

Groton Daily Independent

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Brian Gravatt puts up the flags for the Groton American Legion in the downtown district Saturday morning.

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Saturday, May 20

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship at Rosewood Court.

Sunday, May 21

Graduation at 2 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion at 9 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship at 9 a.m., Choir serving at Nursing Home at 3 p.m.

United Methodist Church: Conde worship, 9 a.m.; coffee fellowship time, 10 a.m., Groton worship, 11 a.m.

Catholic Parish: Mass at St. Elizabeth Ann Seaton 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.

Monday, May 22

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study at 6:30 a.m.

Senior Menu: Hot pork sandwich, coleslaw, baked beans, sherbet.

Tuesday, May 23

Girls Golf at Sioux Valley

United Methodist: Bible Study at 10 a.m.

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

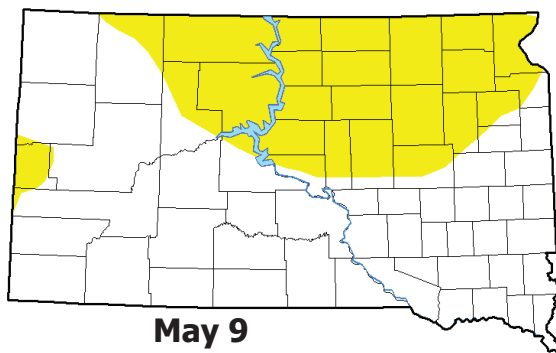
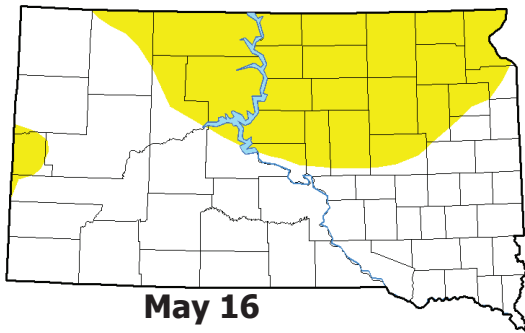
The cardboard/paper
recycling trailer at the school is **Open**

"From minor scratches to a complete rebuild... we can do it all"

NOW OPEN

Harris
Auto Body ABDN

225 Brown County Hwy 19 South
Aberdeen: 605/725-4900



Weekly Drought Monitor

Wet weather continued across southern sections of the High Plains region and moved into northern areas as the monitoring period ended on May 16. (Rain that fell after 7 am CDT on May 16 will be reflected on next week's map.) In north-central Colorado, coverage of moderate drought (D1) was greatly reduced by recent and ongoing wetness. Farther north, there was some modest expansion of dryness (D0), mainly in North Dakota, although conditions were highly favorable for fieldwork. During the week ending May 14, nearly half (45%) of the corn acreage was planted in South Dakota, along with 35% in North Dakota. However, South Dakota also led the northern U.S. in top-soil moisture rated very short to short (40% on May 14), as well as rangeland and pastures rated very poor to poor (20%).

Noem Accepting Applications for Fall Interns

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Rep. Kristi Noem is accepting applications for fall internships in her Washington, D.C.; Sioux Falls; Rapid City; and Watertown offices.

Student interns will work with staff on various constituent service and communications projects, as well as assist with legislative research. Both South Dakota and Washington, D.C., internships provide students with first-hand knowledge of the legislative process and the countless other functions of a congressional office.

College students who are interested in interning in any of Representative Noem's offices should submit a cover letter and resume to Michael.Maloof@mail.house.gov by Friday, July 14, 2017. For more information, contact Michael Maloof at 202-225-2801.



Sharing Our Agricultural Traditions

For nearly 100 years, my family has farmed the land we live on. It's more than a business to us. It's a tradition, a way of life – one that we share with many across the state.

Earlier this month, I was pleased to welcome U.S. Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue to South Dakota and give him a peak into our tradition of agriculture and the people behind it. While it was his first official visit to the state as Secretary, it wasn't his first trip here altogether. We've actually hunted pheasant near my home in the state's northeastern corner a few times before (he's a really good shot, by the way) and he's ridden in the combine with me while I harvested our crops.

South Dakota was a natural stop during his first few weeks on the job, as it's a microcosm of the many issues under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) jurisdiction. From farm and ranch policy to forestry to hunting and fishing, we have a little of everything.

To start the day, we sat down with tribal leaders, who have a significant number of farmers and ranchers within their constituencies. Because of the unique relationship between tribal governments and the U.S. government, I wrote legislation to establish a permanent Office of Tribal Relations within USDA. That provision was successfully rolled into the 2014 Farm Bill and we continue to monitor its implementation today.

Additionally, Secretary Perdue was shown the Black Hills National Forest and the damage done by a decades-long pine beetle infestation. While the Forest Service announced the beetle had finally been beat this April, work remains. Helpful provisions were included in the 2014 Farm Bill at my request, but we will need the continued support of USDA to repair the damage and make the forest more resilient against future outbreaks.

Following the tour, we sat down with producers. While the current Farm Bill will run through 2018, work has already begun on the next one and Secretary Perdue will be essential in implementing that legislation.

The livestock disaster and crop insurance programs have given many South Dakotans an essential safety net, but changes to the commodity programs are needed. We'll also be looking to improve the Farm Bill's wetland determinations provisions. Under existing regulations, producers have been delayed in making improvements to their land because of a years-long backlog. I've sponsored bipartisan legislation to address this and am hopeful we'll see it included. Corrections must also be made to CRP (the Conservation Reserve Program), which only accepted 101 acres in South Dakota during the last sign-up period despite thousands of acres being submitted for consideration.

The day also included a stop at Ellsworth. To make the point that the Farm Bill is really a food bill, I often tell folks that while not everyone farms, everyone eats. I also like to mention that good farm policy is essential to our national security. If other countries control our food supply, they can control us. Food security is national security.

I've always been proud to be part of South Dakota's tradition of agriculture, making it all the more special that I could show our newest Secretary of Agriculture how we do it with excellence.

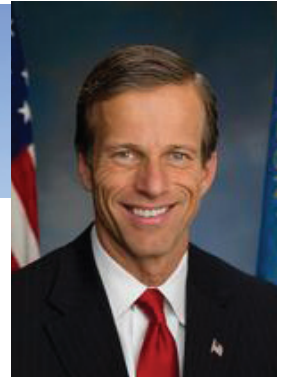


Bike's presented to students

At the beginning of the school year Groton Ford and S&S Lumber collaborated in a joint venture to award every child grade K-5 a brand new bicycle for missing only a half day of school or less. Thursday was the last day of school for Groton Area and those kids received their bikes! Seven of the kids in the photo had perfect attendance! "It was a great experience and well received" says Nick Simon of Groton Ford. "we enjoyed having the parents tell us throughout the year that there is no way their kid will miss school because they want a bike, as well as blaming us for planting the various flu bugs in the school this year!" Pictured in the back row is Groton Ford owner Nick Simon, Elementary school principal Brett Schwan and S&S Lumber's Ryan Schelle

Bicycle recipients from left to right are: Paisley Mitchell, Kyleigh Kroll, Natalia Warrington, Emerlee Jones, Kyleigh Englund, Kira Clocksene, Troy Nickeson, Ryan Groeblichhoff, Nathan Unzen, Winston Clark, Logan Clocksene, Brody Lord, Keegan Harry, Garrett Schultz, not pictured Colby Dunker.

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



South Dakota Businesses Would Benefit From Pro-Growth Tax Reform

The United States is long overdue for a major tax reform bill. After eight years of economic weakness, we need a tax code that works for workers and job creators, not against them.

Our current tax code is strangling business growth, job creation, and higher wages. Our nation has the highest corporate tax rate in the developed world, putting American businesses at a competitive disadvantage in the global economy. Meanwhile, small businesses and family farms face high tax rates and other burdensome tax policies that make it difficult for them to expand and create new jobs.

The most important tax-related measures we can take to boost economic growth are lowering business tax rates and allowing businesses to recover their investments faster. This week, I'm introducing a tax bill in the U.S. Senate to address the second part of that equation. My bill, the Investment in New Ventures and Economic Success Today (INVEST) Act, focuses on helping small and medium-sized businesses by allowing them to recover their investments more quickly – in many cases expensing them immediately – thus freeing up capital to reinvest in the company.

The INVEST Act would allow new businesses to deduct a substantial part, if not all, of their startup costs within the first year. Currently, new businesses can only deduct \$5,000 of these costs. My bill would substantially increase that amount to \$50,000. This would significantly improve the stability of new businesses by freeing up cash they can use to grow. Plus, it would help encourage new business creation, an essential feature of a healthy economy.

A second part of my bill focuses on increasing cash flow for small and medium-sized businesses, farms, and ranches – in particular those that operate as corporations and partnerships – by allowing them to use cash accounting instead of accrual accounting. This would allow a business to be taxed on income when it receives the cash from the customer and to deduct an expense when it pays its supplier.

That means that businesses with inventories would be allowed to deduct investments in inventory up front, rather than having to wait until the inventory is sold, leaving them with more cash on hand to put back into their companies. It would also reduce the need for businesses to employ armies of lawyers and accountants to ensure that they've properly adhered to complex accounting rules.

Finally, the INVEST Act would substantially reform the depreciation and other expensing rules. Traditionally, farms and businesses have been forced to deduct expenses like machinery, property, or agricultural equipment over an extended period – anywhere from five to 10 years, and as much as 39 years for commercial buildings – which can leave a farm or business with its cash tied up for years in all the property it takes to run a successful enterprise.

My bill would permanently allow all businesses to deduct 50 percent of their investment in equipment, vehicles, machinery, and most other property during the year in which it is purchased. Small and medium-sized businesses would be allowed to immediately deduct 100 percent of new investments in business property up to \$2 million.

For farmers and ranchers, who may reach the limit on full expensing, the bill substantially increases the rate at which they can depreciate the cost of tractors, combines, and other farm property. The bill also helps farms and businesses that rely on cars, light trucks, and vans by substantially increasing the amount they can deduct when investing in a new business vehicle.

Forcing business owners, farmers, and ranchers to lock up their capital for years or even decades, as our current tax code does, discourages growth and job creation. We need to free these individuals up as much as possible to redeploy that hard-to-raise capital back into business expansion, increased wages, and new jobs.

The weak economic growth of the past few years doesn't have to be the new normal, but full economic recovery is only possible if we remove the obstacles facing our nation's businesses. We need a tax code that works for American businesses, not against them.

I hope the INVEST Act will become an essential part of a broader tax reform package in the Senate that will help create the strong, sustainable growth Americans have been waiting for.

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South Dakota Works

In South Dakota we have the third lowest unemployment rate in the nation. This is a source of pride, but it's also a double-edged sword. Because so few South Dakotans are unemployed, we have a shortage of qualified workers to fill job openings. We lack skilled workers in accounting, engineering, information technology, health care, manufacturing trades and elsewhere.

Workforce development is not a new challenge for South Dakota, and it's an issue that states across the nation face. In recent years, we have been working to identify the components of an effective workforce system and develop strategies to meet employer needs.

Thanks to the insights gained from conversations with business, education and government leaders at regional workforce summits, we concluded that a new job site software program was necessary. After careful research and evaluation of available technologies, the Department of Labor and Regulation launched a new virtual one-stop system, SDWORKS, last month.

Our old software was not as able to quantify workforce needs. The old system used job titles and only represented the employers who chose to use the system to list jobs. This hampered our ability to make informed policy decisions. The new software searches the internet to "scrape" job listings from other South Dakota employer sites. We are no longer limited to data listed only by employers who use our system. The system also details both job titles and needed skills, allowing any user easily to identify skill supply and demand information in real-time. We can now view, at any given time, everything from the most in-demand skills for job listings to the education level of current job seekers to occupational wage data.

This intuitive, state-of-the-art technology has created an exceptional customer service experience. By helping job seekers and businesses, it's a win-win.

Southdakotaworks.org was designed to be a job seeker's number one resource for finding the perfect career in South Dakota. The virtual one-stop system offers a more comprehensive list of job openings, a more robust resume builder and a better internal messaging system. The Department of Labor and Regulation also offers education opportunities and personalized job advisors.

SDWORKS is the state's largest and most comprehensive jobs board, so there is no need to reinvent the wheel at a local level. New tools allow employers to create job listings based on actual skills and experiences, competencies, and preferences. This allows job seekers and employers to make better matches using the same terminology. Qualified applicants can also be viewed and contacted faster in this system.

Filling workforce gaps is not an easy task, and it's not something that can be solved immediately. It's going to take continued dedication from people of all sectors over a long period of time. Still, the new SDWORKS program is a giant step forward. Whether you're an employer or a job seeker, give it a try, at Southdakotaworks.org.

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Today in Weather History

May 20, 1965: A tornado hit north of Frederick. A barn and all outbuildings were destroyed on one farm. Windows exploded outward at the house. The tornado was estimated to be on the ground for about 5 miles.

May 20, 1974: Softball size hail fell in Kennebec, in Lyman County, breaking many windows in the schools and other buildings.

1894: A record late snow of two to eight inches whitened parts of central and eastern Kentucky. Lexington received six inches of snow, and Springfield Kentucky received 5 inches.

1916: In three consecutive years, a tornado passed near or through the town of Codell, Kansas. The tornado on this day was an estimated F2. The estimated F3 tornado in 1917 passed two miles west of town. Finally, an estimated F4 tornado moved through Codell on May 20th, 1918. This tornado killed 9 and injured at least 65 others.

1957: A tornado touched down to the southwest of Kansas City and traveled a distance of seventy-one miles cutting a swath of near destruction through the southeastern suburbs of Ruskin Heights and Hickman Mills. The tornado claimed the lives of forty-five persons and left hundreds homeless. It was the worst weather disaster of record for Kansas City. About all that remained of one house were a small table and a fish bowl atop, with the fish still swimming about inside the bowl. A canceled check from Hickman Hills was found in Ottumwa, Iowa, 165 miles away. Pilots reported debris at an altitude of 30,000 feet.

