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Wednesday, June 14

FLAG DAY

Senior Menu: Sweet and sour pork, steamed rice, carrot and broccoli medley, honey fruit salad, whole wheat bread.

Outdoor Story Time: at the Little Free Library located south of the Methodist Church, 10:30 a.m.

United Methodist: Wednesday coffee time, 9 a.m.; Finance Committee, 6 p.m.; Ad Council, 7:15 p.m.

T-Ball: Black team at Claremont, 5 p.m., gold team practice at 6 p.m.

U12: at Claremont, for 1 game, 8 p.m.

U10: at Claremont for 1 game, 7 p.m.

U8 Red: at Claremont for 1 game, 6 p.m.

Olive Grove: Men's League, 6 p.m.

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Senior Menu: Baked chicken, potato salad, baked beans, watermelon, cookie.

St. John's Lutheran: Quilting at 9 a.m.

Legion: at Milbank for 2 games, 6 p.m.

Jr. Teener: hosts Redfield for 2 games, 6 p.m.

Softball: hosts Sisseton (U8 at 6 p.m., U10 at 7 p.m., U12/14 DH at 6 p.m. and 7 p.m.)

Annual Transit Fundraiser: 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Transit (retirement party for Arlis Doeden)

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Senior Menu: Meatballs, mashed potatoes and gravy, carrots, fruit cocktail, whole wheat bread.

U8 Blue: hosts Webster for 1 game, 6 p.m., Nelson Field

U8 Red: hosts Webster for 1 game, 7 p.m., Nelson Field

Olive Grove: SDSU Alumni tourney, 18 holes, Noon shotgun.

FOR SALE

MARCY MWM900 Home Gym for sale. Asking \$100. Contact Brian at 397-7180.

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**

Midwest Masonry & concrete Pumping

Greg Heilman, owner

405 E 1st Ave., Groton

Greg: 253/929-9137

Mike: 605/492-7041

midwestmasonry1@yahoo.com



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The storm that blew through Groton early Tuesday morning stripped the roofing off the former Curt's Body Works building at Railroad Ave. and Sixth Street. The metal was flung across the street and some of it landed in the propane station (pictured below). The building is owned by Strom/Johnson Farms.. (Photos by Tina Kosel)



Several workers were working as fast as they could to reinforce the roof before the next round of storms would come through the area Tuesday evening. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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The city workers went through town cleaning out the storm sewer inlets. Many of them were completely plugged up with grass and leaves. Above is Aaron Severson and in the right photo is Brian Gravatt.



There were several big branches that came down with the storm Tuesday morning. The city crew were busy picking up branches throughout the town on Tuesday.

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The two-day rain total for Groton was 1.67 inches. Water is in the construction area of what was SD37. More than likely this will be a weather day for the construction crew. We will find out more at tomorrow's briefing by Webster Scale and the SD-DOT at 1 ap.m. at the Groton Community Center. That will be carried live on GDILIVE.COM. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

It's Flag Day!

Brian Gravatt was in town early Wednesday morning to put up the flags in downtown Groton. Today is Wednesday, June 14 - also known as Flag Day in the United States. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



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Tornado spotted south of Groton

A late spring series of storms brought much needed moisture to the Dakotas on Tuesday. The first series of storms occurred early Tuesday morning which dropped .83 inch of rain in Groton and strong wind brought down branches and stripped the north side of the roof of the former Curt's Body Works in Groton. One branch that came down also brought down a service line on the west side of town.

Then a tornado watch was issued for Tuesday evening as another round of storms was developing. A tornado was spotted south of Groton and the sirens were sounded in Groton. Another .84 inch of rain fell in Groton and wind gusts of 52 mph brought down more branches around the city, but the damage from this storm was less than what occurred in the morning hours.

Today in Weather History

June 14, 1970: An estimated F3 tornado moved northeast from just southeast of Mound City. Barns and sheds were said to have been blown away on three farms.

June 14, 1985: A thunderstorm produced golf ball size hail in the Castlewood area causing considerable damage to grain, corn, soybeans, and gardens. Some areas just south of Castlewood had hail piled up to six inches deep. Leaves were stripped from several trees. Wind gusts to 60 mph accompanied the hail.

Another thunderstorm produced high winds and damaging hail in Grant and Roberts Counties. North of Milbank along both sides of Highway 15, crops incurred considerable damage. An area 17 miles northeast of Sisseton into Browns Valley, to Mud Lake, saw crop damage from golf ball size hail.

June 14, 2009: An upper-level disturbance combined with a warm front and very unstable air brought severe thunderstorms to parts of central and north-central South Dakota. Hail up to the size of golf balls, flash flooding, along with several tornadoes occurred with these storms. Heavy rain caused flash flooding on the Moreau River with the bridge on Route 14 being overtopped. The bridge had to be closed west of Green Grass. A basement was also flooded three miles east of Green Grass along with several roads in the area in Dewey Country. A tornado touched down west of Hayes in Stanley County and traveled almost a mile before lifting. No damage occurred. A second tornado touched down east of Hayes with no damage occurring.

1903: Major flash flooding along Willow Creek destroyed a significant portion of Heppner, Oregon on this day. With a death toll of 247 people, it remains the deadliest natural disaster in Oregon.

1961 - The temperature in Downtown San Francisco, CA, soared to 106 degrees to establish an all-time record for that location. (The Weather Channel)








1987 - Thirty-two cities in the central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. The high of 97 degrees at Flint, MI, tied their record for June, and the high of 101 at Milwaukee WI marked their first 100 degree reading in 32 years. Thunderstorms brought much needed rains to South Texas, drenching McAllen with 3.2 inches in one hour. A thunderstorm soaked the town of Uncertain with 2.3 inches of rain in one hour. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thirty cities in the eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced severe weather from the Central Gulf States to the Middle Atlantic Coast Region during the day and into the night. There were 62 reports of large hail and damaging winds. Thunderstorm winds caused 28 million dollars damage in Montgomery County MD. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

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Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday
						
Sunny then Sunny and Breezy	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Sunny	Slight Chance T-storms	T-storms Likely
High: 83 °F	Low: 56 °F	High: 84 °F	Low: 55 °F	High: 85 °F	Low: 58 °F	High: 75 °F

Dry Through The End Of The Work Week

Today:
Highs: Low 80s
Thursday:
Highs: Mid 80s
Friday:
Highs: Mid 80s



Published on: 06/14/2017 at 3:42AM

Dry conditions are expected for the next few days with temperatures closer to average

