe," Fleury said. "I say thank you and say good job."

The Penguins thanked Fleury for yet another stellar performance. After allowing nine goals on 142 shots through the first four games, he allowed nine in Games 5 and 6 before bouncing back with this effort that sent the Capitals plunging into an offseason of change and Pittsburgh into its fifth East final in 10 years.

Playing only because No. 1 Matt Murray was injured prior to the playoff opener and with his future uncertain, Fleury was at his best in the biggest game of the season so far.

"I think that we're kidding ourselves if we don't give Flower an awful lot of credit," center Matt Cullen said. "He stole us more than one game this series and he kept us in a lot of others. We give him a lot of credit, and we're all so happy for him and proud of him. You can't ask for a better teammate than Flower with what he's gone through the last couple years and to step up the way he has."

NOTES: Game 1 against Ottawa is Saturday in Pittsburgh. ... Pittsburgh improved to 6-0 on the road in Game 7s and 9-1 in series against Washington. ... The road team won five of the seven games. ... Holtby stopped 26 of 28 shots. ... Hagelin was a surprise scratch, replaced in the lineup by Scott Wilson. ... Daley missed his second consecutive game with a lower-body injury. ... Murray dressed as Fleury's backup for the first time in the playoffs. ... F Carter Rowney replaced Tom Kuhnhackl (healthy scratch) on Pittsburgh's fourth line. ... The Capitals fell to 3-7 in the Ovechkin era in Game 7. ... Washington has not made the conference finals since 1998.

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## Wife of ESPN broadcaster Chris Berman dies in car crash

WOODBURY, Conn. (AP) — The wife of longtime ESPN broadcaster Chris Berman died in a traffic crash in Connecticut, the sports network's president confirmed Wednesday.

Katherine Ann Berman, 67, a teacher, was one of two victims in the two-vehicle crash Tuesday afternoon in Woodbury, state police said. The other victim was identified by police as Edward Bertulis, 87,



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of Waterbury.

"This is a devastating tragedy and difficult to comprehend," ESPN President John Skipper said in a statement. "Chris is beloved by all his ESPN colleagues and for good reason: He has a huge heart and has given so much to so many over the years. We know how much his family means to him and all we can do at a moment like this is give him the love and support he will surely need at this hour."

The Bermans have been married more than 33 years and have two adult children, Meredith and Doug. Chris Berman and his children released a statement Wednesday night.

"We are overwhelmed by the outpouring of love and sympathy from so many folks we know, and so many others we look forward to knowing," the statement said. "Kathy Berman had a huge heart, and this would have warmed hers beyond belief. It certainly warmed ours. All of us need to keep the family of Edward Bertulis in our thoughts and prayers as well.

According to the police account of the crash, both vehicles were traveling in the same direction on a two-lane road when Kathy Berman's car struck the rear of Bertulis' SUV, and both veered off the road.

Berman's Lexus went down an embankment and overturned in a small body of water. Chris Berman was listed as the car's owner.

Bertulis' Ford Escape struck a utility pole and landed on its roof in the street.

Berman, who was wearing a seat belt, was pronounced dead at the scene. Bertulis, who was not wearing a seat belt, was pronounced dead at a hospital.

Woodbury is not far from the Bermans' home in Cheshire, and ESPN headquarters in Bristol.

According to a profile of the family that appeared in the Hartford Courant in 1993, Chris Berman met the former Kathy Alexinski in 1983.

Chris Berman, who turned 62 Wednesday, is a Brown University graduate who started working at ESPN in October 1979, a month after its founding.

He stepped down as host of "Sunday NFL Countdown" after 31 seasons in January but remains with the network in an updated role after signing a new contract.

## Easter Epic! Nedved! Caps add playoff letdown to long list

By WILL GRAVES, AP Sports Writer

The Washington Capitals' history of playoff disappointments began even before they ever reached the postseason.

The proof is hanging in the closet in Bruce Peters' home in Waldorf, Maryland, about 30 miles away from where the Presidents' Trophy winners lost Game 7 to the Pittsburgh Penguins on Wednesday night with a spot in the Eastern Conference finals at stake.

The T-shirt, purchased at the long-since demolished Capital Centre, remains in impeccable condition. On it is a cartoon image of an unnamed Washington player with a devil sitting over his shoulder. Across the bottom it reads: "Playoffs 1981 — Paid Hell To Get Here."

One problem. The Capitals didn't actually make the playoffs that spring, finishing last in the Patrick Division instead.

So much for truth in advertising.