1987 - Thunderstorms in southern Texas produced grapefruit size hail, near the town of Dilley ("by dilly"), and produced wind gusts to 73 mph at Lake Amistad. The large hail broke windows, killed small animals, and damaged watermelon. Thunderstorms developing along a warm front produced severe weather from Indiana to the Dakotas. Thunderstorms produced baseball size hail at Denver IA, and wind gusts to 80 mph in southern Henry County IL. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)


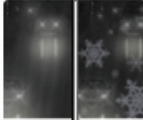


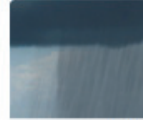
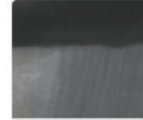
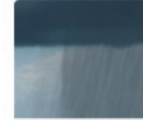
1988 - Thunderstorms in the south central U.S. produced wind gusts to 70 mph at Omaha, NE, and wind gusts to 80 mph at Midland and Dallas, TX. Temperatures in California soared into the 90s and above 100 degrees. San Jose CA reported a record high of 97 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

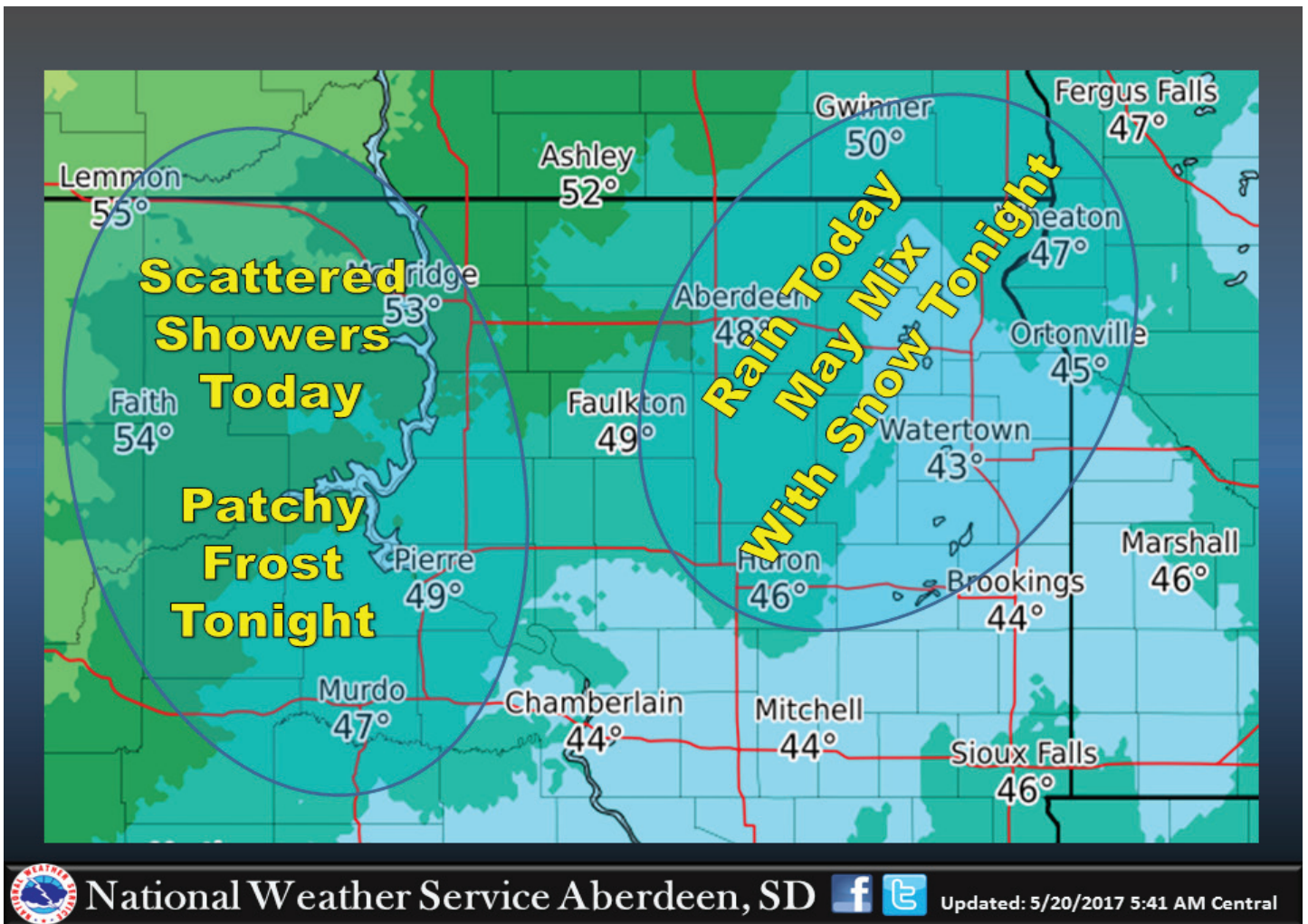
1989 - Pre-dawn thunderstorms produced large hail in eastern Oklahoma and northwestern Arkansas. Later in the morning thunderstorms in North Carolina produced dime size hail at Hanging Dog. Thunderstorms also produced severe weather from the Lower Mississippi Valley to the Central Plains Region later that day and night, with baseball size hail reported around Lawn, Novice and Eola TX. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather across the southeastern quarter of the nation through the day and night. Severe thunderstorms spawned six tornadoes, including one which injured two persons at Algoma, MS, and another which injured nine persons at Rogersville, MO. There were 119 reports of large hail or damaging winds. Thunderstorms produced baseball size hail at Houston MO and damaging winds which killed one person at Toccoa GA. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

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Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
						
60% → 90%	60% 50%	20% 20%		50%	20%	20%
Rain Likely then Rain	Rain Likely then Chance Rain/Snow	Slight Chance Rain/Snow then Slight Chance Rain	Mostly Cloudy	Chance Showers	Slight Chance Showers	Slight Chance Showers
High: 48 °F	Low: 38 °F	High: 65 °F	Low: 42 °F	High: 65 °F	Low: 43 °F	High: 65 °F



Published on: 05/20/2017 at 5:47AM

We have another shot at record low high temperatures today as low pressure continues to sit and spin to the south. Rain is expected for most of the day in eastern South Dakota, with showers across the central and western parts of the state. It may be cold enough for some of that moisture to fall as snow overnight, mainly in the Coteau - however there won't be any accumulations with this one. Western and central South Dakota could see temperatures into the mid 30s if the clouds clear out, with some patchy frost.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 57.8 F at 4:46 PM

Low Outside Temp: 42.4 F at 6:43 AM

High Gust: 17.0 Mph at 4:25 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 96° in 1934

Record Low: 23° in 1907

Average High: 70°F

Average Low: 46°F

Average Precip in May: 2.06

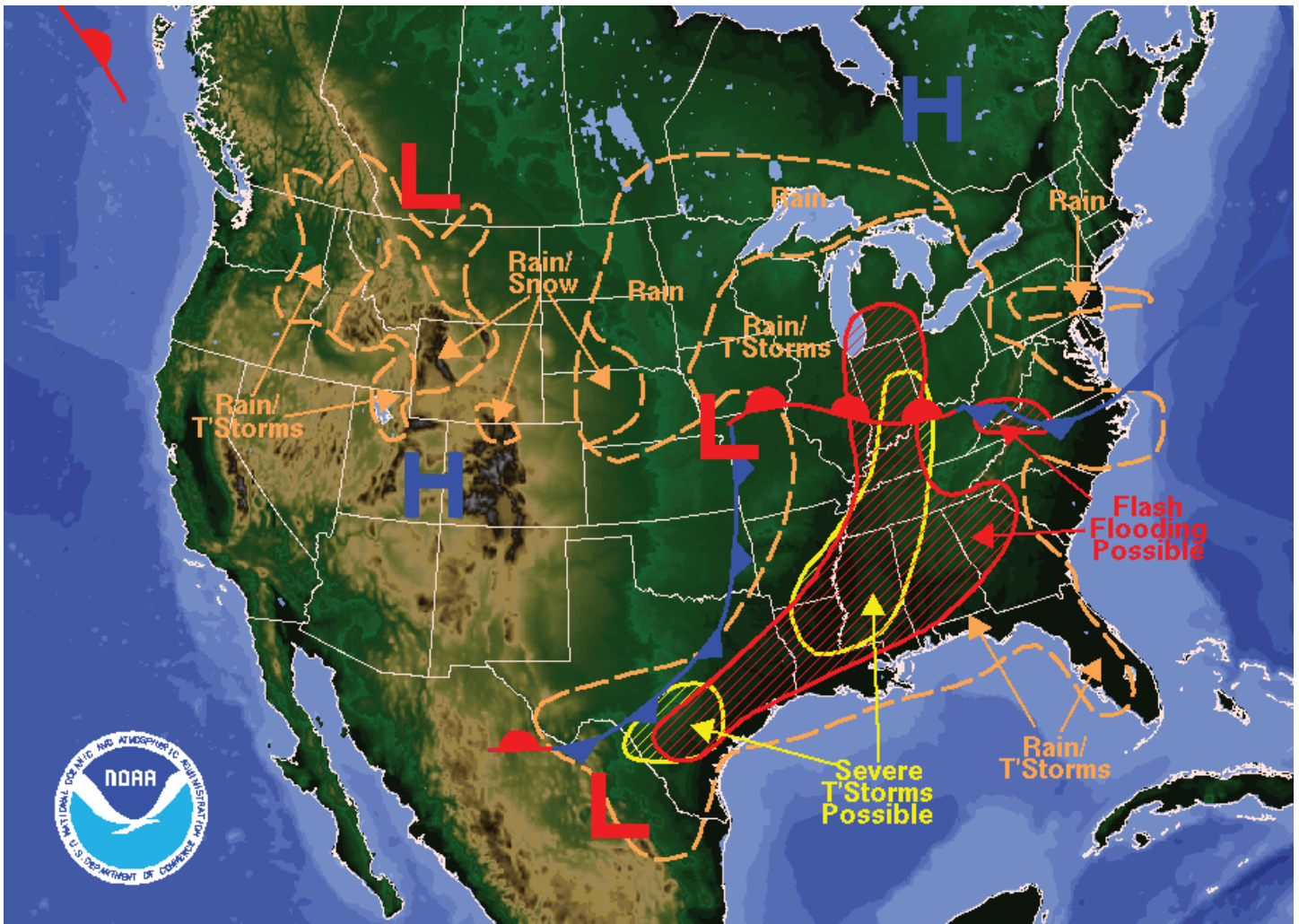
Precip to date in May: 0.78

Average Precip to date: 6.09

Precip Year to Date: 2.76

Sunset Tonight: 9:03 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:56 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Sat, May 20, 2017, issued 4:38 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Tate based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

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WHAT'S WRONG WITH BEING HAPPY?

A friend sitting next to me in church one Sunday commented, "Larry, if you turn around and look at the people here this morning, it looks like they all have stomach aches, a sore tooth, are facing a prison term or are here under duress."

Actually, I didn't have to turn around and look. I noticed it when I walked into the sanctuary. Someone once said to me that "Of all the groups of people in the world, Christians seem to be the most unhappy. They seem to be joyless and miserable. If being a Christian is so terrible, why don't they give up their faith and try something else?"

Some Christians are like a person with a headache: They don't want to give up their head but it hurts to keep it. Can we expect others to want to become Christians if we appear to be miserable and hopeless? Things are bad without Christ. Why invite Him into my life if things will only get worse?

"Blessed - or happy - are the people whose God is the Lord." To experience the fullness that the Lord has to give us requires that we surrender our lives to Him and become dependent on Him for all things. Some who profess to be people of God do not experience the blessings of God - or are not happy in their Christian faith - because they try to live the "half-life." Half a "conversion" is like half a life boat: it won't save you!

Happiness, or God's best blessings, will not come to the half-hearted Christian. Caleb had the secret: "I wholly followed the Lord." What a difference it can make. Try it!

Prayer: Help us, Lord, to "give it up" and surrender all that we are and all that we have to You and enjoy life! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 144:15 Blessed is the people of whom this is true; blessed is the people whose God is the Lord.

News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Mega Millions

01-04-05-24-30, Mega Ball: 1, Megaplier: 3

(one, four, five, twenty-four, thirty; Mega Ball: one; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$43 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$228 million

Audit report: \$1.4M missing after deaths of Platte couple

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A new audit report shows that a now-dead couple who helped administer South Dakota's GEAR UP college-readiness program made unauthorized withdrawals totaling more than \$7.8 million from the Platte-based educational cooperative where they worked.

The Department of Legislative Audit report released Friday says much of the money was returned, but roughly \$1.4 million remained missing after their deaths in 2015.

Scott Westerhuis that year shot his wife and their four children, then set fire to their home and killed himself. Authorities have said they believe the couple stole more than \$1 million before their deaths.

The new details about how much they received through Mid-Central Educational Cooperative are part of a special review of the organization. Many issues identified in the audit had been raised previously.

Three people face charges in connection with the couple's scheme.

'New life' initiative to recruit American Indian students

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota State University president Barry Dunn says he can see a future in which reservation hospitals and health centers across South Dakota employ pharmacists and lab scientists educated at his school, with doctors and administrators also trained at institutions in the state.

The land-grant university is pursuing a new initiative to increase the number of students at the school from the nine tribal nations in South Dakota, Dunn said Friday. The Wokini Initiative, bearing a Lakota word that means "new life" or "a new beginning," is a top priority for Dunn, a Rosebud Sioux tribe member who took over as president about a year ago.

He said the goal of the initiative, which is in its early stages, is to dramatically improve educational opportunities for American Indian students from South Dakota. Dunn said the school aims to recruit high school students and tribal college graduates and provide financial assistance to help them attend South Dakota State University in Brookings.

The university had about 250 American Indian students enrolled in the fall 2016, a number Dunn would like to see climb to 1,000 or higher. It would be wonderful if the enrollment of American Indian students at South Dakota State reflected the state's population, he said.

"This is an intentional, very intentional effort to reach a population that has been underserved by public higher education in a state that has a long and dramatic and many times tragic history of relationships with American Indians," Dunn said. "It's morally and ethically the right thing to do."

Dunn said the initiative will offer tailored advising and counseling to help make sure that American Indian students who are recruited are successful. Part of the initiative calls for the construction of a stand-alone

American Indian student center, which he said would serve as a "home away from home."

Other aspects could include a push to preserve the Dakota and Lakota languages and the funding of collaborative research projects with tribes or tribal colleges on topics important to American Indian communities. A report to the Board of Regents says Wokini Initiative programs will be developed by university staff in collaboration with the tribes, their members and the four tribal colleges serving South Dakota.

The university plans to dedicate revenue from land-grant properties — roughly \$600,000 each year — to the initiative to give it a sustainable funding source. Officials will also seek gifts and grants for the project, though no specific funding goal exists yet, Dunn said.

"Wokini will provide that stability and long-term commitment that won't go away as leadership changes," he said. "My goal is to institutionalize this effort so that it's just part of who South Dakota State is in perpetuity."

The school hopes to hire a director to focus on the project within the next month, and Dunn expects activity to pick up significantly in the fall. He said students could be recruited for the 2018 school year.

Alaina Hanks, a member of the White Earth Chippewa of Minnesota, is pursuing a graduate degree in clinical mental health counseling at South Dakota State. She said the American Indian Student Center has lacked money in the past and that the new initiative is a "clear step forward."

"I think that putting resources into something that you care about is so different than just saying you care about something," she said.

Democratic Sen. Troy Heinert, a Rosebud Sioux member, said that greater access to higher education for tribal members across the state is "how we're going to change the communities from within." When younger tribal members see their relatives and other American Indians in professional positions, it makes that goal seem more attainable, Heinert said.

Dunn said he's pursuing the initiative in honor of his mother, who was born into poverty on the Rosebud Indian Reservation in 1921, before American Indians were U.S. citizens. She eventually earned a degree from Iowa State University, which gave her success and Dunn a middle-class upbringing.

"I want the benefits that my mother received to flow to all of those young people that have a similar story," Dunn said.

4 plead guilty in South Dakota tribal embezzlement case

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — Four of six people charged in a tribal embezzlement case in South Dakota have pleaded guilty in federal court in Aberdeen.

Carrie Godfrey, Gerald Heminger Jr. and Colette White pleaded guilty this week to conspiracy to commit theft from a tribal organization, the Aberdeen News (<http://bit.ly/2rm87fY>) reported.

Court documents show the case involves the unlawful spending of more than \$81,000 from Big Coulee District, a political subdivision of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate tribe.

Godfrey's plea agreement said she'll pay over \$31,000 in restitution to Big Coulee. Heminger and White will pay Big Coulee more than \$5,000 each.

Gerald German Jr. pleaded guilty to theft from a tribal organization. He agreed to pay nearly \$17,000 to Big Coulee and \$63,000 to the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate. The second payment is in connection to a separate case.

The defendants were on the executive board of the Big Coulee District. While board members receive a stipend, court documents show the group issued checks for personal use from 2011-13.

They are scheduled to be sentenced in August.

The two other defendants in the case are Ann German, who was the district coordinator, and Calvin Max Sr., who was on the executive board. German is scheduled for a hearing May 30. According to her plea agreement, she will plead guilty to conspiracy to commit theft from a tribal organization. No plea agreement has been reached in Max's case.

Big Coulee District administers assistance programs for home and emergency repairs.

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

Unemployment rates hit record lows in 3 states

By JOSH BOAK, AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Solid hiring nationwide led unemployment rates to touch record lows in three U.S. states last month.

Unemployment rates declined in 10 states in April, increased in one — Massachusetts — and held relatively stable in the other 39, the Labor Department said Friday. A significant number of the job gains occurred in nine states, led by Texas, Minnesota and Wisconsin. Indiana was the only state to see a significant decrease in jobs last month.