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 78.9 F at 2:51 PM

Low Outside Temp: 60.1 F at 4:29 AM

High Gust: 52.0 Mph at 7:16 PM

Precip: Total: 1.67

Today's Info

Record High: 99° in 1933

Record Low: 34° in 1969

Average High: 77°F

Average Low: 53°F

Average Precip in June: 1.68

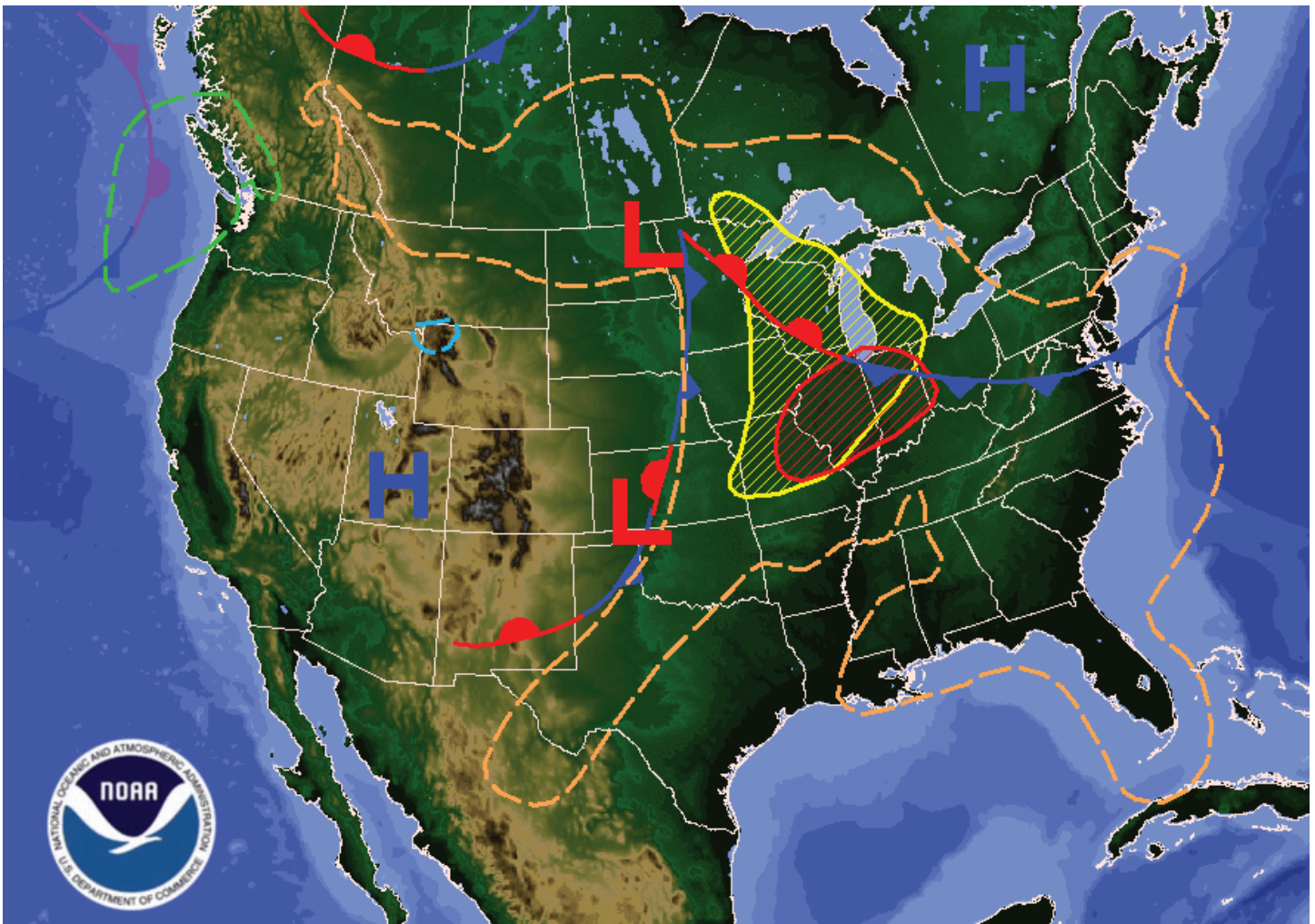
Precip to date in June: 2.02

Average Precip to date: 8.82

Precip Year to Date: 5.21

Sunset Tonight: 9:23 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:44 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Wed, Jun 14, 2017, issued 4:30 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain
Rain and T'Storms
Rain and Snow
Snow

Flash Flooding Possible (hatched)
Severe T'Storms Possible (hatched)
Freezing Rain Possible (hatched)
Heavy Snow Possible (hatched)

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HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT MOST

We are all grateful for our "first responders." They save lives, bind wounds, bring food, give clothing, provide shelter and restore power. They have become our "rescuers." And, indeed, they fulfill a critical role.

But as Christians, when we face a time of trial or tragedy, we have One who has been waiting for us to call upon Him when we need help. He is always waiting for an opportunity to prove His power whenever we face a difficult situation.

One morning, about four o'clock, Peter was in serious trouble. He and a few of his friends were in a small boat far from shore when a fierce storm arose out of nowhere. Fearing for their lives they became even more frightened when they saw what they thought was a ghost. They screamed in terror. And over the howling wind came a stern voice that said, "Stop being afraid." It was Jesus assuring them that there was no reason for them to fear for their lives because He was there to save them when they needed Him the most.

"If it is really you," said Peter, "tell me to come to You – let me walk on the water!" "Certainly," said Jesus, "come on. You've nothing to fear!" He got out of the boat, felt the wind and the waves, lost His faith and began to sink. He shouted, "Save me, Lord," and He did.

It is never the eloquence or length of our prayer that counts, but our simplicity and sincerity. It is never a formula but our faith. He will always come to our rescue if we call on Him in a faith that believes in Him.

Prayer: Lord, we do indeed believe in Your power and Your promises. Increase our faith whenever we doubt. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 12:1 Help, LORD, for no one is faithful anymore; those who are loyal have vanished from the human race.

News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Mega Millions

27-51-62-68-75, Mega Ball: 8, Megaplier: 3

(twenty-seven, fifty-one, sixty-two, sixty-eight, seventy-five; Mega Ball: eight; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$101 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$40 million

Governor proclaims Elder Abuse Awareness Day in South Dakota

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Dennis Daugaard has proclaimed an Elder Abuse Awareness Day in South Dakota.

The South Dakota Department of Human Services says the day gives communities an opportunity to promote a better understanding of the neglect and abuse of older people across the state. The statewide observation on Thursday coincides with World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

The agency says that an estimated 5 million older people are abused, neglected and exploited each year in the United States.