Not that it mattered to Peters. An 8-year-old at the time, he was already hooked on the game and the guys in the red, white and blue sweaters. And he's stayed that way. Through the Easter Epic and the Stanley Caps. Through Yvon Labre and Rod Langway. Peter Bondra and Olaf Kolzig. Jaromir Jagr (whoops) and Alex Ovechkin. Through Esa Tikkanen's botched open net in Game 2 of the 1998 Stanley Cup Final. Through blown 3-1 leads and Game 7s that almost always ended with a handshake line as the other guys moved on. Through 43 years and four wins — four — beyond the second round.

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Peters clings to the positive moments — Dale Hunter's Game 7 breakaway against Ron Hextall in 1988, or Joel Ward's winner against Boston in 2012.

"At least the Caps have given you a glimmer of hope, something to root for," he said.

But for the fourth time in four tries, his Capitals failed in a Game 7 against longtime nemesis Pittsburgh on Wednesday.

"The Penguins always seemed to get the bounce," Peters said.

Those many failures "kind of blur together," Peters says. And now they include another miserable chapter.

**THE EASTER EPIC:** Technically, Game 7 of the 1987 Patrick Division semifinals began on April 18. It didn't end until around 2 a.m. on April 19, when Pat LaFontaine's turnaround snapshot from the point threaded through a sea of bodies and beat Bob Mason 8:47 into the fourth overtime. In the stands, a 13-year-old Peters sat in stunned (and exhausted) disbelief.

"It wasn't like a hard shot, you would think a routine stop, just trickled and found its way," he said. "You play seven periods of hockey, wear and tear just gets you."

**THE NEDVED GAME:** While Washington's 1996 first-round series against Pittsburgh lasted just six games, in many ways it's symbolic of the club's inability to close. The Capitals won the first two games at the Igloo and had a chance to take a 3-1 lead in Game 4. The Penguins lost Mario Lemieux early in the game after getting in a fight. Washington's Joe Juneau botched a penalty shot. Pittsburgh's Petr Nedved won with a shot in the fourth overtime that could have been called "Easter Epic 2.0." The win tied the series. Pittsburgh advanced in six games.

"That one's up there," Peters said. "Way up there."

**SID VS. OVI PART I:** The NHL finally got a matchup four years in the making when Ovechkin and Penguins star Sidney Crosby met in the second round of the 2009 playoffs. The two exchanged hat tricks in Game 2 and Washington did something very un-Capital-like by winning an elimination game on the road to force a Game 7. The breakthrough moment never came. Marc-Andre Fleury stoned Ovechkin early, and the Penguins ripped off four goals in the first 23 minutes and never looked back.

"They just kind of fell apart," Peters said.

**JAROSLAV WHO?:** The Capitals responded a year after falling to the Penguins by posting the NHL's best record for the first time ever. They had home ice in the playoffs. It lasted all of seven games. Washington went up 3-1, then saw its best season ever come undone at the hand of unheralded Montreal goaltender Jaroslav Halak. The team that scored a season-high 318 goals managed three over the final three games and lost 2-1 in Game 7 at home.

**GONE IN A NEW YORK MINUTE:** Less than two minutes from closing out the New York Rangers in Game 5 in 2015, the Capitals allowed New York's Chris Kreider to tie it late in regulation. The Rangers won quickly in overtime, and Henrik Lundqvist lifted them to two more wins. Another hot goalie. Another abrupt ending.

**PENS AGAIN:** The Capitals began Wednesday night's game flying under a thunderous chorus of "Let's go, Caps!" A few hours later, they skated off amid mostly silence, although a smattering of boos pushed back against some cheering fans in black and gold. Fleury made 29 saves, Bryan Rust and Patric Hornqvist scored and Pittsburgh beat Washington 2-0.

It's the second straight season the Capitals won the Presidents' Trophy for the NHL's best regular-season record but exited in the second round of the playoffs. With T.J. Oshie, Justin Williams, Daniel Winnik, Karl Alzner and Kevin Shattenkirk set to become unrestricted free agents, this loss may have marked the end of a once-promising era in Washington hockey.

Just don't expect Peters to stop rocking the red.

"I don't know," he said. "Eventually it's going to turn."

More AP NHL: <http://apnews.com/tag/NHLhockey>

## What's holding back self-driving cars? Human drivers

By TOM KRISHER, AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — In just a few years, well-mannered self-driving robotaxis will share the roads with reckless, law-breaking human drivers. The prospect is causing migraines for the people developing the robotaxis.

A self-driving car would be programmed to drive at the speed limit. Humans routinely exceed it by 10 to 15 mph (16 to 24 kph) — just try entering the New Jersey Turnpike at normal speed. Self-driving cars wouldn't dare cross a double yellow line; humans do it all the time. And then there are those odd local traffic customs to which humans quickly adapt.