Arkansas, Colorado and Oregon reported the lowest unemployment rates since 1976. Colorado's rate, at 2.3 percent, was the nation's lowest.

Those states' jobless rates fell because more residents found work. In some cases, the rate falls when those out of work stop looking and are no longer counted as unemployed.

All told, 19 states had unemployment rates lower than the national average of 4.4 percent. Hawaii, New Hampshire, North Dakota and South Dakota each had jobless rates below 3 percent. The highest unemployment rate was New Mexico at 6.7 percent, while Alaska had the second highest at 6.6 percent.

Nevada, Hawaii and North Dakota enjoyed the stronger percentage job gains last month, while Indiana experienced a loss of 11,300 jobs, or a decline of 0.4 percent.

Across the country, employers added 211,000 jobs in March. Hiring has averaged 174,000 jobs in the past three months, close to last year's pace. The unemployment rate has tumbled to 4.4 percent from 4.8 percent in January.

Lawsuit dismissed against Dakota Access Pipeline protesters

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — A federal judge has dismissed a lawsuit from the developer of the Dakota Access oil pipeline against Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Chairman David Archambault and four others.

Dakota Access LLC filed the complaint last year against Archambault and others, seeking restraining orders and monetary damages.

The Bismarck Tribune reports (<http://bit.ly/2q3y5jN>) that the company claimed they interfered with pipeline work, threatening the safety of workers and costing the company more than \$75,000 a day.

U.S. District Judge Daniel Hovland ruled Thursday that the company failed to show that the alleged losses caused by each defendant exceeded \$75,000, which is required for a lawsuit to be valid in federal court.

Hovland says the company can pursue damages in state court.

Information from: Bismarck Tribune, <http://www.bismarcktribune.com>

Racing at Badlands track suspended for the season

BRANDON, S.D. (AP) — The owners of the Badlands Motor Speedway in Brandon have canceled this season's races.

BMS suspended racing after cutting ties this week with Med Star Dirt Track Rescue Team. The owners say the ambulance company showed up late and left early from a recent race. BMS said the company was paid for the full season.

The track owners say those who have already purchased tickets will get a full refund.

BMS is searching for a new ownership group and says it has cut its asking price to \$7.5 million.

Rapid City police plan to have saturation patrols

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The Rapid City Police Department is set to participate in saturation patrols during the nationwide “Click it or Ticket” campaign.

The campaign runs Monday until June 4. The department plans to add officers during its standard shifts to help with traffic enforcement and address seatbelt and child restraint violations. Officers will also be looking for speed violations and impaired drivers.

Rapid City police made 973 DUI arrests in 2016.

Trump receives regal welcome in Saudi Arabia

By JULIE PACE and JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP) — President Donald Trump, in the first stop of his maiden trip abroad, received a regal welcome Saturday in Saudi Arabia, feted by the wealthy kingdom as he aims to forge strong alliances to combat terrorism while pushing past the multiple controversies threatening to engulf his young administration.

For one day, anyway, Trump appeared successful in keeping his domestic woes an ocean away, as he basked in the pageantry that began with an elaborate airport welcome ceremony punctuated by a military flyover and a handshake from Saudi King Salman.

He later was given a tour of one of Riyadh’s most opulent palaces and sat through an elaborate signing ceremony in which, one by one, the Saudis agreed to military deals with the U.S. government and private businesses. Trump was kept a distance from reporters who were unable to ask about the tumult at home.

Trump is the only American president to make Saudi Arabia, or any majority Muslim country, his first stop overseas - a choice designed in part to show respect to the region after more than a year of Trump’s harsh anti-Muslim campaign rhetoric.

The visit kicked off an ambitious international debut for Trump. After two days of meetings here, Trump will travel to Israel, have an audience with Pope Francis at the Vatican and meet with allies at a NATO summit in Brussels and the Group of 7 powerful nations in Sicily.

Trump waved from the doorway after Air Force One touched down and before descending the staircase with first lady Melania Trump. The 81-year-old King Salman, who used a cane for support, was brought to the steps of the plane in a golf cart. The leaders exchanged pleasantries and Trump said it was “a great honor” to be there.

Several jets then flew overhead leaving a red, white and blue trail.

Soon after, Trump tweeted for the first time on international soil as president, writing that it was “great” to be in Saudi Arabia.

At a later ceremony at the grand Saudi Royal Court, the king placed the Collar of Abdulaziz Al Saud, the nation’s highest civilian honor, around Trump’s neck. The medal, given to Trump for his efforts to strengthen ties in the region, has also been bestowed on Russian President Vladimir Putin, British Prime Minister Theresa May and Trump’s predecessor, Barack Obama.

The king and Trump were overheard discussing natural resources and arms, and the king bemoaned the destruction caused by Syria’s civil war. Trump also agreed to a defense cooperation deal with the Saudis, pledging \$110 billion effective immediately and up to \$350 billion over 10 years, as well as some private sector agreements. The military package includes tanks, combat ships, missile defense systems, radar and communications, and cybersecurity technology.

White House officials hope the trip, complete with images of the accompanying pomp and pageantry of a president abroad, will help Trump recalibrate after one of the most difficult stretches of his young presidency. The White House bungled the president’s stunning firing of FBI Director James Comey, who was overseeing a federal investigation into possible ties between Trump’s campaign and Russia. This week, the Justice Department relented to pressure from Democrats and named former FBI chief Robert Mueller as special counsel to lead the probe.

But fresh news reports about the Russia investigation surfaced shortly after Trump departed and threat-

ened to overshadow the nine-day trip.

The New York Times reported that Trump called Comey "a real nut job" while discussing the ongoing investigation with two Russian officials in the Oval Office earlier this month. He also told them that firing Comey had "taken off" the "great pressure" he was feeling from the investigation, the Times reported.

Meanwhile, The Washington Post reported that an unidentified senior Trump adviser was being considered a "person of interest" in the investigation. Separately, Comey agreed to testify at an upcoming, open hearing of the Senate intelligence committee, the panel said.

Saudi's ruling family grew deeply frustrated with Obama's detente with Iran and his restrained approach on Syria. The king did not greet Obama at the airport as he did Saturday with Trump.

Billboards featuring images of Trump and the king and emblazoned with the motto "Together we prevail," dotted Riyadh's highways, and Trump's hotel was bathed in red, white and blue lights and, at times, an image of the president's face.

Mrs. Trump wore a black pantsuit with a golden belt and did not cover her head, consistent with the custom for foreign dignitaries visiting Saudi Arabia. Trump's daughter, Ivanka, also eschewed the scarf. Her father had criticized then-lady Michelle Obama for not wearing a headscarf during a 2015 visit to the kingdom.

Ivanka's presence dominated Arabic Twitter traffic, with the phrase "bint Trump" — Arabic for daughter of Trump — trending.

Trump arrived as Iran's President Hassan Rouhani won re-election by a wide margin, giving the moderate cleric a second, four-year term to continue pushing for greater freedoms and outreach to the wider world.

On Sunday, he'll deliver a speech on Islam and hold meetings with more than 50 Arab and Muslim leaders, who are converging on Riyadh for a regional summit focused largely on combating the Islamic State and other extremist groups. White House aides view the address as a counter to Obama's 2009 speech to the Muslim world, which Trump criticized as too apologetic for U.S. actions in the region.

Trump will call for unity in the fight against radicalism in the Muslim world, casting the challenge as a "battle between good and evil" and urging Arab leaders to "drive out the terrorists from your places of worship," according to a draft of the speech obtained by The Associated Press. The draft also notably did not contain the words "radical Islamic terror," a phrase Trump repeatedly criticized Hillary Clinton for not using during last year's campaign.

Associated Press writer Jon Gambrell contributed to this report from Dubai.

Follow Pace at <http://twitter.com/@jpaceDC> and Lemire at <http://twitter.com/@JonLemire>

High society: Pippa Middleton marries at almost-royal event

By KEVIN SCOTT and GREGORY KATZ, Associated Press

ENGLEFIELD, England (AP) — Pippa Middleton, radiant in a custom-made wedding gown, married a wealthy financier Saturday as two likely future British kings and other members of the royal family, including her sister, looked on.

In what was seen by many as the society wedding of the year, Middleton and hedge fund manager James Matthews said their vows in a ceremony at St. Mark's Church in Englefield, west of London. Before the wedding, a crowd of well-wishers and reporters gathered outside the church grounds, hoping for a glimpse.

The wedding party included Prince George, a 3-year-old page boy, and 2-year-old Princess Charlotte, a bridesmaid. Both are the children of the Duchess of Cambridge, Pippa's sister.

Prince William and Prince Harry arrived together wearing formal morning suits. They seemed relaxed as they strolled into the church — perhaps relieved they didn't have a role to play in the wedding party.

Matthews, 41, smiled broadly and sported elegant formal wear set off by a blue vest.

Middleton, 33, came to the church accompanied by her father Michael in a vintage Jaguar convertible. She wore a custom wedding gown designed by Giles Deacon, a long veil by prominent hat-maker Stephen

Jones, and a sparkly tiara.

The dress was constructed with a high neckline and a corseted bodice, with draping to the front and a heart-shaped detail in the back. Deacon said the lace bodice was embroidered with pearl details over a layered organza-and-tulle underskirt.

"(It was) a privilege to show the craftsmanship that my team produces in London and a real testament to Pippa's support of British fashion," he said.

Father and daughter had a quiet moment together before entering the church, and church bells rang out as the couple emerged after saying their vows. They were fortunate in their timing — it rained during the ceremony, but the sun had returned before they stepped out of the church.

Tennis star Roger Federer and his wife Mirka were among the guests, as was reality TV personality Spencer Matthews, the groom's well-known brother and one of the stars of "Made in Chelsea."

The Duchess of Cambridge gracefully ceded the spotlight to her younger sister Saturday. Kate wore a long-sleeved, blush pink Alexander McQueen dress and focused on making sure the young page boys and bridesmaids behaved — which they reportedly did.

The bride's parents, Carole and Michael Middleton, had an elaborate glass marquee built on the grounds of their estate in nearby Bucklebury for the lavish wedding reception Saturday night. Guests were advised to bring two outfits so they could change after the wedding ceremony.

The airspace above both villages has been closed to prevent intrusive press crews from flying overhead or launching drones to get video footage.

There is some speculation that Harry will bring his American girlfriend, actress Meghan Markle, to the reception. Their relationship has become serious in recent months, with Harry speaking out to ask the press to respect their privacy.

Middleton had several serious boyfriends before Matthews proposed last year. She has written a book about entertaining and columns for Vanity Fair while also working at her parents' lucrative "Party Pieces" business.

Her figure-hugging gown attracted attention at the 2011 wedding of Kate and Prince William, sparking completely unfounded rumors that she was dating Prince Harry.

Ingrid Seward, editor of Majesty Magazine, said the Middletons could take pleasure in the day: their first daughter, Kate, had married a future king, and their second daughter, Pippa, had married an extremely wealthy, charming and handsome man.

"You can't do better than that," she said.

US first lady ignores Trump criticism and shuns headscarf

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP) — Ignoring President Donald Trump's past admonition, U.S. first lady Melania Trump did not cover her head Saturday when they arrived in Saudi Arabia on the opening leg of his first international tour since taking office.

Two years ago, then-citizen Trump criticized then-first lady Michelle Obama's decision to go bare-headed on a January 2015 visit with her husband.

"Many people are saying it was wonderful that Mrs. Obama refused to wear a scarf in Saudi Arabia, but they were insulted. We have enuf enemies," Trump tweeted at the time, including a short-hand spelling for "enough."

Under the kingdom's strict dress code for women, Saudi women and most female visitors are required to wear a loose, black robe known as an abaya, in public. Most women in Saudi Arabia also cover their hair and face with a veil known as the niqab.

But head coverings aren't required for foreigners and most Western women go without.

While Mrs. Trump dressed conservatively Saturday in a long-sleeved, black pantsuit accented with a wide, gold-colored belt, her below-the-shoulder brown hair blew in the breeze at King Khalid International Airport in the capital city of Riyadh.

She followed the example set by other, high-profile Western women, including Mrs. Obama.

On visits earlier this year, British Prime Minister Theresa May and German Chancellor Angela Merkel also shunned head coverings. Then-first lady Laura Bush generally went without covering her head, though she once briefly donned a headscarf that she received as a gift.

Hillary Clinton, on trips to Saudi Arabia as Obama's secretary of state, also did not cover her head.

Trump's daughter, Ivanka, a senior White House adviser who is also accompanying her father, also left her head uncovered.

Saudi Arabia adheres to an ultraconservative interpretation of Islamic Shariah law where unrelated men and women are segregated in most public places. Women are banned from driving, although rights advocates have campaigned to lift that ban.

Guardianship laws also require a male relative's consent before a woman can obtain a passport, travel or marry. Often that relative is a father or husband, but in the absence of both can be the woman's own son.

Iran's President Rouhani wins 2nd term by a wide margin

By ADAM SCHRECK and NASSER KARIMI, Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran's President Hassan Rouhani won re-election by a wide margin Saturday, giving the moderate cleric a second four-year term to see out his agenda pushing for greater freedoms and outreach to the wider world.

The 68-year-old incumbent secured a commanding lead of 57 percent in a race that drew more than seven out of every 10 voters to the polls. His nearest rival in the four-man race, hard-liner Ebrahim Raisi, secured 38 percent of the vote.

As Rouhani appeared close to victory, some female drivers held out the V for victory sign and flashed their car lights on highways in Tehran's affluent north.

"We made the victory again. We sent back Raisi to Mashhad," his conservative hometown in northeastern Iran, said Narges, a 43 year-old beauty salon owner, who declined to give her full name. She said she spent more than three hours outside waiting to vote, "but it was worth it."

Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli announced the vote tallies in a televised news conference, based on a count of more than 99 percent of the ballots. He said Rouhani garnered 23.5 million votes out of 41.2 million ballots cast. Iran has 56.4 million eligible voters.

In 2013, Rouhani won the presidential election with nearly 51 percent of the vote. Turnout for that vote was 73 percent.

Iran's president is the second-most powerful figure within Iran's political system. He is subordinate to the supreme leader, who is chosen by a clerical panel and has the ultimate say over all matters of state.

Election officials repeatedly extended voting hours until midnight to accommodate long lines of voters, some of whom said they waited hours to cast their ballots. Analysts have said a higher turnout would likely benefit Rouhani.

Friday's vote was largely a referendum on Rouhani's more moderate political policies, which paved the way for the landmark 2015 nuclear deal that won Iran relief from some sanctions in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program.

Rouhani has come to embody more liberal and reform-minded Iranians' hopes for greater freedoms and openness at home, and better relations with the outside world.

Rouhani's first comment on the win came on Twitter, which is banned by government censors but followed widely by Iranians able to get around the curbs, highlighting the limits on expression that still exist in Iran despite his promises for greater openness.

"Great nation of Iran, you are the winner of the election. I humbly bow down before you. I will remain loyal to my promises to you," he wrote.

Raisi, his nearest challenger, is close to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, who stopped short of endorsing anyone in the election. Raisi ran a populist campaign, vowing to fight corruption and fix the economy while boosting welfare payments to the poor.

Many of Raisi's critics pointed to his alleged role condemning inmates to death during Iran's 1988 mass

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execution of thousands of political prisoners, and feared a victory for the hard-liner could worsen human rights in Iran and put the country on a more confrontational path with the West.

The two other candidates left in the race, Mostafa Mirsalim, a former culture minister, and Mostafa Hashemitaba, a pro-reform figure who previously ran for president in 2001, respectively netted 478,000 and 215,000 votes each.

Hashemitaba was among the first to predict an outright win for Rouhani as he offered his congratulations Saturday morning.

"Rouhani will apply his ever-increasing efforts for the dignity of Iran" in his next term, the reformist said.