South Dakota winter wheat production forecast to drop

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — This year's winter wheat crop in South Dakota is forecast to be much smaller than last year's, mirroring a national trend.

The Agriculture Department projects the state crop at 39 million bushels, down 39 percent over the year. Both harvested acres and average yield are expected to be down.

National winter wheat production is forecast at 1.25 billion bushels, down 25 percent from 2016.

Lawyers claim injured South Dakota workers may lose rights

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Lawyers who represent injured workers in South Dakota are preparing for a proposal from the insurance industry that would limit their ability to pursue legal claims against insurance companies that are intentionally dishonest.

Insurance industry representatives were scheduled to present the proposal to the state Workers' Compensation Advisory Council later this month, a step that could lead to legislation limiting injured workers from pursuing bad faith claims against insurance companies. But lawyer Mike McKnight, who represents insurance companies, said the proposal is delayed until August.

"We're going to have some further discussions — both sides, the other claimant lawyers, trial lawyers, etc. — and see if we can come to some resolution of it," McKnight said.

Lawyers representing workers expect the proposal to include caps on damages awarded in bad faith cases or even barring those claims from being filed at all, the Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2rZT21s>) reported.

"There's been a concern raised in the past that worker compensation insurance companies are unduly susceptible to liability for bad faith," said James Marsh, who oversees the state Division of Labor and Management and workers' compensation system.

Bad faith claims usually accuse insurance companies of intentionally hiding information from those insured. Should a jury find that a company acted in bad faith, it can levy punitive damages to punish the bad behavior and hopefully deter future similar behavior.

Mike Abourezk is a Rapid City attorney who won a \$4 million verdict last year after finding that an insurance company hid the details of a \$1 million insurance policy after a woman suffered catastrophic injuries in a car accident. Abourezk said insurance companies are willing to gamble that they won't get caught, especially with workers' comp claims where the amount is usually only a few thousand dollars.

He said that by denying legitimate claims, those companies "are going to make more money than they lose even if they get caught now and again."

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

Artist pours creativity into old watering hole

By LAUREN DONOVAN, Bismarck Tribune

LEMMON, S.D. (AP) — A great old bar in a South Dakota border town will not die as expected, though its resurrection as a highfalutin' art gallery will certainly change up its history.

The Kokomo Inn was famous around those parts for decades — it had a cool name and it was the closest bar when 18 was the legal drinking age on the south side of the border and 21 was operative on the North Dakota side, The Bismarck Tribune (<http://bit.ly/2rY2156>) reported.

Who knows how many cans of watery 3.2 Schlitz or Hamms beer were popped open by those young kids with nice farm town manners, some with a hoked-up driver's license? But it was enough to make mention in the town's history book, and it was the bar where generations probably sipped their first served beer.

Noni Hoff, 53, of Lemmon, said she did, but that's not why she remembers the place so fondly. She was good friends with one of the Raba kids — the family that started it back in the '30s — and they ran in the front door on Main Street and out the back to the alley like the joint was a second home.

"It was a place you could just go. Other bars came and went, but it was the one that was always there," she said. "It was special, a place you could be comfortable in. You didn't have to dress up."

The doors closed about eight years ago after the death of the last Raba family member and the building eventually reverted to city ownership. The colorful Kokomo Inn sign painted on the building's front faded in the west sun and the inside fell to wrack and ruin as rain and snowmelt made their way through the old roof.

Last summer, Lemmon scrap metal sculptor John Lopez got permission from the city to use the building's exterior as a brick canvas for a mural to go along with turning the adjacent empty lot into "Boss Cowman Square." The square honors the town's namesake, Ed Lemmon, famous for managing the largest fenced pasture in the world at 865,000 acres and bossing the single biggest cattle roundup in history.

The mural, painted by Nigerian artists, is a beautiful piece of work and, if the building ever went down, so would it.

Lopez works out of studio near Lemmon and had come to the conclusion that he needed a gallery for his internationally recognized work, a place to showcase his pieces and meet with clients. The Kokomo Inn, dilapidated and beloved, was right there waiting for him.

"Wherever I had a gallery, I wanted it next to a park for landscaping and to create an experience. I didn't realize it would be the Kokomo," said Lopez, who acquired the title from the city and went to work.

Turns out "work" is a small word for the gargantuan undertaking the renovations required throughout this past hard winter. He'd hoped to save the roof, but in the end — actually the beginning — it was clear it had to be removed and the building gutted and shored up.

His vision was a place of open, white simplicity, where his sculptures would speak for themselves.

"I want to be taken seriously, so that, when people walk in, they'll get it," he said.

He recently completed "Custer's Last Stand," which will be his permanent installation at the gallery. It's been four years in the making from iron and found pieces, including a propane tank, shovel heads, snow

chains, plow disks and even a bar stool from the old Kokomo Inn. It's as complex, detailed and imaginative as any work he's done. The piece features two life-sized buffalo engaged in mortal conflict, inset with bronzed likenesses of Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer and Chief Sitting Bull looking toward each other.

The colonel would die that day in 1876 in the Battle of the Little Big Horn, and Sitting Bull would ride on into history. Lopez tries to evoke the outcome in the expressions of the men and the stances of the buffalo in which the battle is being played out.

"It goes beyond the gimmick; there's a story within a story, a sculpture within a sculpture," he says.

For now, the piece stands out in the prairie near his house, and soon it will be loaded up and moved into the gallery where it will fit the open space. Lopez is keeping the Kokomo Inn name out front — it is iconic in Lemmon and happens to be the actual name of another Indian, Chief Kokomo of the Miami tribe that once populated the lower Great Lakes region. Word is old George Raba took a liking to the name when he came across it in Indiana and it stuck.

It has stuck and withstands the test of time, just as Lopez believes in his sculptures along with his commitment to Lemmon's history.

While he intends the gallery to be a showroom for his art, he is making one important exception. Canvas paintings by his Nigerian artist friends of mural fame, Jonathan Imafidor and Dotun Popoola, will be for sale in a week-long exhibit starting from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. June 10 and ending June 17 with live music and other events.

The public is invited. For those, like Hoff, who remember the Kokomo Inn's heyday so well, it might be a strange transition walking through that door into the past.

"It's awesome that he saved the building, but it's hard. It's like going back to your parent's house and finding someone remodeled it," Hoff said.

Fishing tournament in South Dakota honors deceased veteran

By SARA BERTSCH, The Daily Republic

PLATTE, S.D. (AP) — What started as a way to remember the late Terry Severson has since grown to help veterans across South Dakota.