In Los Angeles and other places, for instance, there's the "California Stop," where drivers roll through stop signs if no traffic is crossing. In Southwestern Pennsylvania, courteous drivers practice the "Pittsburgh Left," where it's customary to let one oncoming car turn left in front of them when a traffic light turns green. The same thing happens in Boston. During rush hours near Ann Arbor, Michigan, drivers regularly cross a double-yellow line to queue up for a left-turn onto a freeway.

"There's an endless list of these cases where we as humans know the context, we know when to bend the rules and when to break the rules," said Raj Rajkumar, a computer engineering professor at Carnegie Mellon University who leads the school's autonomous car research.

Although autonomous cars are likely to carry passengers or cargo in limited areas during the next three to five years, experts say it will take many years before robotaxis can coexist with human-piloted vehicles on most side streets, boulevards and freeways. That's because programmers have to figure out human behavior and local traffic idiosyncrasies. And teaching a car to use that knowledge will require massive amounts of data and big computing power that is prohibitively expensive at the moment.

"Driverless cars are very rule-based, and they don't understand social graces," said Missy Cummings, director of Duke University's Humans and Autonomy Lab.

Driving customs and road conditions are dramatically different across the globe, with narrow, congested lanes in European cities, and anarchy in Beijing's giant traffic jams. In India's capital, New Delhi, luxury cars share poorly marked and congested lanes with bicycles, scooters, trucks, and even an occasional cow or elephant.

Then there is the problem of aggressive humans who make dangerous moves such as cutting cars off on freeways or turning left in front of oncoming traffic. In India, for example, even when lanes are marked, drivers swing from lane to lane without hesitation.

Already there have been isolated cases of human drivers pulling into the path of cars such as Teslas, knowing they will stop because they're equipped with automatic emergency braking.

"It's hard to program in human stupidity or someone who really tries to game the technology," says John Hanson, spokesman for Toyota's autonomous car unit.

Kathy Winter, vice president of automated driving solutions for Intel, is optimistic that the cars will be able to see and think like humans before 2030.

Cars with sensors for driver-assist systems already are gathering data about road signs, lane lines and human driver behavior. Winter hopes auto and tech companies developing autonomous systems and cars will contribute this information to a giant database.

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Artificial intelligence developed by Intel and other companies eventually could access the data and make quick decisions similar to humans, Winter says.

Programmers are optimistic that someday the cars will be able to handle even Beijing's traffic. But the cost could be high, and it might be a decade or more before Chinese regulators deem self-driving cars reliable enough for widespread public use, said John Zeng of LMC Automotive Consulting.

Intel's Winter expects fully autonomous cars to collect, process and analyze four terabytes of data in 1 ½ hours of driving, which is the average amount a person spends in a car each day. That's equal to storing over 1.2 million photos or 2,000 hours of movies. Such computing power now costs over \$100,000 per vehicle, Zeng said. But that cost could fall as more cars are built.

Someday autonomous cars will have common sense programmed in so they will cross a double-yellow line when warranted or to speed up and find a gap to enter a freeway. Carnegie Mellon has taught its cars to handle the "Pittsburgh Left" by waiting a full second or longer for an intersection to clear before proceeding at a green light. Sensors also track crossing traffic and can figure out if a driver is going to stop for a sign or red light. Eventually there will be vehicle-to-vehicle communication to avoid crashes.

Still, some skeptics say computerized cars will never be able to think exactly like humans.

"You'll never be able to make up a person's ability to perceive what's the right move at the time, I don't think," said New Jersey State Police Sgt. Ed Long, who works in the traffic and public safety office.

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Allen G. Breed in Raleigh, North Carolina; Joe McDonald in Beijing; Nirmala George in New Delhi; and Michael Liedtke in San Francisco contributed to this report.

## Asian stocks mostly higher in quiet trading; oil prices gain

By **YOUKYUNG LEE, AP Business Writer**

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Asian stocks were moderately higher on Thursday with few data reports to move the markets. Investors are watching tax reform developments in the U.S. after President Donald Trump's firing of FBI chief James Comey. Oil prices extended gains.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's Nikkei 225 rose 0.2 percent to 19,929.27 and South Korea's Kospi gained 0.8 percent to 2,288.90. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index advanced 0.3 percent to 25,096.16. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 was up 0.3 percent to 5,891.60. But Shanghai Composite Index fell 0.4 percent to 3,041.00. Stocks in Taiwan, Singapore and Southeast Asia were higher.

ANALYST'S VIEWPOINT: "Trump's decision to fire FBI director Comey continues to reverberate, with markets uncertain whether this could distract the government from its tax reform agenda," said Mizuho Bank in a daily report.

WALL STREET: Stocks finished slightly higher on Wednesday on Wall Street. The Standard & Poor's 500 index picked up 0.1 percent to 2,399.63. The Dow Jones industrial average shed 0.2 percent to 20,943.11. The Nasdaq composite finished at a record for the fourth day in a row as it rose 0.1 percent to 6,129.14.