The Tehran Stock Exchange rallied after the election results came out, extending a recent winning streak to close nearly 1 percent higher at its highest level in three months.

Although considered a moderate by Iranian standards, Rouhani was nonetheless the favorite pick for those seeking more liberal reforms in the conservative Islamic Republic.

He appeared to embrace a more reform-minded role during the campaign as he openly criticized hard-liners and Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard, a paramilitary force involved in the war in Syria and the fight against the Islamic State group in neighboring Iraq.

That gave hope to his supporters, who during recent campaign rallies called for the release of two reformist leaders of the 2009 Green Movement who remain under house arrest. The two figures, Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mahdi Karroubi, both endorsed Raisi, as did Mohammad Khatami, another reformist who served as Iran's president from 1997 to 2005.

One of the first world leaders to congratulate Rouhani was Syrian President Bashar Assad, whose government is strongly backed by Tehran.

A statement released by Assad's office said the Syrian president sent a letter to Rouhani congratulating him for the "confidence that the Iranian people gave to him to go forward in boosting Iran's status in the region and the world."

Iran's president oversees a vast state bureaucracy employing more than 2 million people, is charged with naming Cabinet members and other officials to key posts, and plays a significant role in shaping both domestic and foreign policy.

All candidates for elected office must be vetted, a process that excludes anyone calling for radical change, along with most reformists. No woman has ever been approved to run for president.

Ahmadi said the Interior Ministry expects to announce final results later Saturday.

Associated Press writers Amir Vahdat in Tehran, Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and Bassem Mroue in Beirut contributed to this report.

Follow Adam Schreck on Twitter at www.twitter.com/adamschreck and Nasser Karimi at www.twitter.com/ncarrimi.

GOP's Cotton in Iowa: "I'm ready for that new beginning."

By THOMAS BEAUMONT, Associated Press

COUNCIL BLUFFS, Iowa (AP) — Arkansas Sen. Tom Cotton declared Americans "ready for that new beginning" in Iowa Friday, walking a delicate path by raising his national political profile at a time of turmoil for Donald Trump's White House.

The 40-year-old freshman Republican senator sounded national themes as the guest at the Pottawattamie County Republican Party's annual fundraiser in Council Bluffs in conservative western Iowa. It was a role thick with presidential implications despite Trump's solid standing among Iowa Republicans less than four months into his term.

"I'm ready for that new beginning," Cotton added, in closing his 20-minute speech to more than 100 Iowa GOP loyalists and prompting a standing ovation.

However, Cotton offered a simple "no" when asked if he was laying the groundwork for a 2020 presi-

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dential campaign, or hedging his bets should the Republican Trump not seek re-election.

"I'm up for re-election in Arkansas" in 2020, Cotton told The Associated Press before the fundraising dinner at an event center.

Cotton's hosts were standing by the president, and calling their guest's appearance an opportunity for Republican activists to meet a potential future leader. But the event had all the trappings of an early White House exploration.

Despite his unambiguous "no," Cotton offered a broad message, as would-be White House prospects often do in Iowa. The veteran of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan suggested the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, were a unifying point for a new generation of Americans.

"I've spent most of my days since 9/11 trying to stop another day like that from happening," he told the fundraising crowd. "But I also want to revive the spirit of the days following."

On matters swirling around Trump, Cotton, also tread carefully.

Having previously said a special counsel was unnecessary, he declined Friday to endorse Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein's appointment of former FBI Director Bob Mueller to investigate any collusion between Trump's presidential campaign and the Russian government's interference in the campaign.

"I can't evaluate whether it's a good decision or not, the right decision or not. I don't have all the facts, all the reasoning the deputy attorney general had," he told the AP, while praising Mueller as widely respected.

Former FBI Director James Comey is expected to testify before the Senate Intelligence Committee, on which Cotton sits. Cotton said he hoped to learn what exchanges Comey had with Trump before the president abruptly fired him last week and to see the memos Comey is alleged to have kept.

Pottawattamie County Republican Chairman Jeff Jorgensen said he expects to invite Cotton back to western Iowa.

"He was a big hit. He has an open invitation to come back anytime," Jorgensen said after the dinner. "I'm going to get a lot of requests to have him back."

Trump, who departed Friday for the first overseas trip of his presidency, would seem to have few worries within the party base in Iowa, at the moment.

The GOP base overwhelmingly supports him, said Iowa Republican strategist Doug Gross, a former nominee for governor. That's despite low national approval and the shroud of congressional committees — and now a special counsel — investigating whether Trump's campaign colluded with Russia to sway the 2016 presidential election.

Only if Trump is impeached or the economy turns sour will Trump not be re-nominated, said Gross, who has been a Trump critic. Still, Cotton has begun making friends in Iowa, a move that could pay future dividends — or backfire.

"I think a guy like Tom Cotton could actually hurt himself by coming out too early like this," Gross said.

Cotton has made inroads with Iowa Republicans. Early this month, he spoke to the Des Moines Chamber of Commerce's conference in Washington.

"He's clearly someone who has a rising national profile," said Joe Murphy of the Greater Des Moines Partnership, one of about 200 who saw Cotton's speech. "He's extremely well versed in many different issues."

Besides being a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, which is investigating Trump's campaign and Russia, Cotton is part of the Senate Republican working group charged with writing health care legislation, now that the GOP-controlled House has passed legislation undoing broad portions of the 2010 Affordable Care Act.

Hawaii-bound passengers noticed unruly man before take-off

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER and MICHAEL BALSAMO, Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — After landing in Honolulu on a flight from Los Angeles, passengers described a mid-air disruption involving an unruly man whose attempts to get to the front of the jetliner prompted flight attendants and passengers to subdue him. and fighter jets to escort the plane.

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Passengers noticed him before the plane even took off.

Mark and Donna Basden were among the first to board the plane Friday and found a laptop in the seat pocket of Mark Basden. The Albuquerque, New Mexico, couple assumed it was from the previous flight.

A flight attendant said it must belong to a man in the bathroom.

Then a "disheveled looking fellow" walked out, Donna Basden said.

Mark Basden handed the man the laptop, telling him it had been in his seat. He said the man scowled at him, took the laptop, opened it and closed it and then tried to sit in another seat in first class.

Donna Basden said the man "clearly looked out of place," but he didn't say anything. The flight attendant asked to see his boarding pass, then when she looked at it she told him he was in row 35 and sent him to the back of the plane.

About halfway through the six-hour flight, the Basdens saw the same man, holding his laptop, with something over his head, which they thought was a towel or a blanket.

The man, identified by law enforcement officials as Anil Uskanil, 25, of Turkey, was duct-taped to his seat until the plane landed in Honolulu and federal agents arrested him, passenger Lee Lorenzen said.

The trouble with Uskanil actually began about eight hours before the flight departed. He was arrested before dawn at Los Angeles International Airport for opening a door that led onto an airfield ramp, according to Los Angeles Airport Police, who provided Uskanil's identity to The Associated Press.

Police say Uskanil had been drinking but didn't meet the criteria for public drunkenness. He was arrested on suspicion of misdemeanor trespassing, given a date to appear in court and allowed to take the flight to Honolulu.

Passenger Grant Arakelian said, "He was very quiet, moving very sluggish. He was trying to approach the cabin, like where the captain is."

Lorenzen and his wife Penny Lorenzen, of Orange County, California, were sitting in first class and saw a "really serious look" on the flight attendant's face.

The flight attendant ran down the aisle with her serving cart and blocked the doorway separating first class from the rest of the plane.

"She jammed the cart in that the doorway and she just said, 'You're not coming in here,'" Lee Lorenzen said.

He said the man was pushing against the cart, trying to get through. At that point, passengers came up from behind and grabbed him. He was restrained in his seat with duct tape for the rest of the flight.

"He didn't really fight or anything," said Arakelian, a student at the University of Southern California.

"It caused worry on the plane, more curiosity than fear I would say because he wasn't acting irrationally but you could tell something was kind off about him as well," he said. "Once they took him to the back we never heard anything else about it."

American Airlines Flight 31 had 181 passengers and six crew members aboard, said airline spokeswoman Katie Cody, who did not provide details on the incident.

Uskanil having a laptop with him may have caused more concern than usual, with U.S. and European officials in recent weeks exchanging threats about aviation believed to include bombs hidden in laptop computers. Laptops have been banned on a handful of international flights, and could soon be outlawed on far more.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly was briefed on the disturbance, according to a statement from the department. There are no other reports of disruptions, but the department said it is monitoring all flights Friday out of caution.

As Uskanil was subdued, the cockpit called for help. Federal agents were sent to wait for the flight's arrival and two F-22 Raptors from the Hawaii Air National Guard scrambled to escort the plane.

"We got that military escort coming into Honolulu," Donna Basden said with a laugh, "so welcome to Hawaii."

Balsamo reported from Los Angeles. Associated Press writers Andrew Dalton in Los Angeles and Audrey McAvoy in Honolulu contributed to the story, and AP Airlines Writer David Koenig contributed from Dallas.

Report: Trump says firing 'nut job' Comey took off pressure

By ERICA WERNER and EILEEN SULLIVAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump told Russian diplomats last week his firing of “nut job” James Comey had eased the pressure on him, even as the FBI’s Trump-Russia investigation had moved into the White House, according to reports Friday that pursued the president as he began his maiden foreign trip.

White House hopes that Trump could leave scandalous allegations at home were crushed in a one-two punch of revelations that landed shortly after his departure. A Washington Post report, citing anonymous sources familiar with the matter, said a senior Trump adviser is now considered a “person of interest” in the law enforcement investigation into whether Trump’s campaign associates coordinated with Russia in an effort to sway the 2016 election.

And The New York Times reported that the president had told Russian officials he felt the dismissal of his FBI director had relieved “great pressure” on him. The White House has said the firing was unrelated to the FBI’s Russia investigation.

Late Friday, the Senate intelligence committee announced that Comey had agreed to testify at an open hearing at an undetermined date after Memorial Day.

Comey will certainly be asked about encounters that precipitated his firing, including a January dinner in which, Comey has told associates, Trump asked for his loyalty. In the Oval Office weeks later, Comey told associates, the president asked him to shut down an investigation into former national security adviser Michael Flynn.

Comey is known to produce memos documenting especially sensitive or unsettling encounters, such as after the February meeting.

Comey turned down an invitation to testify before the Senate Judiciary Committee.

The new headlines were a fresh indication that Trump would not be able to change the subject from what appears to be an intensifying investigation reaching toward the president and his inner circle.

The White House repeated its assertion that a “thorough investigation will confirm that there was no collusion between the campaign and any foreign entity.”

It did not deny the Times report that Trump was critical of Comey to the Russians the day after he fired him.

The Times reported Trump noted the Russia investigation as he told Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Ambassador to the U.S. Sergey Kislyak of his decision to fire Comey.

“I just fired the head of the FBI. He was crazy, a real nut job,” the Times reported that Trump said during the May 10 meeting. “I faced great pressure because of Russia. That’s taken off.”

White House spokesman Sean Spicer called the president’s rhetoric part of his deal-making.

“By grandstanding and politicizing the investigation into Russia’s actions, James Comey created unnecessary pressure on our ability to engage and negotiate with Russia,” Spicer said. “The investigation would have always continued, and obviously the termination of Comey would not have ended it. Once again, the real story is that our national security has been undermined by the leaking of private and highly classified conversations.”

As for the separate report of a “person of interest” under investigation, the Post said the senior White House adviser “under scrutiny” is someone close to the president but did not name the person.

Among Trump’s senior White House advisers are several former campaign officials, including his son-in-law Jared Kushner, Steve Bannon, Stephen Miller and Kellyanne Conway. In March, Kushner volunteered to answer lawmakers’ questions about meetings he had with Russian officials during the transition.

A spokeswoman for House Speaker Paul Ryan said he would not discuss information provided in classified briefings and said the House Oversight committee had already asked for documents related to Comey’s firing.

Earlier this week, the Justice Department appointed former FBI Director Robert Mueller to take over the federal investigation in an effort to re-establish independence from the White House.

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Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein told Congress Friday he stands by a memo he wrote bluntly criticizing Comey. But he made clear it was not his intention for Trump or other White House officials to use the document to justify firing Comey, which is what they have done.

In closed-door meetings with lawmakers on Thursday and Friday, Rosenstein said he wrote the memo after Trump told him one day before the May 9 firing that he wanted to dismiss Comey. Rosenstein said that though he was personally fond of Comey, "I thought it was appropriate to seek a new leader."

The Justice Department on Friday released the text of Rosenstein's opening remarks for the briefings on Capitol Hill.

Trump has said he plans to nominate a new FBI director soon, but there was no announcement Friday.

The appointment of Mueller as special counsel has drawn generally favorable comments from Democrats and from some Republicans as well. But lawmakers at both congressional sessions expressed frustration that Rosenstein would say little in answer to their questions about his actions — or others' — before Comey's firing.

"There was considerable frustration in the room," said Rep. Seth Moulton, D-Mass., a member of the Armed Services Committee. "This renewed my confidence that we should not have confidence in this administration. I don't think (Rosenstein) did a lot to bolster our confidence in him today."

The White House has struggled since Comey's firing to explain the chain of events that led to it and the Justice Department's involvement in that decision. Trump has insisted at times that the decision was his alone, but he also has pointed to the "very strong" recommendation from Rosenstein.

Rosenstein made it clear to the lawmakers that he drafted his memo only after Trump told him of his plans to dismiss the FBI director. "My memorandum is not a statement of reasons to justify a for-cause termination," he said. But he added, "I wrote it. I believe it. I stand by it."

The memo focused on Comey's handling of the Hillary Clinton email investigation, particularly the FBI director's decision to divulge details to the public at various junctures during her presidential campaign against Trump. Rosenstein denounced that decision as "profoundly wrong and unfair."

Trump has reacted furiously to the appointment of a special counsel, a prosecutor with wide authority to investigate Russia's interference and other potential crimes uncovered. However, at a combative news conference Thursday, he fell short in trying to resolve questions about investigations into his campaign and his first four months in office.

Asked point-blank if he'd done anything that might merit prosecution or even impeachment, Trump said no — and then added of the lingering allegations and questions: "I think it's totally ridiculous. Everybody thinks so."

Associated Press writers Matthew Daly, Richard Lardner, Stephen Ohlemacher, Andrew Taylor, Kevin Freking, Mary Clare Jalonick, Eric Tucker and Deb Riechmann contributed to this report.

In draft of speech, Trump using softer language about Islam

By VIVIAN SALAMA and JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump will use his first visit to the Middle East to call for unity in the fight against radicalism in the Muslim world, casting the challenge as a "battle between good and evil" and urging Arab leaders to "drive out the terrorists from your places of worship," according to a draft of the speech obtained by The Associated Press.

Abandoning some of the harsh anti-Muslim rhetoric of his presidential campaign, the draft of the speech, slated to be delivered in Saudi Arabia on Sunday, envisions new partnerships with America's traditional allies in the Middle East. It notably refrains from mentioning democracy and human rights — topics Arab leaders often view as U.S. moralizing — in favor of the more limited goals of peace and stability.

"We are not here to lecture — to tell other peoples how to live, what to do or who to be. We are here instead to offer partnership in building a better future for us all," the document said.

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Trump left Washington Friday afternoon for Riyadh, the first stop on his maiden trip overseas trip as president. The marathon trip will also take him to Israel, the Vatican, Belgium and Italy. The trip is a key test of the president's diplomatic skills and a chance to add substance to a foreign policy he has described broadly as "America First."

Two different sources provided the AP with copies of the draft of his remarks, billed as a marquee speech of the trip. One version, obtained late Thursday, included edits with comments from an administration official, indicating it was still a work in progress.

The White House confirmed the draft was authentic, but cautioned the president had not yet signed off on the final product.

"The president has not seen this draft," White House spokesman Sean Spicer said. "This is one of five drafts that have been written by various people. He continues to take input and is writing a final version."