The third annual Terry Severson Memorial Fishing Tournament took place last week at the Platte Creek Recreation Area to both honor his memory, and also raise money for area veterans, The Daily Republic (<http://bit.ly/2rXYovX>) reported.

Severson was a member of the 153rd Engineer Battalion, serving in the Iraq War from February 2004 to January 2005. He served in the Army National Guard for 19 years up until his death in March 2014.

Severson, who suffered from undiagnosed post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), killed himself, according to LeRoy Severson, Terry's brother and founder of the memorial fishing tournament.

Lake Francis Case on the Missouri River, south of Platte, was Terry's favorite place to fish, his brother said, and a fishing tournament seemed like the best way to honor him and help others who might be facing the same struggles.

"One of the things Terry was about was helping people ..." LeRoy said. "I thought this was kind of a way to reach out to them and say, 'Hey if you need to talk, let's talk.' Let's not let this happen to anybody else."

The tournament, which began June 2015, started out as a way for the family and military buddies to get together and share stories, LeRoy said. But it has since grown. This year 40 teams entered, nearly doubling from the first and second year.

In the past, the money raised from the tournament has been donated to area groups including the American Legion Post 115, Legion Baseball team in Platte, Platte Ministerial Association and Youth Group and the 155th Engineer Company stationed out of Wagner and Rapid City.

But this year, LeRoy decided to do something a little bit different. Instead of donating to a local organization, he created a goal: to build an ATV cart for the Paralyzed Veterans of America's annual pheasant hunt in Platte.

The cart allows paralyzed veterans to ride along during hunts. The Platte pheasant hunt already has

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one cart, but due to the high amount of paralyzed veterans interested in tagging along, LeRoy decided it'd be worth it to build another.

"It's like you're walking with the group when you're not mobile," LeRoy said.

Any leftover funds will go to other local organizations, he said, including setting aside funds for veterans suffering from PTSD.

And the community support always amazes the Severson family.

"The local businesses have been way supportive of this, and a lot because they knew Terry and a lot because we're a tight-knit area," LeRoy said.

Not only is it fun for the Seversons, it's also a great way for old friends and military buddies to get together and fish. And for Greg Nielsen it was a great day of fishing.

Nielsen, along with his partner Andy Ronfeldt, took second place, narrowly missing first in the total weight division. But it wasn't about the prizes.

"The prizes and cash is all great, but being here to support the veterans and the organization for the third annual Terry Severson Memorial Fishing Tournament is the main thing," Nielsen said.

Nielsen served alongside Terry in the Army National Guard since 1997. He, along with Ronfeldt, also know the family well, coaching several of Severson's nephews in wrestling.

Nielsen said there were troops from the 155th at the tournament as well, attending on behalf of the National Guard.

"We all miss Terry, and glad that his family can put this tournament on in his remembrance," Nielsen said.

Tony Herting, Rob Johnson and Austin Herting, of Canton, won the tournament with 15.9 pounds.

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

Game, Fish and Parks restoring public access to 24 lakes

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks is working to restore public access to two dozen lakes after lawmakers approved a measure governing the use of lakes on private land for recreation, the agency said Tuesday.

Staff will remove cables blocking access to the lakes by the end of the day, the agency said in a statement. Full services including docks will be restored by the end of the week.

Game, Fish and Parks Secretary Kelly Hepler thanked lawmakers for acting quickly to pass the plan during a Monday special legislative session on so-called nonmeandered waters.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard that evening signed the bill into law, declaring nearly 30 specific lakes open. The law also says that lakes on private property are open for recreational use unless a landowner installs signs or buoys saying an area is closed, though property owners could still grant permission to use the water.

The measure would bar them from being paid for allowing fishing. It sunsets in June 2018, meaning lawmakers will have to revisit the issue in the upcoming legislative session.

Nonmeandered waters are bodies of water that weren't specially designated during government surveys in the late 1800s. Some private property has since flooded, forming new, unofficial bodies of water and creating good fishing, but it's come at the cost of farmland and pastures lost by agriculture producers.

The issue has long vexed landowners and outdoor enthusiasts. State officials intervened after a South Dakota Supreme Court ruling in March that said the Legislature must decide the extent the public can use the waters on private land for recreation.

Daugaard has called the lakes an "economic engine," saying their closure has hurt small-town businesses. There are thousands of nonmeandered lakes in South Dakota, but only roughly 90 have had fishing, according to Game, Fish and Parks.

Donna Bumann's bait shop and motel in Lake Preston have suffered significantly since the state restricted access to a lake called "Dry #2." Bumann said she's glad the lakes are open and hopes business turns around for the summer.

"I'm expecting phone calls throughout the day" for reservations, Bumann said.

South Dakota gets \$2M federal grant to fight opioid use

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The state Department of Social Services has been awarded \$2 million in federal funds to help fight opioid use in South Dakota.

The Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2rrGEW5>) reports that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has issued grants to states to combat the nation's opioid epidemic.

Department of Social Services Secretary Lynne Valenti says while South Dakota's opioid use rate remains low, there has been an increase in use. She says the grant will provide more resources in treatment and prevention services with the goal of reversing that trend.

Some of the new money will be used to outfit additional emergency responders with naloxone, the medication used to counteract opioid overdoses. The funds would also be used to expand access to treatment and offer training for physicians, prescribers and treatment providers.

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

Activist prepared to take pipeline protest case to trial

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON, Associated Press**

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — An American Indian activist and former U.S. congressional candidate accused of inciting a riot during protests against the Dakota Access oil pipeline says he has no qualms about taking the case to trial, even though he could face more than five years in prison if convicted.

Chase Iron Eyes maintains his innocence and pleaded not guilty in March to the felony charge and also misdemeanor criminal trespass. He is scheduled for a one-day trial on Feb. 8, 2018, in Mandan, just west of Bismarck.

Iron Eyes' attorney also represented Hollywood actress Shailene Woodley, who signed a plea deal earlier this year that kept her out of jail in another high-profile protest case. Unlike Woodley, Iron Eyes said, he still lives and works in the area where the protests occurred and has "a huge and sincere concern about the administration of justice."

"If it takes that we have to go to trial to achieve those goals, then that's a good thing," he said. "That's what our system of justice is designed to do."

Iron Eyes and 73 others were arrested on Feb. 1 after erecting teepees on land that authorities said is owned by pipeline developer Energy Transfer Partners. Protesters maintained they were peacefully assembling on land they believe rightfully belongs to American Indians.