OIL: Benchmark U.S. crude added 21 cents to \$47.54 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange after surging \$1.45, or 3.2 percent, to \$47.33 a barrel on Wednesday. Brent crude, the international standard, gained 20 cents to \$50.42 per barrel in London after closing up \$1.49, or 3.1 percent, at \$50.22 in the previous session. The price of U.S. crude oil jumped as reports showed U.S. crude stockpiles dropped by 5.2 million barrels last week, bigger than analysts expected.

CURRENCIES: The dollar fell to 114.21 yen from 114.29 yen. The euro rose to \$1.0874 from \$1.0868.

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## Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, May 11, the 131st day of 2017. There are 234 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 11, 1927, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences was founded during a banquet at the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles.

On this date:

In 1647, Peter Stuyvesant arrived in New Amsterdam to become governor of New Netherland.

In 1858, Minnesota became the 32nd state of the Union.

In 1937, "SPAM" was registered as a trademark by Hormel Foods, producer of the canned meat product.

In 1947, the B.F. Goodrich Company of Akron, Ohio, announced the development of a tubeless tire.

In 1953, a tornado devastated Waco, Texas, claiming 114 lives.

In 1960, Israeli agents captured Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

In 1973, the espionage trial of Daniel Ellsberg and Anthony Russo in the "Pentagon Papers" case came to an end as Judge William M. Byrne dismissed all charges, citing government misconduct.

In 1981, legendary reggae artist Bob Marley died in a Miami hospital at age 36.

In 1985, 56 people died when a flash fire swept a jam-packed soccer stadium in Bradford, England.

In 1987, doctors at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore transplanted the heart and lungs of an auto accident victim into a cystic fibrosis patient who gave up his own healthy heart to another recipient. (Clinton House, the nation's first living heart donor, died 14 months later.)

In 1996, an Atlanta-bound ValuJet DC-9 caught fire shortly after takeoff from Miami and crashed into the Florida Everglades, killing all 110 people on board.

In 1997, IBM's "Deep Blue" computer demolished an overwhelmed Garry Kasparov, winning the six-game chess re-match between man and machine in New York.

Ten years ago: Speaking aboard the aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis in the Persian Gulf, Vice President Dick Cheney warned Iran the U.S. and its allies would keep it from restricting sea traffic as well as from developing nuclear weapons. North and South Korea adopted a military agreement, enabling the first train crossing of their border in more than half a century. (The first freight trains began running between the two Koreas in Dec. 2007, but the border was closed by North Korea almost a year later.)

Five years ago: A Chicago jury convicted Oscar-winner Jennifer Hudson's former brother-in-law, William Balfour, of murdering her mother, brother and 7-year-old nephew. (Balfour was sentenced to life in prison.)

One year ago: A white former South Carolina police officer already facing a state murder charge in the shooting death of unarmed black motorist Walter Scott was indicted on federal charges including depriving the victim of his civil rights. (Ex-officer Michael Slager pleaded guilty on May 2, 2017 to violating Scott's civil rights, and is awaiting sentencing; as part of the plea bargain, South Carolina prosecutors agreed to drop the state murder charge.) A SpaceX capsule returned to Earth with precious science samples from NASA's one-year space station resident, Scott Kelly, who had returned to Earth the previous March. CBS News veteran Morley Safer, a "60 Minutes" correspondent for all but two of the newsmagazine's 48-year history, announced his retirement (Safer died eight days later at age 84).

Today's Birthdays: Comedian Mort Sahl is 90. Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan is 84. Jazz keyboardist Carla Bley is 81. Rock singer Eric Burdon (The Animals; War) is 76. Actress Pam Ferris is 69.

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Homeland Security Secretary John F. Kelly is 67. Actress Shohreh Aghdashloo (SHOH'-reh ahg-DAHSH'-loo) is 65. Actress Frances Fisher is 65. Actor Boyd Gaines is 64. Country musician Mark Herndon (Alabama) is 62. Actress Martha Quinn is 58. Country singer-musician Tim Raybon (The Raybon Brothers) is 54. Actor Tim Blake Nelson is 53. Actor Jeffrey Donovan is 49. Country musician Keith West (Heartland) is 49. Actor Nicky Katt is 47. Actor Coby Bell is 42. Cellist Perttu Kivilaakso (PER'-tuh KEE'-wee-lahk-soh) is 39. Actor Austin O'Brien is 36. Actor-singer Jonathan Jackson is 35. Rapper Ace Hood is 29. Latin singer Prince Royce is 28. Musician Howard Lawrence (Disclosure) is 23.

Thought for Today: "Ability hits the mark where presumption overshoots and diffidence falls short." — Golda Meir, Israeli prime minister (1898-1978).