Trump's campaign was marked by his anti-Islamic rhetoric and his administration has twice tried to impose a travel ban on several Muslim-majority countries. "I think Islam hates us," he said at one point.

The draft of the speech includes no mention of "radical Islamic terrorism" — a phrase that candidate Trump regularly criticized opponent Hillary Clinton and President Barack Obama for shying away from. His speech calls terrorism a widespread problem plaguing everyone who loves peace.

He positions himself as an "emissary for the American people, to deliver a message of friendship and hope," according to the draft.

"This is not a battle between different faiths, different sects or different civilizations. This is a battle between those who seek to obliterate human life and those who seek to protect it," the text reads. "This is a battle between good and evil."

Trump may seem an unlikely messenger to deliver an olive branch to the Muslim world.

Only a week after taking office, he signed an executive order to ban immigrants from seven countries — Iraq, Iran, Syria, Sudan, Libya, Somalia, and Yemen — from entering the United States, a decision that sparked widespread protests at the nation's airports and demonstrations outside the White House. That ban was blocked in federal court, prompting the administration to sign a second one.

The second version, which dropped Iraq from the list, is also blocked in court, though Trump has said the measure is needed for the nation's security. As a campaigner, he called for a "total and complete shutdown" of the entry of Muslims to the United States "until our country's representatives can figure out what the hell is going on," insisting that a sizable segment of the Muslim population has "great hatred toward Americans."

His Saudi speech is aimed at the nations represented at an Arab and Muslim leaders' summit.

Trump intends to condemn Syria's President Bashar Assad for committing "unspeakable crimes against humanity" and Iran for contributing to spiraling violence in Syria.

"All nations of conscience in the Middle East must work together to roll back Iran's destabilizing influence, restore a more stable balance of power in the region, and pray for the day when the Iranian people have the just and responsible government they deserve," the draft reads.

Iran and Syria were not invited to the summit, and they are not part of a regional military alliance that Saudi Arabia is establishing to fight terrorism. The kingdom backs efforts to topple the Syrian government, which counts Iran and Russia as its closest allies.

White House officials have said they consider Trump's visit, and his keynote address, a counterweight to President Obama's debut speech to the Muslim world in 2009 in Cairo.

Obama called for understanding and acknowledged some of America's missteps in the region. That speech was denounced by many Republicans and criticized by a number of the United States' Middle East allies, including Israel, as being a sort of apology. Obama aides have continued to defend it.

Administration officials believe Trump's decision to begin his trip in Saudi Arabia sends a powerful message to the kingdom: the strained ties that marked U.S.-Saudi relations under Obama are over.

Unlike the Obama administration, which distanced itself from authoritarian leaders and took a moral stance against the human rights violations that in many cases fueled resentment and extremism, Trump

is focusing on deal-making. Only in the case of Iran does his speech advocate for the “longest-suffering” people who are subject “to their leaders’ reckless attempts to dominate their neighbors.”

By contrast, Trump hails America’s friendship with Saudi Arabia, which “stretches back many decades, and covers numerous dimensions.” It is a markedly different message from his campaign tweet that said “Saudi Arabia and many of the countries that gave vast amounts of money to the Clinton Foundation want women as slaves and to kill gays.”

Lemire reported from New York. AP Diplomatic Writer Matthew Lee contributed to this report.

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

In New Orleans, Confederate monuments are gone _ Lee last

By JANET MCCONNAUGHEY and REBECCA SANTANA, Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — They were among the city’s oldest landmarks, as cemented to the landscape of New Orleans as the Superdome and St. Louis Cathedral: a stone obelisk heralding white supremacy and three statues of Confederate stalwarts.

But after decades standing sentinel over this Southern city, the Confederate monuments are gone, amid a controversy that at times hearkened back to the divisiveness of the Civil War they commemorated.

The last of the monuments — a statue of Gen. Robert E. Lee facing defiantly north with his arms crossed — was lifted by a crane from its pedestal late Friday. As air was seen between Lee’s statue and the pedestal below it, a cheer went out from the crowd who recorded the history with their phones and shook hands with each other in congratulations. Many in the crowd had waited since morning.

“I never thought I would see this day!” shouted Melanie Morel-Ensminger with joy. “But look! It’s happening.”

Lee’s was the last of four monuments to Confederate-era figures to be removed under a 2015 City Council vote on a proposal by Mayor Mitch Landrieu. It caps a nearly two-year-long process that has been railed against by those who feel the monuments are a part of Southern heritage and honor the dead. But removal of the monuments has drawn praise from those who saw them as brutal reminders of slavery and symbols of the historic oppression of black people.

Landrieu called for the monuments’ removal in the lingering emotional aftermath of the 2015 massacre of nine black parishioners at a South Carolina church. The killer, Dylann Roof, was an avowed racist who brandished Confederate battle flags in photos, recharging the debate over whether Confederate emblems represent racism or an honorable heritage.

While Roof’s actions spurred a debate in many parts of the South about whether it was appropriate to fly the Confederate battle emblem — and many places have taken it down — the reaction in New Orleans seemed to go even further, knocking away at even weightier, heavier parts of history.

Landrieu drew blistering criticism from monument supporters and even some political allies. But in explaining his reasoning, the mayor has repeatedly said they do not represent the diversity and future of New Orleans.

“These statues are not just stone and metal. They are not just innocent remembrances of a benign history. These monuments celebrate a fictional, sanitized Confederacy; ignoring the death, ignoring the enslavement, ignoring the terror that it actually stood for,” he said Friday.

“After the Civil War, these statues were a part of that terrorism, as much as burning a cross on someone’s lawn. They were erected purposefully to send a strong message to all who walked in their shadows about who was still in charge in this city,” he added.

Of the four monuments, Lee’s was easily the most prominent: The bronze statue alone is close to 20 feet (6 meters) tall. It’s a bronze sculpture of Lee looking toward the northern horizon from atop a roughly 60-foot-tall column.

It’s not massive like the Superdome or alluring like Bourbon Street, but Lee in his uniform was a familiar

landmark for tourists and commuters alike.

Lee's removal was planned during the day, and announced in advance. Earlier removals happened after nightfall, a precautionary measure due to security concerns for contractors and workers involved in the effort. Landrieu said the change was out of safety concerns because the statue was close to electrical wires and New Orleans' famous streetcar lines.

The atmosphere Friday was almost festive as dozens of people, some with lawn chairs, came out to see what many called history in the making.

"If you can see history as it happens, it's more meaningful," said Al Kennedy, who supported the removal. Speaking of the Confederate past, he said: "It's my history, but it's not my heritage."

But others criticized the move.

"Mayor Landrieu and the City Council have stripped New Orleans of nationally recognized historic landmarks," said the Monumental Task Committee, an organization that maintains monuments and plaques across the city. "With the removal of four of our century-plus aged landmarks, at 299 years old, New Orleans now heads in to our Tricentennial more divided and less historic."

The city turns 300 in 2018.

In 2015, the City Council voted 6-1 to remove the monuments after a succession of contentious public meetings. Contractors involved in the removal process have been threatened; statue supporters sued repeatedly to keep the statues up.

At last, a court decision cleared the way for the April removal of what is likely the most controversial of the monuments — seen as an overt tribute to white supremacy. Statues to the Confederacy's only president Jefferson Davis and Gen. P.G.T. Beauregard followed in quick succession until only Lee was left.

Attention now shifts to where the monuments will go and what will take their place.

The city announced an outline of its plans late Thursday. It said it has received offers from public and private institutions to take individual monuments, so it will solicit proposals on where they will go through an "open and transparent selection." Only nonprofits and government entities will be allowed to take part, and the city said the process will not include the Beauregard statue because of legal issues.

The city said those taking the statues cannot display them outdoors on public property in New Orleans.

The city plans to leave the column at Lee's Circle intact and will mount public art in its place.

An American flag will stand where the Davis statue used to be, and the area where the Liberty Place monument used to stand "will remain as is." The City Park Improvement Association, civic groups and the city will decide what will go where the Beauregard statue once stood.

The city wants to finish the work during its tricentennial year.

Associated Press writers Kevin McGill in New Orleans and Jesse J. Holland in Washington contributed to this report.

Teen charged in death says 19-year-old shot Mississippi boy

By JEFF AMY, Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — A Mississippi teenager charged with murder in the death of a 6-year-old told investigators that the boy was actually shot by another of the three teen suspects, according to an investigator's sworn statement.

The Associated Press obtained the sworn statement Friday from a source with knowledge of the case involving the death of Kingston Frazier. The boy was found shot to death at the side of a dead-end road inside his mother's abandoned car, hours after someone stole the Toyota Camry from a supermarket parking lot.

Mississippi Bureau of Investigation Special Agent Rusty Clark said in the sworn statement filed in connection with the case that 17-year-old Dwan Wakefield of Ridgeland told Clark and another investigator 19-year-old Byron McBride of Pickens was at fault.

"During this interview, Wakefield implicated Byron McBride as the person who actually stole the vehicle

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and shot and killed Frazier," Clark's statement said.

When asked for further comment, MBI spokesman Warren Strain declined, saying "the court document speaks for itself."

Wakefield, McBride and 17-year-old D'Allen Washington of Ridgeland are being held without bail in Madison County, just north of Jackson, awaiting Monday morning court appearances. It's unclear if any of the three have lawyers.

Though all three are charged with capital murder, only McBride could face the death penalty. The U.S. Supreme Court outlawed the death penalty for crimes committed by people younger than 18 in 2005.

Madison County Coroner Alex Breeland said Kingston was shot multiple times. District Attorney Michael Guest said authorities are still looking for the gun used to kill Kingston but are confident they have enough evidence against the three teen suspects to proceed without it.

"I do not believe that it is anything other than a crime of opportunity," Guest said, saying there was no evidence of any deeper plot besides stealing a car that Ebony Archie left running with her child inside. He said he didn't believe anyone else was involved.

Security video shows that after Archie left her car about 1 a.m., another car drove up and a man got out and then drove off in her Camry. Frazier was in the back seat.

Archie's family members told local news media Friday that she had picked up her son from his grandmother after going out with friends to celebrate her birthday and was going into the Jackson supermarket to buy party supplies to celebrate Kingston's kindergarten graduation, which was scheduled Friday.

"She feels guilty for the fact that she decided to go inside the store and leave the car running when she went inside the store," David Archie, Ebony Archie's uncle, told WLBT-TV.

The car was found eight hours later, abandoned in a muddy ditch about 15 miles (20 kilometers) north of Jackson in Gluckstadt. People continued to stream to the site Friday afternoon, with some leaving small memorials. One note said "Kingston R.I.P. Sweet angel fly high. You are loved and will be missed. Prayers for your family."

Guest wouldn't say if any of the men have confessed, but Clark's statement made clear that at least Wakefield has talked to investigators. Guest said investigators are gathering surveillance video from near where the car was abandoned, as well as seeking mobile phone evidence that could indicate the whereabouts of the suspects.

Breeland said an autopsy was completed and the boy's body was released to a funeral home. However, no funeral arrangements had been scheduled as of Friday afternoon.

Guest said Washington is currently under indictment for armed robbery in Madison County. Court records the other two men have no criminal history as adults.

Follow Jeff Amy at: <http://twitter.com/jeffamy>. Read his work at https://www.apnews.com/search/Jeff_Amy.

This story has been corrected to show only 19-year-old Byron McBride could face the death penalty.

Associated Press photographer Rogelio Solis contributed to this report from Gluckstadt, Mississippi.

Report: FBI probe moves into White House

By ERICA WERNER and EILEEN SULLIVAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump told Russian diplomats last week his firing of "nut job" James Comey had eased the pressure on him, even as the FBI's Trump-Russia investigation had moved into the White House, according to reports Friday that pursued the president as he began his maiden foreign trip.

White House hopes that Trump could leave scandalous allegations at home were crushed in a one-two punch of revelations that landed shortly after his departure. A Washington Post report, citing anonymous sources familiar with the matter, said a senior Trump adviser is now considered a "person of interest" in

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the law enforcement investigation into whether Trump's campaign associates coordinated with Russia in an effort to sway the 2016 election.

And The New York Times reported that the president had told Russian officials he felt the dismissal of his FBI director had relieved "great pressure" on him. The White House has said the firing was unrelated to the FBI's Russia investigation.

Late Friday, the Senate intelligence committee announced that Comey had agreed to testify at an open hearing at an undetermined date after Memorial Day.

Comey will certainly be asked about encounters that precipitated his firing, including a January dinner in which, Comey has told associates, Trump asked for his loyalty. In the Oval Office weeks later, Comey told associates, the president asked him to shut down an investigation into former national security adviser Michael Flynn.

Comey is known to produce memos documenting especially sensitive or unsettling encounters, such as after the February meeting.

Comey turned down an invitation to testify before the Senate Judiciary Committee.

The new headlines were a fresh indication that Trump would not be able to change the subject from what appears to be an intensifying investigation reaching toward the president and his inner circle.

The White House repeated its assertion that a "thorough investigation will confirm that there was no collusion between the campaign and any foreign entity."

It did not deny the Times report that Trump was critical of Comey to the Russians the day after he fired him.

The Times reported Trump noted the Russia investigation as he told Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Ambassador to the U.S. Sergey Kislyak of his decision to fire Comey.

"I just fired the head of the FBI. He was crazy, a real nut job," the Times reported that Trump said during the May 10 meeting. "I faced great pressure because of Russia. That's taken off."

White House spokesman Sean Spicer called the president's rhetoric part of his deal-making.

"By grandstanding and politicizing the investigation into Russia's actions, James Comey created unnecessary pressure on our ability to engage and negotiate with Russia," Spicer said. "The investigation would have always continued, and obviously the termination of Comey would not have ended it. Once again, the real story is that our national security has been undermined by the leaking of private and highly classified conversations."

As for the separate report of a "person of interest" under investigation, the Post said the senior White House adviser "under scrutiny" is someone close to the president but did not name the person.

Among Trump's senior White House advisers are several former campaign officials, including his son-in-law Jared Kushner, Steve Bannon, Stephen Miller and Kellyanne Conway. In March, Kushner volunteered to answer lawmakers' questions about meetings he had with Russian officials during the transition.

A spokeswoman for House Speaker Paul Ryan said he would not discuss information provided in classified briefings and said the House Oversight committee had already asked for documents related to Comey's firing.

Earlier this week, the Justice Department appointed former FBI Director Robert Mueller to take over the federal investigation in an effort to re-establish independence from the White House.

Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein told Congress Friday he stands by a memo he wrote bluntly criticizing Comey. But he made clear it was not his intention for Trump or other White House officials to use the document to justify firing Comey, which is what they have done.

In closed-door meetings with lawmakers on Thursday and Friday, Rosenstein said he wrote the memo after Trump told him one day before the May 9 firing that he wanted to dismiss Comey. Rosenstein said that though he was personally fond of Comey, "I thought it was appropriate to seek a new leader."

The Justice Department on Friday released the text of Rosenstein's opening remarks for the briefings on Capitol Hill.

Trump has said he plans to nominate a new FBI director soon, but there was no announcement Friday.

The appointment of Mueller as special counsel has drawn generally favorable comments from Democrats

and from some Republicans as well. But lawmakers at both congressional sessions expressed frustration that Rosenstein would say little in answer to their questions about his actions — or others' — before Comey's firing.

"There was considerable frustration in the room," said Rep. Seth Moulton, D-Mass., a member of the Armed Services Committee. "This renewed my confidence that we should not have confidence in this administration. I don't think (Rosenstein) did a lot to bolster our confidence in him today."

The White House has struggled since Comey's firing to explain the chain of events that led to it and the Justice Department's involvement in that decision. Trump has insisted at times that the decision was his alone, but he also has pointed to the "very strong" recommendation from Rosenstein.