Iron Eyes hasn't disputed his involvement, but he says he wasn't the leader of the effort and had no authority to stop it.

Prosecutors did not respond to requests for comment from The Associated Press. But authorities have alleged in statements and court documents that Iron Eyes helped lead a "rogue group" of "aggressive" protesters who set up the short-lived camp, and that he negotiated with law officers on behalf of the camp, "holding himself out as the new camp's leader."

Dave Archambault, chairman of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe, which led opposition to the pipeline, condemned the group's action at the time, saying it undermined legitimate protests.

The pipeline protests in southern North Dakota ended in February, after President Donald Trump's administration and the courts allowed construction on the \$3.8 billion project to wrap up. The line went into service this month, transporting North Dakota oil 1,200 miles (1,930 kilometers) across South Dakota and Iowa to a distribution point in Illinois.

Iron Eyes, a member of the Standing Rock tribe, made an unsuccessful bid for North Dakota's lone U.S. House seat last year. He said he considers himself a part of an informal "reconciliation process" that involves people from the reservation normalizing relations with people in the Bismarck-Mandan region, where protests often disrupted businesses, farmers and motorists.

"The pipeline brought out the ugliness on both sides. There was no shortage of that," he said. "We

just need to take it slow and rebound. I wouldn't have run for Congress in North Dakota if I didn't have confidence in North Dakota, and in Standing Rock."

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

Hot temps, strong winds exacerbate drought in South Dakota

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Parts of South Dakota got much-needed rain over the past week, but hot temperatures and strong winds continue to exacerbate drought conditions in many areas.

The weekly crop report from the federal Agriculture Department says topsoil moisture supplies statewide are rated 63 percent short or very short, and subsoil moisture is 58 percent in those categories.

Less than half of the state's corn and soybean crops are rated in good to excellent condition, and only 13 percent of the spring wheat crop is in those categories.

In the ranching community, pasture and range conditions are rated 45 percent poor or very poor. Stock water supplies are 65 percent adequate to surplus

Nevada man caught in Sturgis Rally sex sting sentenced

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A Nevada man caught in a sex trafficking sting at the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in South Dakota in 2015 has been sentenced to two years in federal prison.

Twenty-nine-year-old Michael Preston, of Henderson, Nevada, was arrested in an undercover law enforcement operation targeting people willing to pay for sex with underage girls.

He was later convicted, and recently sentenced. South Dakota U.S. Attorney Randolph Seiler says Preston will be on supervised release for two years following his prison term.

Rapper Chief Keef accused of drug possession in South Dakota

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Chicago rapper Chief Keef has been arrested in South Dakota, accused of drug possession.

The rapper, whose legal name is Keith Cozart, was booked into the Minnehaha County Jail Monday following his arrest at the Sioux Falls Regional Airport. Police say airport security found marijuana in his carry-on bag.

Promoters say Chief Keef performed Sunday at an anti-bullying celebrity basketball event at the University of Sioux Falls.

Kowabunga Music issued a statement saying he has had problems in the past but that he has fixed himself.

Chief Keef was charged with disorderly conduct in Atlanta in May 2013, and he spent two months in juvenile detention earlier that year for violating probation on a weapons conviction. He was sentenced to probation for pointing a gun at police in 2012.

Manhunt sparked by slaying of prison guards, inmates' escape

By KATE BRUMBACK, Associated Press

Two Georgia inmates serving long prison sentences and "dangerous beyond description" overpowered and killed two guards on a prison bus before fleeing in a stolen car, authorities said.

The deadly escape happened about 6:45 a.m. Tuesday as the guards drove 33 inmates between prisons, and it set off a massive manhunt involving local, state and federal officers, Putnam County Sheriff Howard Sills said.

Sills was emotional as he described the scene.

"I saw two brutally murdered corrections officers, that's what I saw," he said. "I have their blood on my shoes."

Donnie Russell Rowe, serving life without parole, and Ricky Dubose, who has prominent tattoos on his face and neck, overpowered, disarmed and killed Sgt. Christopher Monica and Sgt. Curtis Billue and then

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carjacked a driver who happened to pull up behind the bus on a rural highway, Sills said.

They got into the "grass green," four-door 2004 Honda Civic with the Georgia license plate number RBJ-6601 and drove west on state Highway 16 toward Eatonton, southeast of Atlanta.

"We are still desperately looking for these two individuals. They are armed with 9 mm pistols that were taken from these correctional officers. They are dangerous beyond description. If anyone sees them or comes into contact, they need to call 911 immediately," the sheriff said.

The two inmates got a head start by taking and tossing the Honda driver's cellphone and leaving the other 31 prisoners locked inside the bus, Sills said.

"My biggest worry is they're going to kill somebody else," Sills said.

Later Tuesday, the manhunt shifted about 25 miles (40 kilometers) to the north to the city of Madison, where Sills said the two men burglarized a house and then two men fitting their descriptions were reportedly seen in a Family Dollar store less than a mile away. Authorities had no further signs of the inmates and had no reason to believe they had split up, Sills said.

Multiple agencies contributed to a reward of \$60,000 for information leading to the arrests of the two inmates, Georgia Bureau of Investigation spokeswoman Nelly Miles said.

Monica and Billue were both transfer sergeants at Baldwin State Prison. Monica had been with the Georgia Department of Corrections since October 2009 and Billue since July 2007.

How the two inmates managed to reach and overpower the guards remains under investigation, Sills said.

"They were inside the caged area of the bus," he said. "How they got through the locks and things up to that area I do not know."

Protocol is to have two armed corrections officers on the bus, but the officers don't wear bullet-proof vests during transfers, Corrections Commissioner Greg Dozier said.

"We lost two of our fellow officers, two of our kin. We see our officers as our family," Dozier said.

Monica was 42 and leaves behind a wife, Dozier said. Billue was 58 and is survived by his father, five sisters, two brothers and two sons, said Jim Green, an attorney who's speaking for the Billue family.

"Officer Billue's family asks for prayers for all of those who are now placing their own lives at risk to bring these men to justice and asks anyone who has information that may assist in apprehending these perpetrators to please contact law enforcement," Green said in an email.

The guards were moving the inmates to a diagnostic prison in Jackson, where their next placement was to be determined, Dozier said, adding that inmates do not know their transfer dates ahead of time.

Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal pledged every state resource necessary to catch the pair.

"The selflessness and courage of these two brave souls will not be forgotten, nor will their sacrifice and service," Deal said in an emailed statement.

U.S. Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein said federal resources are being committed to help catch the fugitives. The FBI and U.S. Marshals have joined the investigation, Sills said.

"An attack on any American law enforcement officer is an attack on every American law enforcement officer and the principles we all believe in," Rosenstein told a Senate budget panel in Washington Tuesday morning.

Both escaped inmates were serving long sentences for armed robbery and other crimes. The Department of Corrections said Rowe, 43, has been serving life without parole since 2002, and Dubose, 24, began a 20-year sentence in 2015.

A photo released by the sheriff's office in Elbert County, the site of his most recent conviction, shows Dubose with prominent tattoos. He appears to have a crown tattooed above his right eyebrow, writing above his left eyebrow and large letters covering the entire front of his neck.

"They need to surrender before we find 'em," Sills said.

Associated Press writers Kathleen Foody in Atlanta and Russ Bynum in Savannah, Georgia, contributed to this report.

6 killed, dozens injured in massive London high-rise blaze

By GREGORY KATZ and DANICA KIRKA, Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — A deadly night-time fire raced through a 24-story apartment tower in London early Wednesday, killing at least six people and injuring dozens more. Some desperate residents threw their children from high windows, hoping someone on the ground would catch them.

Police commander Stuart Cundy said there were six confirmed fatalities, adding that the figure was likely to rise “during what will be a complex recovery operation over a number of days.”

People in the apartments cornered by the quickly advancing flames and thick smoke banged on windows and screamed for help to those watching down below, witnesses and survivors said.

Flames from the inferno lit up the night and smoke spewed from the windows of the Grenfell Tower in North Kensington where more than 200 firefighters battled the blaze and went into the building with breathing apparatus. A plume of black smoke stretched for miles (kilometers) across the pale sky after dawn, revealing the blackened, flame-licked wreckage of the building.

“This is an unprecedented incident,” Fire Commissioner Dany Cotton told reporters on the scene. “In my 29 years of being a firefighter I have never, ever seen anything of this scale.”

The London Fire Brigade received the first reports of the fire at 12:54 a.m. and the first engines arrived within six minutes, she said. Flames could still be seen more than 10 hours later.

There was no immediate word on the cause, but angry residents said they had repeatedly warned about a potential fire threat. One resident said the fire alarm did not go off.

Samira Lamrani, a witness, said a woman dropped a baby from a window on the ninth or 10th floor to people on the sidewalk.

“People were starting to appear at the windows, frantically banging and screaming,” Lamrani said, and the woman gestured that she wanted to drop a baby. “Somebody did, a gentleman ran forward and managed to grab the baby,” Lamrani told Britain’s Press Association news agency.

Ruks Mamudu, 69, escaped from her first floor apartment wearing only her purple pajamas and bathrobe. She and her grandson sat outside the building and watched people trapped on higher floors cry desperately for help. “I sat there watching my house burn down and watching people cry for help who couldn’t come down,” she said.

People at the scene spoke of being unable to reach friends and family inside. Others said they could see people inside using flashlights and mobile phones to try to signal for help from higher floors.

Nassima Boutrig, who lives opposite the building, said she was awakened by sirens and smoke so thick that it filled her home as well. “We saw the people screaming,” she said. “A lot of people said ‘help, help, help.’ The fire brigade could only help downstairs. It was fire up, up, up. They couldn’t stop the fire.”

The disaster occurred 10 days after a terror attack at London’s Borough Market, and some locals said they initially feared the fire was also terror-related, though authorities discounted that possibility.

“The flames, I have never seen anything like it, it just reminded me of 9/11,” said Muna Ali, 45. “The fire started on the upper floors ... oh my goodness, it spread so quickly, it had completely spread within half an hour.”

Other witnesses described a white, polystyrene-type material falling like snow from the building as it burned. Some locals feared the charred tower block might collapse but a structural engineer said the building was not in danger, London Fire Brigade said.

Edward Daffarn, a 55-year-old who lived on the building’s 16th floor, said the fire alarm didn’t ring. “I’m lucky to be alive. A neighbor’s smoke alarm went off and another neighbor phoned and told me to get out,” he said.

Daffarn said residents had complained for years to London City Council about building safety, to no avail. “I consider this mass murder,” he said of the blaze.

Grenfell Tower was recently upgraded at a cost of 8.6 million pounds (\$11 million), with work finishing in May 2016. The Grenfell Action Group, a community organization formed to oppose a nearby redevelopment project, has been warning about the risk of fire at Grenfell Tower since 2013.

The group has raised concerns about testing and maintenance of firefighting equipment and blocked emergency access to the site. "All our warnings fell on deaf ears and we predicted that a catastrophe like this was inevitable and just a matter of time," the group said in a blog post written after the fire broke out.

A July 2014 newsletter for residents said the building was designed "according to rigorous fire safety standards." It recommended that in case of a fire in the building residents should stay inside their apartments.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan said many questions now need to be answered about tower blocks around the city.

"There will be a great many questions over the coming days as to the cause of this tragedy and I want to reassure Londoners that we will get all the answers," Khan said in a statement.

Associated Press journalists Cara Rubinsky, Sylvia Hui and Ben Jary contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to show that the building has 24 floors, not 27.

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

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

1. DEADLY FIRE RIPS THROUGH LONDON HIGH-RISE

Fire sweeps through a 24-story apartment building in west London, killing an unknown number of people and sending more than 50 people to area hospitals, officials say.

2. SESSIONS DEFENDS HIMSELF BEFORE SENATE PANEL

The attorney general denies having an undisclosed meeting with Russia's ambassador to the U.S. and rejects any claim of misconduct in the ouster of FBI Director James Comey.

3. US COLLEGE STUDENT RELEASED BY NORTH KOREA HOME, BUT IN COMA

Otto Warmbier, 22, who was serving a 15-year prison term with hard labor for alleged anti-state acts, lands in Cincinnati and is taken by ambulance to a hospital.

4. 'DANGEROUS BEYOND DESCRIPTION'

Two Georgia inmates serving long prison sentences overpower and kill two guards on a prison bus before fleeing in a stolen car, authorities say.

5. AMID CRIMINAL CASE, COSBY FIGHTING LAWSUITS BY 10 WOMEN

Seven women have defamation suits pending in Massachusetts, while three more have defamation or sexual battery suits pending in California.

6. HOW TRUMP IMPACTED VIRGINIA PRIMARY

Democratic voters backed the more moderate and establishment-favored gubernatorial candidate over a liberal insurgent.

7. WHO IS SUING TRUMP OVER FOREIGN PAYMENTS

Almost 200 Democratic lawmakers allege he is violating the emoluments clause of the Constitution as foreign money continues to flow into his global business empire.