Rosenstein made it clear to the lawmakers that he drafted his memo only after Trump told him of his plans to dismiss the FBI director. "My memorandum is not a statement of reasons to justify a for-cause termination," he said. But he added, "I wrote it. I believe it. I stand by it."

The memo focused on Comey's handling of the Hillary Clinton email investigation, particularly the FBI director's decision to divulge details to the public at various junctures during her presidential campaign against Trump. Rosenstein denounced that decision as "profoundly wrong and unfair."

Trump has reacted furiously to the appointment of a special counsel, a prosecutor with wide authority to investigate Russia's interference and other potential crimes uncovered. However, at a combative news conference Thursday, he fell short in trying to resolve questions about investigations into his campaign and his first four months in office.

Asked point-blank if he'd done anything that might merit prosecution or even impeachment, Trump said no — and then added of the lingering allegations and questions: "I think it's totally ridiculous. Everybody thinks so."

Associated Press writers Matthew Daly, Richard Lardner, Stephen Ohlemacher, Andrew Taylor, Kevin Freking, Mary Clare Jalonick, Eric Tucker and Deb Riechmann contributed to this report.

Tulsa officer acquitted in man's death returning to force

By JUSTIN JUOZAPAVICIUS, Associated Press

TULSA, Okla. (AP) — A white Oklahoma police officer acquitted in an unarmed black man's shooting death will be back on the force next week, even as jurors who declared her not guilty of manslaughter unanimously agreed she should never return to patrol.

Tulsa police Chief Chuck Jordan issued a one-sentence statement Friday in which he said Betty Jo Shelby is reinstated. It comes a day after black community leaders rallied, urging city leaders to block the 43-year-old officer from getting back her job. She had been on unpaid leave since Sept. 22 when she was charged in the death.

Some leaders were taken aback by Shelby's quick reinstatement.

"The decision today was obviously a slap in the face, and I think that's how a lot of the black community feels," said Anthony Scott, pastor at First Baptist Church North Tulsa. "It's like pouring salt on a wound."

Shelby's attorneys said she'll rejoin the force Monday, but in limited capacity. The 10-year law enforcement veteran is barred from street patrol while an internal affairs investigation into the Sept. 16 shooting of 40-year-old Terence Crutcher plays out.

Shortly before the announcement of Shelby's reinstatement, the foreman of the jury that acquitted her Wednesday said in a court filing that if Shelby had thought to use her stun gun before Crutcher reached his stalled sport utility vehicle, the decision "could have saved his life."

"Many on the jury could never get comfortable with the concept of Betty Shelby being blameless for Mr. Crutcher's death," the foreman wrote. The jurors didn't identify themselves in the memo filed in court.

Another member of the jury told local news site The Frontier that various jurors thought Shelby could work a desk job or perhaps be another type of emergency responder — just not an officer on street patrol.

"I don't think she's a bad person," he told the publication, speaking on condition of anonymity because

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jurors didn't want to be associated with the highly charged case. "She just shouldn't be a cop."

The jury of eight women and four men, including three blacks, deliberated for about nine hours before reaching its verdict late Wednesday, prompting about 100 residents gathered outside the courthouse to protest the outcome.

Shelby's attorney, Shannon McMurray, acknowledged Friday that Shelby could have deployed her stun gun instead of a firearm, but said the officer had to make a "split-second" decision because she thought Crutcher was armed. No weapon was found.

"Could she have used a Taser? Yes. Might she be dead? Yes," McMurray said. "It's a classic law school exam: All the answers are right, but which ones are the most right?"

Shelby's police partner, Tyler Turnbough, deployed his stun gun at the same time she fired her handgun. Turnbough told a national police aid group last month that Shelby had no way of knowing what Crutcher was reaching for and that "to take a chance could be deadly."

A spokesman for the Crutcher family didn't return calls seeking comment on Shelby's reinstatement.

McMurray said Shelby's return to the force means "she's getting the due process she wasn't afforded when (prosecutors) jumped the gun and charged her."

Tulsa County District Attorney Steve Kunzweiler, who filed the first-degree manslaughter charge six days after the shooting, declined to comment Friday.

Crutcher was shot after Shelby approached him in a city street where his SUV had broken down.

Shelby had said she fired her weapon out of fear because Crutcher ignored her commands to lie down and kept reaching into his pockets.

But prosecutors said she overreacted, arguing that Crutcher had his hands in the air and wasn't combative — part of which was confirmed by police video that showed him walking away from Shelby with his hands above his head.

Crutcher's family said the verdict was a setback to racial harmony in Tulsa. They said the acquittal shows a larger failure of the legal system — and by extension society — to recognize the value of a black man's life. Their heartbreak echoed that of families across the U.S. following a spate of killings of blacks that has fueled a national debate over race and policing.

"The wedge that existed (Wednesday) has become the mountain range that we must climb today," said Anthony R. Douglas, the NAACP's Oklahoma chapter president.

About 16 percent of Tulsa's roughly 400,000 residents are black. Racial disparities in mostly black north Tulsa include neighborhoods without a real grocery store and a ZIP code where a black baby has 10 years less life expectancy than a white baby. One swath has yet to recover economically from a 1921 race riot where hundreds of black residents were killed and homes and businesses were burned.

Brazil's top prosecutor accuses Temer of obstructing justice

By PETER PRENGAMAN and MAURICIO SAVARESE, Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Brazil's top prosecutor is accusing President Michel Temer of corruption and obstruction of justice, according to an investigation released Friday by the supreme court, dramatically escalating pressure to force the embattled leader from office.

At the same time, other released documents said the owner of a major meatpacker has told prosecutors that he transferred \$150 million to offshore accounts for the campaigns of Temer's two predecessors in the presidency.

Attorney General Rodrigo Janot's charges against Temer threaten to drive him from the presidency and represent an extraordinary development in a corruption probe that is upending politics and just about everything else in Latin America's largest nation.

For Temer, a 76-year-old career politician who was not elected, the fallout could cost him his job. Temer, then vice president, took power a year ago after President Dilma Rousseff was impeached and later removed from office for illegally managing the federal budget.

By Friday afternoon, O Globo, the flagship paper of Brazil's largest media company, was calling for Te-

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mer's resignation, delivering a significant blow to Temer's prospects for survival. The media group had supported Temer's proposed economic overhaul, and more generally wields enormous influence because of its popular soap operas and media dominance.

The attorney general's formal presentation of evidence is the latest revelation related to a secretly recorded audio that purportedly captured Temer endorsing the paying of hush money to an ex-lawmaker now serving a 15-year prison sentence for corruption. The audio was first reported by O Globo on Wednesday night and has been rocking the country ever since.

In a plea bargain that was part of the documents released Friday by the Supreme Federal Tribunal, the same man who reportedly recorded the president also says he paid \$1.5 million in bribes to Temer.

Janot says Temer and Sen. Aécio Neves have tried to derail the three-year-old "Car Wash" investigation into a huge kickback scheme at the state-run oil company Petrobras via legislative means and by influencing police investigators.

"In this way, there is evidence of possibly committing the crime of obstructing justice," Janot wrote.

Because the case involves a sitting president, the process is different than in any other kind of criminal case. With a formal investigation now opened, Janot's next step will be to decide whether his case is strong enough to send it for consideration by the lower Chamber of Deputies in Congress.

If at least two-thirds of the members of the lower house voted in favor, the case would be sent back to the top court, which would then decide whether to put Temer on trial. If the court decided to try Temer, he would be suspended from office for up to 180 days. A conviction would permanently remove him from office.

At least eight pieces of proposed legislation to impeach Temer have been submitted in Congress, and a stream of people from many walks of life has been calling for him to step down.

On Friday, former Chief Justice Joaquim Barbosa added his voice.

"There is not another way out: Brazilians must organize, go to the streets and demand with strength the immediate resignation of Michel Temer," Barbosa Tweeted.

Temer's administration began questioning both the legality and content of the recording first reported by O Globo.

"President Michel Temer does not believe in the veracity of the declarations" in the recording, according to a statement from his office.

The statement also noted that the person who made the recording, JBS meat-packing company executive Joesley Batista, is under investigation himself and thus was "taking advantage" of the situation. The recording was turned over to prosecutors as part of a Batista plea bargain.

In the documents released Friday, Batista also said his company paid Temer about \$1.5 million from 2010 to 2017. Some of those funds were disguised as legal campaign donations and others were channeled to Temer's public image consultant Elsinho Mouco, Batista said.

Attempts to locate Mouco for comment were not successful. The presidency also didn't immediately respond to queries seeking comment about the latest revelations.

In Batista's plea bargain, he also told authorities that he transferred \$150 million to offshore bank accounts for campaigns of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and his successor in the presidency, Dilma Rousseff.

Batista said former finance minister Guido Mantega was the middle man in the operation. He also said both former presidents were aware of the transfers, but did not say where the accounts were based. Batista also didn't say for which campaigns the money was transferred.

Rousseff denied the accusations in a statement and said she never had offshore bank accounts. Silva's spokesman said Batista's accusations are hearsay that was never investigated.

For Silva, president between 2003 and 2010, the accusations add to a long list of corruption cases against him, which may ultimately keep him from running for the presidency in 2018.

The sprawling "Car Wash" probe has already put dozens of Brazil's top businessmen and politicians in prison. Many more are being investigated.

After the O Globo report on Temer, Brazil's highest court opened an investigation into the accusation

late Thursday and lifted the seal on the nearly 39-minute recording, which is scratchy and often inaudible. In it, two men can be heard talking about former Lower House Speaker Eduardo Cunha, now serving a 15-year prison sentence for corruption and money laundering. Globo's report identified the men as Temer and Batista.

One man, apparently Temer, complains that Cunha could potentially embarrass him.

"Within my limits, I did the most I could there. I settled everything," responds the other man, apparently Batista. "He came and collected, etc., etc., etc. I am good with Eduardo, OK?"

The first man then says: "You have to keep that up, see?" To which the second man responds: "Every month."

In a national address Thursday, Temer emphatically denied that he had authorized any bribes and defiantly vowed to continue in office.

His short speech did little to calm nerves during a volatile day that saw a 10 percent drop in Brazil's stock market and an 8 percent drop in the real against the U.S. dollar. By late Friday, the real had risen 3 percent and stocks were up nearly 2 percent in the Ibovespa exchange.

Peter Prengaman on Twitter: twitter.com/peterprengaman
Mauricio Savarese on Twitter: twitter.com/MSavarese

Weiner pleads guilty in sexting case, could go to prison

By LARRY NEUMEISTER and TOM HAYS, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Former U.S. Rep. Anthony Weiner, whose penchant for sexting strangers ended his political career and sparked a probe that upended the presidential race, pleaded guilty Friday to a sex charge, tearfully apologizing for communications with a 15-year-old girl that he said destroyed his "life's dream in public service."

Weiner, who could go to prison, pleaded guilty to a single count of transmitting obscene material to a minor. He admitted exchanging online messages with the girl beginning in January 2015 and "sharing explicit images and encouraging her to engage in sexually explicit conduct."

"I have a sickness, but I do not have an excuse," he said.

In court, the 52-year-old former Democratic congressman paused repeatedly as he fought back tears and tried to compose himself. He said he knew the texting was "as morally wrong as it was unlawful."

Pleading to the charge, which requires him to register as a sex offender, could bring a sentence of up to 10 years. But Weiner is likely to serve much less time if he is sentenced to prison.

In a plea agreement with prosecutors, he agreed not to appeal any sentence between 21 and 27 months in prison. His lawyer can request leniency at a sentencing scheduled for Sept. 8.

In a written plea agreement, prosecutors said aggravating factors such as the age of the victim would have called for a prison sentence of up to 14 years under sentencing guidelines were it not for the plea bargain and a 10-year maximum penalty on the charge.

Wearing his wedding ring and a dark blue suit with a maroon tie, Weiner read from a prepared statement after U.S. District Judge Loretta A. Preska addressed him: "Tell me what you did, sir."

He said he "compulsively sought attention from women who contacted me on social media" beginning with his service in Congress and continuing through the first half of last year.

"I engaged with many of them in both sexual and nonsexual conversation," he said. "These destructive impulses brought great devastation to my family and friends and destroyed my life's dream in public service. Yet I remained in denial even as the world around me fell apart."

Weiner said he began getting mental health treatment in the fall, when he said he "came to grips for the first time with the depths of my sickness." He said he continues to follow the treatment daily.

"I had hit bottom," he said. "Through treatment I found the courage to take a moral inventory of my defects."

Weiner apologized to "everyone I have hurt," including the girl he "mistreated so badly."

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Finished speaking, he wiped his eyes with tissues.

Weiner was already in federal custody ahead of the hearing, which lasted less than half an hour. Afterward, he shook hands with prosecutors, telling them: "Thanks, guys. I appreciate your service."

He then went down the courthouse elevator surrounded by his lawyers and court officers and left the building. He said nothing to reporters. His wife, Huma Abedin, was not in court.

Abedin, a top aide to Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton last year, separated from Weiner in September after revelations he had sent more sexually charged messages online.

That same month, the FBI began investigating Weiner after the North Carolina girl told the news website DailyMail.com that she and Weiner had exchanged lewd messages for several months.

She also accused him of asking her to undress on camera. Phone messages left Friday with the North Carolina girl's father were not immediately returned.

As part of his plea, Weiner agreed to forfeit his iPhone.

In a statement, attorney Arlo Devlin-Brown said his client had "apologized, offered no excuses and made a commitment to make amends." He said the plea agreement reflected a resolution "on terms far less severe than could have been sought" because the circumstances lacked the kind of aggravating factors often present in similar cases. He added that Weiner remains "focused on his recovery."

In a release, acting Manhattan U.S. Attorney Joon Kim called Weiner's conduct "reprehensible," saying he sent sexually explicit images and directions to engage in sexual conduct to a girl he knew was 15.

The investigation led FBI agents to seize his laptop computer, which led to the discovery of a new cache of emails that Clinton had sent to Abedin.

In late October, just days before the election, FBI Director James Comey stunned the country by announcing that his agency was reopening its closed investigation into Clinton's handling of State Department business on a private email server so it could analyze the newly discovered correspondence.

That inquiry was brief. Comey announced shortly before the election that the new emails contained nothing to change his view that Clinton could not be charged with a crime. But Clinton partly blamed her loss to Republican Donald Trump on Comey's announcement.

Weiner, who lives in Manhattan and represented New York in Congress from 1999 to 2011, resigned after revelations that he was sending sexually explicit messages to multiple women.

He ran for New York City mayor in 2013 and was leading several polls until it was revealed he had continued his questionable behavior. His failed mayoral bid was the subject of the documentary "Weiner."

Associated Press Writer Colleen Long contributed to this report.

NAACP president won't be returning as leader

BY JESSE J. HOLLAND, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — NAACP President Cornell William Brooks will not be returning as the leader of the nation's oldest civil rights organization after his contract expires this summer, officials said Friday.

Brooks has been the NAACP's leader since 2014 but will not be kept on past June 30, the end of his current term. NAACP Board Chairman Leon W. Russell and Vice Chair Derrick Johnson will lead the organization until a new president is selected.

Russell and Johnson announced what they described as a "transformational, system-wide refresh and strategic re-envisioning" for the NAACP in a Friday evening conference call with reporters.

"We understand and appreciate the historic model of protest, but at this point in time we believe as an organization we need to retool to become better advocates, better at educating the public, better at involving them in our operation" and better at legislation and litigation, Russell said.

Russell, who was made the Baltimore-based organization's board chairman in February, praised Brooks' leadership and said the NAACP remained at the forefront of civil rights activism in the United States.

"However, modern-day civil rights issues facing the NAACP, like education reform, voting rights and access to affordable health care, still persist and demand our continued action," he said.

A national search for a new leader was expected to begin this summer.

In addition, the NAACP planned to embark on a "listening tour" this summer to solicit input on how the organization should reinvent itself.