8. STRONG EARTHQUAKE ROCKS WESTERN GUATEMALA

A magnitude 6.9 temblor strikes near Tajumulco, causing moderate damage to homes and triggering some landslides across highways.

9. FED EXPECTED TO AGAIN RAISE SHORT-TERM RATE

But anticipation surrounds the possibility that the central bank could signal policy shifts in a statement it will issue, in updated economic forecasts and anything Chair Janet Yellen might say.

10. 'I OBVIOUSLY HAVE MADE MY FAIR SHARE OF MISTAKES'

Kim Kardashian West tells AP how hurtful comments affect her and how the robbery in Paris has changed her life.

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US college student released by North Korea home, but in coma

By MATTHEW LEE, MATTHEW PENNINGTON and DAKE KANG, Associated Press

CINCINNATI (AP) — An American college student who was released from a North Korean prison is finally home but in a coma and undergoing treatment at an Ohio hospital where he was taken shortly after arriving on U.S. soil.

An airplane carrying Otto Warmbier, who is from Ohio, landed in Cincinnati late Tuesday night. The 22-year-old was then taken by ambulance to the University of Cincinnati Medical Center.

Warmbier was serving a 15-year prison term with hard labor in North Korea for alleged anti-state acts.

In Warmbier's hometown of Wyoming, just outside of Cincinnati, residents helped tie blue and white ribbons, Wyoming High School's colors, to trees and said news of his release had sent waves of shock and joy through the community.

"Everybody feels a sense of relief that he is coming back to the United States," resident Amy Mayer said before he arrived. "I think we're very excited yet very prayerful about what is happening because we've heard he is in a coma. So I think that people are trying to be supportive of the family and let the community-family know that we are very with them."

A hospital spokeswoman said Warmbier's family was expected to hold a news conference Thursday morning at Wyoming High School.

Securing Warmbier's release "was a big priority" for President Donald Trump, who worked "very hard and very closely" with Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said.

While North Korea's move to free Warmbier could potentially provide an opening for talks on security issues, the prospects still appear bleak. International negotiations on the dispute over North Korea's nuclear program have been in limbo for years, as the U.S. cranks up economic sanctions and North Korea won't give up weapons it considers a guarantee against invasion.

The detention of Americans, often sentenced to draconian prison sentences for seemingly small offenses in the totalitarian nation, has compounded tensions between Washington and Pyongyang. Three Americans remain in custody.

Warmbier, a University of Virginia undergraduate, was convicted and sentenced in a one-hour trial in North Korea's Supreme Court in March 2016. He was sentenced to 15 years in prison with hard labor for subversion after he tearfully confessed that he had tried to steal a propaganda banner.

Warmbier's parents, Fred and Cindy Warmbier, said they were told he has been in a coma since his trial, when he was last seen in public, and they had learned of this only one week ago.

"We want the world to know how we and our son have been brutalized and terrorized by the pariah regime" in North Korea, Warmbier's parents said. "We are so grateful that he will finally be with people who love him."

A White House official said Trump had instructed Tillerson to take all appropriate measures to secure the release of Americans held in North Korea. The official referred to them as "hostages."

The U.S. government accuses North Korea of using such detainees as political pawns. North Korea accuses Washington and South Korea of sending spies to overthrow its government.

Warmbier's release came during a visit to North Korea by former NBA star Dennis Rodman, one of few people to have met both North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and President Donald Trump, who was Rodman's boss on "Celebrity Apprentice."

Department of State spokeswoman Heather Nauert told reporters Rodman had nothing to do with Warmbier's release. Rodman, who has traveled to the isolated nation four times since 2013, had told reporters before arriving in Pyongyang that he hopes his trip will "open a door" for Trump.

North Korea poses one of the greatest national security challenges for Trump as it tries to develop a nuclear-tipped missile that could strike America. He is looking to increase economic and diplomatic pressure on North Korea, with help from China but has said he's open to meeting Kim.

In the past, North Korea has held out until senior U.S. officials or statesmen came to personally bail out detainees. A 2009 visit by former President Bill Clinton, a Democrat, secured the freedom of American journalists Euna Lee and Laura Ling.

Tillerson said the Department of State was continuing "to have discussions" with North Korea about the release of other three American citizens imprisoned there.

AP reporters Josh Lederman and Ken Thomas in Washington, Eric Talmadge in Pyongyang, North Korea, Daniel Sewell in Cincinnati and video journalist Sara Gillesby in New York contributed to this report.

Sessions vows to defend himself against 'false allegations'

By ERIC TUCKER and ERICA WERNER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Attorney General Jeff Sessions, a close adviser to President Donald Trump during his battle for the presidency, heatedly defended himself before his former Senate colleagues as he denied having an undisclosed meeting with Russia's ambassador to the United States and rejected any misconduct in the ouster of FBI Director James Comey.

In a dramatic and packed Senate hearing, Sessions vowed to defend his honor "against scurrilous and false allegations" and declared it a "detestable and appalling lie" to suggest he was aware of or took part in any collusion between Russia and the election campaign that sent Trump to the White House.

He also contradicted a contention made by Comey at a hearing before the same panel last week. Comey told the intelligence committee that, after an encounter with President Trump in which he said Trump pressured him to back off an investigation into the former national security adviser, Comey "implored" Sessions to make sure he was never left alone with the president again — but that Sessions didn't respond.

"He didn't recall this, but I responded to his comment by agreeing that the FBI and Department of Justice needed to be careful to follow department policy regarding appropriate contacts with the White House," Sessions said.

The former Alabama senator also defended himself against accusations that he misrepresented himself during his confirmation hearing when he said he hadn't met with Russian officials during the campaign. Sessions argued that in the context of that hearing, "my answer was a fair and correct response to the charge as I understood it."

The attorney general stepped aside from the Justice Department probe into Russian meddling in the campaign on March 2, the day after The Washington Post reported on two previously undisclosed meetings with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak. Days after that, Sessions also corrected his confirmation hearing testimony to inform the committee about his two meetings with Kislyak.

Ahead of the hearing there had been suggestions that Sessions might have had a third, unreported, encounter with Kislyak in April 2016, at Washington's Mayflower Hotel, where candidate Trump was giving his first major foreign policy speech.

Sessions was adamant that he did not have a private meeting with Kislyak at that event. He did allow for the possibility that he encountered him in a reception that he said was attended by a couple dozen people, though he said he had no specific recollection of that.

Democratic senators have seized on the possibility of a third meeting to suggest that Sessions has not been forthcoming about the extent of his communications with the ambassador. Sens. Al Franken of Minnesota and Patrick Leahy of Vermont have sought an FBI investigation.