Brooks, the NAACP's 18th national president, replaced interim leader Lorraine Miller. Miller had served in that position since Benjamin Jealous ended his five-year tenure in 2013.

Brooks, a minister, is originally from Georgetown, South Carolina. It was not immediately known what his future plans were.

The NAACP found itself battling for attention from black youth with groups like Black Lives Matter, which rose to prominence behind street-level protests after the killings of African-American men and women by police, including 18-year-old Michael Brown at the hands of a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri.

Catherine Flowers, founder of the Alabama Center for Rural Enterprise, an organization that advocates for poor and black people living in rural areas, said she wasn't surprised at the coming change.

"I would like to see more of a grassroots effort" by the NAACP, she said. "Clearly, on a national level we're at a crisis and it calls for a new kind of leadership."

Brooks also has his fans. Ernest L. Johnson Sr., president of the NAACP Louisiana State Conference, invited Brooks to visit Baton Rouge less than a week after a white police officer shot and killed a black man during a struggle outside a convenience store last year. Videos of Alton Sterling's July 5 shooting quickly spread on social media, setting off nightly protests in Louisiana's capital.

Johnson said Brooks met with Sterling's relatives. During a rally outside Baton Rouge's City Hall, he said he was tired of victims of police shootings being treated as "hashtag tragedies" instead of human beings mourned by their families.

"He brought some young energy to this 108-year-old organization," Johnson said. "He's very energetic. Whenever we needed him in the state of Louisiana, he came to Louisiana."

Associated Press writers Corey Williams in Detroit and Michael Kunzelman in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, contributed to this report.

Jesse J. Holland covers race and ethnicity for The Associated Press. Contact him at jholland@ap.org, on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/jessejholland> or on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/jessejholland>.

Family of musician Chris Cornell disputes he killed himself

By MESFIN FEKADU and COREY WILLIAMS, AP Music Writer

DETROIT (AP) — Rock musician Chris Cornell's wife on Friday disputed "inferences" that the rocker killed himself in a Detroit hotel room, saying he may have taken more of an anti-anxiety drug than he was prescribed.

The Wayne County Medical Examiner's Office said Cornell — the lead singer in Soundgarden and Audioslave — hanged himself early Thursday morning after performing at a concert Wednesday night. But Cornell's family said that without toxicology test results completed they don't know what caused his death.

On Friday, an official said the results of a full autopsy and toxicology tests could take days before they are completed and released.

Cornell, 52, was found unresponsive in his hotel room hours after he performed at a Soundgarden concert. According to the Detroit News, a police report says Cornell's bodyguard gave him two prescription pills for anxiety after the concert. The bodyguard later found Cornell on the bathroom floor of his room with an exercise band around his neck, the newspaper reported.

The newspaper said it obtained the police report but doesn't say how.

Vicky Cornell, Cornell's wife, said that when she spoke to her husband after the Detroit show, he told her he may have taken "an extra Ativan or two." According to lawyer Kirk Pasich, the musician had a prescription for the anti-anxiety drug. Ativan, a sedative, has side effects that can include drowsiness and dizziness, according to the National Institutes of Health.

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"Without the results of toxicology tests, we do not know what was going on with Chris — or if any substances contributed to his demise," Pasich said in a statement released to The Associated Press. "Chris, a recovering addict, had a prescription for Ativan and may have taken more Ativan than recommended dosages.

"The family believes that if Chris took his life, he did not know what he was doing, and that drugs or other substances may have affected his actions."

Cornell has battled addiction problems in the past. He told Rolling Stone in a 1994 interview that he started using drugs at age 13, and was kicked out of school at 15.

"I went from being a daily drug user at 13 to having bad drug experiences and quitting drugs by the time I was 14, and then not having any friends until the time I was 16," he said. "There was about two years where I was more or less agoraphobic and didn't deal with anybody, didn't talk to anybody, didn't have any friends at all.

"All the friends that I had were still (messed) up with drugs and were people that I didn't really have anything in common with."

Vicky Cornell said her husband slurred his words when she spoke with him after the Detroit show. She said "he was different," and she contacted security to check on him.

"What happened is inexplicable, and I am hopeful that further medical reports will provide additional details," she said. "I know that he loved our children and he would not hurt them by intentionally taking his own life."

Cornell was a leader of the grunge movement with Seattle-based Soundgarden — with whom he gained critical and commercial acclaim. He also found success outside the band with other projects, including Audioslave, Temple of the Dog, and solo albums. Soundgarden's current tour kicked off in late April and was planned to run through May 27.

Grief-stricken fans left flowers at memorials across Seattle on Thursday for the musician whose forceful, somber songs helped cement the city's place in rock history.

One of the locations where people gathered was the Sound Garden art sculpture at a Seattle park, for which Soundgarden was named.

"It's really sad that he could never find peace in his life," said Chad White, who came to the art display with his young son, Ignatius, to honor Cornell.

The city's Space Needle went dark at 9 p.m. for an hour in tribute to Cornell.

Cornell was born and raised in the city and was part of a close-knit group of artists who formed the foundation of what would become the grunge scene that exploded in the early 1990s, by combining the bombast of early 1970s heavy metal with the aggression and attitude of punk rock.

Fekadu reported from New York City. Associated Press reporter Chris Grygiel in Seattle contributed to this report.

Iranians turn out in large numbers for closely watched vote

By ADAM SCHRECK and NASSER KARIMI, Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Millions of Iranians voted late into the night Friday to decide whether incumbent President Hassan Rouhani deserves another four years in office after securing a landmark nuclear deal, or if the sluggish economy demands a new hard-line leader who could return the country to a more confrontational path with the West.

The Islamic Republic's first presidential election since the 2015 nuclear accord drew surprisingly large numbers of voters to polling stations, with some reporting waiting in line for hours to cast their votes. Election officials extended voting hours at least three times at the more than 63,000 polling places to accommodate the crowds.

Four candidates remain in the race. But for most voters only two mattered, both of them clerics with very different views for the country's future: Rouhani and hard-line law professor and former prosecutor

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Ebrahim Raisi.

Rouhani is a political moderate by Iranian standards, but the 68-year-old has come to embody more liberal and reform-minded Iranians' hopes for greater political freedom at home and better relations with the outside world.

His supporters are also hoping he can make better progress on improving the economy, a key issue on the minds of the country's 56 million eligible voters. Many say they are yet to see the benefits of the nuclear deal, which saw Iran limit its contested nuclear program over the objection of hard-liners in exchange for the lifting of some sanctions.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the most powerful man in Iran, symbolically cast the election's first vote. He called for a large turnout, saying "the country is in the hands of all people."

In Tehran, whose liberal and affluent voters form the bedrock of support for Rouhani, lines at some precincts were much longer than those in his 2013 win. Analysts have suggested a high turnout will aid Rouhani in securing a second four-year term.

"I am happy I could vote for Rouhani," said Zohreh Amini, a 21-year-old woman studying painting at Tehran Azad University. "He kept the shadow of war far from our country."

Voters who spoke to The Associated Press from the cities of Bandar Abbas, Hamadan, Isfahan, Rashat, Shiraz and Tabriz also described crowded polling places.

The turnout may have spooked Raisi's camp, who filed a complaint to authorities over what they called "election violations" even before the polls closed, according to a report by the semi-official Tasnim news agency.

Tehran Friday prayer leader Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Movahedi Kermani urged voters to elect someone who won't be a "hostage" to Western governments and their culture.

"The next president should not be someone who makes the enemies happy when he is elected," said Kermani, who is an adviser to Khamenei.

Rouhani has history on his side in the election. No incumbent president has failed to win re-election since 1981, when Khamenei himself became president.

The 56-year-old Raisi, who heads an influential religious charitable foundation with vast business holdings, is seen by many as close to Khamenei. Raisi has even been discussed as a possible successor, though Khamenei has stopped short of endorsing anyone.

Raisi won the support of two major clerical bodies and promised to boost welfare payments to the poor. His populist posture, anti-corruption rhetoric and get-tough reputation — bolstered by his alleged role condemning inmates to death during Iran's 1988 mass execution of thousands of political prisoners — hold appeal for conservative rural and working-class voters.

"Rouhani has turned our foreign policies into a mess and damaged our religion," said Sedigheh Davoodabadi, a 59-year-old housewife in Iran's holy city of Qom who voted for Raisi. "Rouhani gave everything to the U.S. outright" in the nuclear deal.

Both candidates urged voters to respect the outcome of the vote.

Mostafa Hashemitaba, a pro-reform figure who previously ran for president in 2001, and Mostafa Mirsalim, a former culture minister, also remain in the race.

Iranians overseas were also voting in over 300 locations, including 55 in the U.S., where more than 1 million Iranians live.

Hard-liners remain suspicious of America, decades after the 1953 U.S.-engineered coup that toppled Iran's prime minister and the 1979 U.S. Embassy takeover and hostage crisis in Tehran. President Donald Trump's tougher stance on Iran has stoked concern as well, though his administration this week took a key step toward preserving the Obama-era nuclear deal.

Iran's political system combines conservative clerical oversight and state control over large parts of the economy with tightly regulated but still hotly contested elections for key government posts.

All candidates for elected office must be vetted, a process that excludes anyone calling for radical change, along with most reformists. No woman has ever been approved to run for president.

The president of the Islamic Republic oversees a vast state bureaucracy employing more than 2 million

people, is charged with naming Cabinet members and other officials to key posts, and plays a significant role in shaping both domestic and foreign policy. But he remains subordinate to the supreme leader, who is chosen by a clerical panel and has the ultimate say over all matters of state.

The race has heated emotions and pushed public discourse in Iran into areas typically untouched in the tightly controlled state media.

That includes Rouhani openly criticizing hard-liners and Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard, a paramilitary force now involved in the war in Syria and the fight against Islamic State militants in neighboring Iraq. Rouhani also found his vehicle besieged by angry coal miners during a visit to a northern mine struck by a deadly explosion earlier this month.

But authorities worry about tempers rising too high, especially after the 2009 disputed re-election of former hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad that saw unrest, mass arrests and killings. Authorities barred Ahmadinejad from running in Friday's election, and Khamenei warned this week that anyone fomenting unrest "will definitely be slapped in the face."

That hasn't stopped those at Rouhani rallies from shouting for the release of the house-arrested leaders of the 2009 Green Movement. Opposition websites have said Green Movement leaders Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mahdi Karroubi both have endorsed Rouhani against Raisi. Rouhani promised in his 2013 campaign to free the men, but that pledge so far remains unfulfilled.

Mohammad Khatami, another reformist who served as Iran's president from 1997 to 2005, also has endorsed Rouhani and received a raucous welcome when he voted, according to a clip shared on social media.

Iranian authorities say they believe the vote will exceed a 70 percent turnout.

Associated Press journalists Amir Vahdat in Tehran, Iran, Ebrahim Noroozi in Qom, Iran, and Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, contributed to this report.

Follow Adam Schreck on Twitter at www.twitter.com/adamschreck and Nasser Karimi at www.twitter.com/ncarrimi.

Trump attorney didn't want him to sign financial disclosure

By JULIE BYKOWICZ, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's attorneys initially wanted him to submit an updated financial disclosure without certifying the information as true, according to correspondence with the Office of Government Ethics.

Attorney Sheri Dillon said she saw no need for Trump to sign his 2016 personal financial disclosure because he is filing voluntarily this year. But OGE director Walter Shaub said his office would only work with Dillon if she agreed to follow the typical process of having Trump make the certification.

The Associated Press obtained the letters under a Freedom of Information Act request.

Trump led his family's private company until becoming president, and even now maintains financial ties to it. He has avoided full transparency about his finances by breaking the long tradition of major-party political candidates making their tax returns public.

Trump has routinely pointed to his previous public financial disclosures to justify his billionaire status and to dismiss calls for him to provide more information to the public. The filings are self-reported, though, making the personal certification all the more important to show the president is attesting for their accuracy.

The documents indicate that after OGE pushed back, Trump now plans to certify the information by mid-June. But his attorney's effort to sidestep certification of his personal financial disclosure marks another departure from the norm. Each year, the OGE processes thousands of those forms, all of which are certified.

"This is not at all typical; in fact I've never heard of anyone trying this," said Marilyn Glynn, an OGE employee for 17 years before retiring in 2008. Her positions included acting director and general counsel. "It would be as unusual as not signing your taxes."

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The certification means that if a person knowingly included incorrect financial information, the OGE can seek a civil penalty such as a fine, or even make a referral to the Justice Department for criminal prosecution.

Glynn said OGE has indeed used those tools to enforce the integrity of certification.

The letters indicate Shaub and Dillon talked through the importance of Trump presenting true information and signing off on it as such. OGE typically works with federal employees and their representatives and also certifies the financial disclosures.

"As we discussed, OGE will provide this assistance on the condition that the President is committed to certifying that the contents of his report are true, complete and correct," Shaub wrote in a May 10 letter. "When we met on April 27, 2017, you requested that he be excused from providing this certification."

In her letter to Shaub, Dillon said the president will "sign and file" documents regarding his 2016 financials by mid-June — an indication that she agreed to the requirement.

Dillon also stressed in her letter, dated May 9, that Trump is under no obligation to file a financial disclosure this year and is doing so voluntarily. "President Trump welcomes the opportunity to provide this optional disclosure to the public, and hopes to file it shortly," she wrote.

A person familiar with the matter said Dillon expressed concern in a meeting with OGE officials about the certification process because virtually everything on the new personal financial disclosure is now held in and managed by a trust overseen by people other than the president.

Dillon questioned how Trump could certify something he wasn't supposed to have "direct, contemporaneous knowledge" about, the person said. Shaub assured her that other wealthy employees had certified as true their reports even though they didn't independently verify every single underlying asset in them, said the person who demanded anonymity because the person was not authorized to discuss the interactions between Dillon's law firm and OGE.

Personal financial disclosures include an accounting of a person's personal income, assets and liabilities. Trump's 2016 form will span his general election candidacy, election and transition to power — potentially shedding light on the immediate impact his Republican nomination and election had on his Trump Organization.

Last May, then-candidate Trump's disclosure form showed his business empire had grown in value while he was running for office. His new filing is expected to outline what specific assets have been transferred to a trust overseen by one of his adult sons and a longtime Trump Organization executive.

However, the information is no substitute for tax returns, which Trump has chosen not to release. Tax documents would show his effective rate of income tax and detail the extent of his charitable giving.

Trump's decision to file a personal financial disclosure puts him in the company of past Presidents Barack Obama, George W. Bush and others. The law gives presidents a reprieve from filing financial disclosures in their first year, but citing transparency, they typically file anyway on or before May 15.

Shaub references that history in the first line of his letter to Dillon: "Thank you for your letter dated May 9, 2017, regarding the President's decision to adhere to the longstanding tradition of voluntarily filing a public financial disclosure report in the first year after taking office."

Associated Press writer Chad Day contributed to this report.

Read the documents here: <http://apne.ws/2qFvHle>

Prospect of NAFTA rewrite gives US farmers a case of jitters

By PAUL WISEMAN, AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A sizable majority of rural Americans backed Donald Trump's presidential bid, drawn to his calls to slash environmental rules, strengthen law enforcement and replace the federal health care law.

But many farmers are nervous about another plank in Trump's agenda: His vow to overhaul U.S. trade policy, including his intent announced Thursday to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement

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with Canada and Mexico.

Trump's message that NAFTA was a job-killing disaster had never resonated much in rural America. NAFTA had widened access to Mexican and Canadian markets, boosting U.S. farm exports and benefiting many farmers.

Farm Country went on red alert last month when it looked as if Trump wasn't even going to pursue a NAFTA rewrite: White House aides had spread the word that the president would simply withdraw from the pact.

"Mr. President, America's corn farmers helped elect you," Wesley Spurlock of the National Corn Growers Association warned in a statement. "Withdrawing from NAFTA would be disastrous for American agriculture."

Within hours, Trump softened his stance. He wouldn't actually dump NAFTA, he said. He'd first try to forge a more advantageous deal with Mexico and Canada — a move that formally began Thursday when his top trade negotiator, Robert Lighthizer, informed Congress of the administration's intent to renegotiate NAFTA.

As a candidate, Trump defined his "America First" stance as a means to fight unfair foreign competition. He blamed unjust deals for swelling U.S. trade gaps and stealing factory jobs.

But NAFTA and other deals have been good for American farmers, who stand to lose if Trump ditches the pact or ignites a trade war. The United States has enjoyed a trade surplus in farm products since at least 1967, government data show. Last year, farm exports exceeded imports by \$20.5 billion.

"You don't start off trade negotiations ... by picking fights with your trade partners that are completely unnecessary," says Aaron Lehman, a fifth-generation Iowa farmer who produces corn, soybeans, oats and hay.

Many farmers worry that Trump's policies will jeopardize their exports just as they face weaker crop and livestock prices.

"It comes up pretty quickly in conversation," says Blake Hurst, a corn and soybean farmer in northwestern Missouri's Atchison County.

That county's voters backed Trump more than 3-to-1 in the election but now feel "it would be better if the rhetoric (on trade) was a little less strident," says Hurst, president of the Missouri Farm Bureau.

Trump's main argument against NAFTA and other pacts was that they exposed American workers to unequal competition with low-wage workers in countries like Mexico and China.

NAFTA did lead some American manufacturers to move factories and jobs to Mexico. But since it took effect in 1994 and eased tariffs, annual farm exports to Mexico have jumped nearly five-fold to about \$18 billion. Mexico is the No. 3 market for U.S. agriculture, notably corn, soybeans and pork.

"The trade agreements that we've had have been very beneficial," says Stephen Censky, CEO of the American Soybean Association. "We need to take care not to blow the significant gains that agriculture has won."

The U.S. has run a surplus in farm trade with Mexico for 20 of the 23 years since NAFTA took effect. Still, the surpluses with Mexico became deficits in 2015 and 2016 as global livestock and grain prices plummeted and shrank the value of American exports, notes Joseph Glauber of the International Food Policy Research Institute.

Mexico has begun to seek alternatives to U.S. food because, as its agriculture secretary, Jose Calzada Rovirosa, said in March, Trump's remarks on trade "have injected uncertainty" into the agriculture business.

Once word had surfaced that Trump was considering pulling out of NAFTA, Sonny Perdue, two days into his job as the president's agriculture secretary, hastened to the White House with a map showing areas that would be hurt most by a pullout, overlapped with many that voted for Trump.

"I tried to demonstrate to him that in the agricultural market, sometimes words like 'withdraw' or 'terminate' can have a major impact on markets," Perdue said in an interview with The Associated Press. "I think the president made a very wise decision for the benefit of many agricultural producers across the country" by choosing to remain in NAFTA.

Trump delivered another disappointment for U.S. farm groups in January by fulfilling a pledge to abandon the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which the Obama administration negotiated with 11 Asia-Pacific countries.

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Trump argued that the pact would cost Americans jobs by pitting them against low-wage Asian labor.

But the deal would have given U.S. farmers broader access to Japan's notoriously impregnable market and easier entry into fast-growing Vietnam. Philip Seng of the U.S. Meat Export Federation notes that the U.S. withdrawal from TPP left Australia with a competitive advantage because it had already negotiated lower tariffs in Japan.

Trump has also threatened to impose tariffs on Chinese and Mexican imports, thereby raising fears that those trading partners would retaliate with their own sanctions.

Farmers know they're frequently the first casualties of trade wars. Many recall a 2009 trade rift in which China responded to U.S. tire tariffs by imposing tariffs on U.S. chicken parts. And Mexico slapped tariffs on U.S. goods ranging from ham to onions to Christmas trees in 2009 to protest a ban on Mexican trucks crossing the border.

The White House declined to comment on farmers' fears that Trump's trade policy stands to hurt them. But officials say they've sought to ease concerns, by, for example, having Agriculture Secretary Perdue announce a new undersecretary to oversee trade and foreign agricultural affairs.

Many farmers are still hopeful about the Trump administration. Some, for example, applaud his plans to slash environmental rules that they say inflate the cost of running a farm. Some also hold out hope that the author of "The Art of the Deal" will negotiate ways to improve NAFTA.

One such way might involve Canada. NAFTA let Canada shield its dairy farmers from foreign competition behind tariffs and regulations but left at least one exception — an American ultra-filtered milk used in cheese. When Canadian farmers complained about the cheaper imports, Canada changed its policy and effectively priced ultra-filtered American milk out of the market.

"Canada has made business for our dairy farmers in Wisconsin and other border states very difficult," Trump tweeted last month. "We will not stand for this. Watch!"

Some U.S. cattle producers would also like a renegotiated NAFTA to give them something the current version doesn't: The right to label their product "Made in America." In 2015, the World Trade Organization struck down the United States' country-of-origin labeling rules as unfair to Mexico and Canada.

Many still worry that Trump's planned overhaul of American trade policy is built to revive manufacturing and that farming remains an afterthought.

"So much of the conversation in the campaign had been in Detroit or in Indiana" and focused on manufacturing jobs, said Kathy Baylis, an economist at the University of Illinois. The importance of American farm exports "never made it into the rhetoric."

AP Writers David Pitt in Des Moines and Mary Clare Jalonick in Washington contributed to this report.

Follow Paul Wiseman on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/PaulWisemanAP>

Fox News fires Bob Beckel for racially insensitive remark

By DAVID BAUDER, AP Television Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Fox News Channel said Friday that it had fired liberal commentator Bob Beckel for making a racially insensitive remark to a black employee.

Fox offered no details on the case, but a lawyer for the employee said Beckel had "stormed out" of his office Tuesday when the man, who is a technician, came to do work on his computer, saying he was leaving because the worker was black.

The lawyer, Douglas Wigdor, also said that Beckel attempted to intimidate his client and get him to withdraw his complaint in a meeting Friday with Fox executive Kevin Lord. Fox denied that anyone tried to persuade the man to withdraw his complaint, and said that Beckel had apologized to him after he was fired.

Beckel, 68, is a veteran Democratic political strategist who is a regular on Fox's "The Five," where he discusses stories with four conservative panelists. The show recently moved into Fox's prime-time lineup

with the firing of Bill O'Reilly.

Beckel had only returned to Fox in January. He'd been ousted in June 2015 while dealing with substance abuse, with then-Fox executive Bill Shine saying Fox "couldn't hold 'The Five' hostage to one man's personal issues." Beckel subsequently wrote a book "I Should Be Dead: My Life Surviving Politics, TV and Addiction."

Wigdor currently represents 22 clients with cases against Fox, including 15 involved in a lawsuit alleging racist behavior by the network's since-fired controller, Judith Slater, who denies the charges.

Fox is involved in several legal cases involving O'Reilly and the late former network chairman Roger Ailes, who died on Thursday.

Wigdor's firm, in a statement, said that "we intend on holding (Fox News parent company) 21st Century Fox accountable for these actions and will be filing multiple other complaints in other matters next week."

Rape inquiry dropped, WikiLeaks' Assange remains in embassy

By GREGORY KATZ and DAVID KEYTON, Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange no longer is the subject of an active rape investigation in Sweden, but he remains holed up in Ecuador's embassy in London facing an unclear future because of uncertainty over whether American authorities will try to get him handed over next.

Sweden's top prosecutor dropped a long-running inquiry into a rape claim against Assange on Friday, saying there was no way to detain or charge him "in the foreseeable future" because of his protected status inside the embassy.

Prosecutor Marianne Ny said she could not judge whether the 45-year-old Australian native was guilty or innocent because the investigation had been thwarted. Ny said the case could be reopened if Assange comes to Sweden before the statute of limitations expires in 2020.

British police said they would arrest Assange if he leaves the embassy on the relatively minor charge of jumping bail, but the more severe threat is a possible sealed U.S. indictment against him.

The sun-starved WikiLeaks provocateur, looking healthy if pale, emerged Friday afternoon to address the media in the open air of the embassy's balcony. He said the day marked an "important victory," but noted that he still could be prosecuted by the United States.

Assange also lashed out at Sweden for taking seven years to investigate allegations he maintained were baseless. His children had grown up without him, he said.

"That is not something I can forgive, or forget," he said, claiming he had suffered a "terrible injustice" while living under house arrest or hidden away inside the embassy without ever being charged with a crime.

Despite the welcome news from Sweden, police in London said Friday that Assange is still wanted there for jumping bail in 2012. More serious are the possible charges he faces in the United States for WikiLeaks' aggressive publication of thousands of pages of classified government documents.

Assange said his legal team would reach out to British authorities to try to find a way forward, and he said he would be "happy" to have a dialogue with the U.S. Department of Justice despite its threats against him.

WikiLeaks has repeatedly infuriated U.S. officials with the widespread release of sensitive secret documents related to military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq and diplomatic relations around the world.

WikiLeaks also had a role in the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign when it published emails written by Hillary Clinton's campaign officials.

U.S. and British officials Friday declined to say if the United States has requested Assange's extradition.

Ecuador's foreign minister, Guillaume Long, tweeted Friday that Britain "must now grant safe passage" to Assange. The South American country has granted him asylum, but it is not clear how Assange would travel there without the permission of British authorities.

Assange has spent nearly five years inside the Latin American country's London embassy, but he seemed robust and defiant in his brief balcony appearance. He did not take shouted questions from the reporters assembled outside and would not say if he plans to leave the embassy located in the posh Knightsbridge neighborhood.

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The day began with the dramatic announcement in Sweden that the rape investigation was being suspended. But some experts said the development would put him in an even more precarious legal situation, if the U.S. has a sealed indictment for his arrest.

U.S. President Donald Trump said last month he would support any decision by the Justice Department to charge Assange.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions has suggested that the arrest of Assange could be an American priority, saying last month the U.S. was "stepping up our efforts on all leaks."

"We will seek to put some people in jail," Sessions said.

Army Pvt. Chelsea Manning served seven years in prison for giving classified material to WikiLeaks. She was freed Wednesday, having had her sentence commuted by former President Barack Obama before he left office.

British officials said they do not comment on individual extradition cases. British Prime Minister Theresa May said Friday that "any decision that is taken about U.K. action in relation to him (Assange) would be an operational matter for the police."

WikiLeaks complained about the lack of clarity in Assange's legal situation.

"UK refuses to confirm or deny whether it has already received a US extradition warrant for Julian Assange. Focus now moves to UK," the group tweeted.

His supporters believe the sex crime allegations that have bedeviled Assange for years were politically motivated. They surfaced after the women accused Assange of sexual misconduct during a visit to Stockholm in 2010.

A lawyer for the woman who alleged she was raped by Assange said "it's a scandal that a suspected rapist can avoid the judicial system and thus avoid a trial in court."

Elisabeth Massi Fritz says her client is shocked by the Swedish decision but added that "she can't change her view that Assange has exposed her to a rape."

There were initially two separate allegations being investigated, but one was dropped in 2015 because the statute of limitations ran out. The rape allegation, the more serious claim, remained under investigation. Prosecutors were trying to determine, among other things, if Assange had sex with the woman while she was asleep and without using a condom.

Assange has said the sex was consensual.

British police said that since Assange is now wanted for a "much less serious offense" than the original sex crimes claims, police "will provide a level of resourcing which is proportionate to that offense."

British police kept up a round-the-clock guard outside the embassy until December 2015, when the operation was scaled back partly because of the costs, which had exceeded 11 million pounds (over \$17.5 million at the time).

Keyton reported from Stockholm. Jill Lawless in London, Eric Tucker in Washington and Jan M. Olsen in Copenhagen, Denmark, contributed to this story.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Saturday, May 20, the 140th day of 2017. There are 225 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 20, 1927, Charles Lindbergh took off from Roosevelt Field in Long Island, New York, aboard the Spirit of St. Louis on his historic solo flight to France.

On this date:

In 1506, explorer Christopher Columbus died in Spain.

In 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act, which was intended to encourage settlements west of the Mississippi River by making federal land available for farming.

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In 1902, the United States ended a three-year military presence in Cuba as the Republic of Cuba was established under its first elected president, Tomas Estrada Palma.

In 1932, Amelia Earhart took off from Newfoundland to become the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic. (Because of weather and equipment problems, Earhart set down in Northern Ireland instead of her intended destination, France.)

In 1941, during World War II, the Office of Civilian Defense was established.

In 1942, Glenn Miller and His Orchestra recorded "(I've Got a Gal in) Kalamazoo" at Victor Studios in Hollywood.

In 1956, the United States exploded the first airborne hydrogen bomb over Bikini Atoll in the Pacific.

In 1957, Frank Sinatra recorded the song "Witchcraft" by Cy Coleman and Carolyn Leigh at Capitol Records in Hollywood.

In 1961, a white mob attacked a busload of Freedom Riders in Montgomery, Alabama, prompting the federal government to send in U.S. marshals to restore order.

In 1970, some 100,000 people demonstrated in New York's Wall Street district in support of U.S. policy in Vietnam and Cambodia.

In 1989, actress-comedian Gilda Radner died in Los Angeles at age 42.

In 1996, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Romer v. Evans*, struck down, 6-3, a Colorado measure banning laws that protected homosexuals from discrimination.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush welcomed NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer (yahp duh hohp SKEHF'-ur) to his Crawford, Texas, ranch, to review strategy on a flurry of issues. A gunman took his own life following a rampage in Moscow, Idaho, that killed three victims, including his wife. A pair of investment firms agreed to acquire Alltel Corp. in a deal worth \$27.5 billion. (Alltel was later acquired by Verizon Wireless and AT&T.)

Five years ago: A two-day NATO summit hosted by President Barack Obama opened in Chicago. Thousands of protesters marched through downtown Chicago, airing grievances about war, climate change and a wide range of other complaints. Abdel Baset al-Megrahi (AHB'-dehl BAH'-seht AH'-lee ahl-meh-GRAH'-hee), 60, the only man convicted in connection with the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 in 1988, died in Tripoli, Libya. Robin Gibb, 62, who along with his brothers Maurice and Barry, defined the disco era as part of the Bee Gees, died in London.

One year ago: A U.S. Secret Service officer shot a man with a gun who had approached a checkpoint outside the White House and refused to drop his weapon; Jesse Olivieri of Ashland, Pennsylvania, was later sentenced to eight months' confinement. Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon (MOH'-shuh YAH'-uh-lohn) announced his resignation, saying the governing party had been taken over by "extremist and dangerous elements" and that he no longer trusted Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Today's Birthdays: Actor-author James McEachin is 87. Actor Anthony Zerbe is 81. Actor David Proval is 75. Singer-actress Cher is 71. Actor-comedian Dave Thomas is 69. Rock musician Warren Cann is 67. Sen. Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, is 66. Former New York Gov. David Paterson is 63. Actor Dean Butler is 61. TV-radio personality Ron Reagan is 59. Rock musician Jane Wiedlin (The Go-Go's) is 59. Actor Bronson Pinchot is 58. Singer Susan Cowsill is 58. Actor John Billingsley is 57. Actor Tony Goldwyn is 57. Singer Nick Heyward is 56. TV personality Ted Allen is 52. Actress Mindy Cohn is 51. Rock musician Tom Gorman (Belly) is 51. Actress Gina Ravera is 51. Actor Timothy Olyphant is 49. Race car driver Tony Stewart is 46. Rapper Busta Rhymes is 45. Actress Daya Vaidya is 44. Rock musician Ryan Martinie is 42. Actor Matt Czuchy (zoo-KREE') is 40. Actress Angela Goethals is 40. Actress-singer Naturi Naughton is 33. Country singer Jon Pardi is 32.

Thought for Today: "Intolerance of ambiguity is the mark of an authoritarian personality." — Theodor W. Adorno, German philosopher (1903-1969).