Sessions testified Tuesday that he recused himself from the current Russia investigation only because of a regulation that required it because of his involvement in the Trump campaign.

"Many have suggested that my recusal is because I felt I was a subject of the investigation myself, that I may have done something wrong," Sessions added. That was not so, he said.

And while he had recused himself from the Russia probe, Sessions insisted, "I did not recuse myself from defending my honor against scurrilous and false allegations."

Democratic Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon aggressively asked Sessions about suggestions arising from Comey's testimony last week that there was something "problematic" about his recusal.

Wyden asked Sessions what problematic issues existed.

"Why don't you tell me? There are none, Sen. Wyden, there are none," Sessions insisted, his voice rising.

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"This is a secret innuendo being leaked out there about me, and I don't appreciate it."

Sessions lent his support to the special counsel, Robert Mueller, who is now in charge of the Trump campaign-Russia investigation. "I have confidence in Mr. Mueller," he said.

At a separate hearing Tuesday, Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein declared he'd seen no basis for dismissing Mueller, the former FBI director he appointed as special counsel after Sessions' recusal. A friend of the president suggested a day earlier that Trump was considering such an ouster.

Rosenstein said he would agree to dismiss Mueller only if there were a legitimate basis to do so, and an order from the president would not necessarily qualify.

Mueller also won votes of support Tuesday from the top two Republicans in Congress, House Speaker Paul Ryan of Wisconsin and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, both of whom said they have confidence in him.

As for Comey's firing, Sessions told senators that his recommendation had nothing to do with the Russia probe, that he and his second-in-command, Rosenstein, had a "clear view ... that we had problems there, and it was my best judgment that a fresh start at the FBI was the appropriate thing to do. And when asked I said that to the president."

Sessions criticized Comey's handling of the Hillary Clinton email investigation, which the White House had initially cited as the ostensible reason for his firing. Comey's decision to announce last year that Clinton would not be prosecuted over her emails was a "usurpation" of the Justice Department's authority, Sessions said.

Asked about Trump's own contention that the president fired Comey with the Russia probe in mind, and regardless of any recommendation from anyone else, Sessions said: "I guess I'll just have to let his words speak for themselves. I'm not sure what was in his mind specifically."

Sessions refused to say whether he had ever discussed the Russia investigation with Trump, arguing that he could not disclose private communications with the president.

Democratic senators pressed him on the legal rationale for his refusal to discuss those private conversations, as Sessions acknowledged that Trump had not asserted executive privilege around the hearing. He asserted that "I am protecting the right of the president to assert if it he chooses and there may be other privileges that may apply."

Sessions maintained that he had not been briefed on the Russia investigation between the time of his February swearing-in and his March 2 recusal.

"As such," he said, "I have no knowledge about this investigation, as it is ongoing today, beyond what has been publicly reported. I don't even read that carefully. And I have taken no action whatsoever with regard to any such investigation."

On another hot-button issue, Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., asked Sessions whether Trump records his conversations in the White House. Trump has suggested there might be tapes of his encounters with Comey; Comey said last week that "lordy" he hopes there are.

"I do not," Sessions said when asked whether he knows whether the president records his conversations. Would any such tapes have to be preserved? "I don't know, Sen. Rubio, probably so," Sessions replied.

Associated Press writers Deb Riechmann, Sadie Gurman and Mary Clare Jalonick contributed to this report.

US steps up security for U19 basketball tournament in Egypt

By BRIAN MAHONEY, AP Basketball Writer

John Calipari would prefer to focus on the players he wants and the offense he'll run.

This time, there are other concerns.

When he leads the U.S. basketball team into the Under-19 World Cup for men, they will travel to Egypt, home to enough violence lately that the Americans questioned whether it was safe enough to even go defend their title.

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Calipari spoke to parents seeking answers he didn't even have for himself, but he knew where he could get them. Gen. Martin Dempsey, the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is now USA Basketball's chairman, and a conversation a few weeks ago that detailed the Americans' security plans and procedures put Calipari's mind at ease.

"I'm trying to figure out basketball, let alone trying to figure out security and so all I can say to the parents is I'm comfortable making this trip," the Kentucky coach said. "And believe me, three or four weeks ago I was like, 'Come on now, talk to me, how are we going to do this?' And from that point when I was on the phone with Gen. Dempsey, I knew at the end of the day either he was going to feel real comfortable with what was going on or we wouldn't go."

USA Basketball CEO Jim Tooley said the U.S. and other federations raised concerns with basketball's governing body a year ago when it selected Cairo to host the July 1-9 event. Any fears only heightened in recent months when more than 100 people were killed since December in four separate attacks targeting Christians claimed by the Islamic State group.

But Dempsey stressed that most of the danger is beyond Cairo, while the capital city is well protected. And Tooley said that during a recent discussion with FIBA it was revealed that security for the event had now fallen under the control of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, rather than the office of sports ministry.

"So while we are very much aware of the challenges of security in Egypt, we have concluded that the venue — that is to say where the games will be played, the hotel, the transit zones — will be secured adequately and gives us confidence to send a team over there," Dempsey said.

USA Basketball took the unusual step of deciding that the U-19 team would be given the same level of security as an Olympic team, with more staff on the ground and greater intelligence shared. The Americans have been criticized for the lengths they go to comfort their millionaire players, such as staying on a cruise ship rather than the athletes' village in Rio, but NBA Finals MVP Kevin Durant said he's always felt safe while winning two Olympic golds and a world title with the Americans.

"I'm sure they've been doing their work for years in advance on this thing and trying to make sure it's perfect for the players, so I have no concerns that USA Basketball won't get it done," Durant said. "So hopefully everybody's comfortable going and have a great time and win a gold."

Though the Americans have won two straight golds in the 16-nation tournament, fielding a team is challenging. Many college coaches would prefer their incoming recruits on campus in summer school, and with the security concerns this time, Tooley figures some players Calipari may have wanted passed on invites to training camp next week.

But Chuma Okeke of Atlanta, who will be a freshman next season at Auburn, will be among the 28 players in Colorado Springs, Colorado. His mother, Renee, reached out to a USA Basketball official with some questions, but ultimately decided to let her son attend after getting the answers and doing enough research on her own into the situation in Egypt that she said she'd even feel comfortable going.

"It was explained to me that the USA Basketball security team is really experienced in that area so I really don't have any worries," she said. "They reassured me that my young man will be safe so I'm OK with it. And you know what, even if I wasn't, I could not stop Chuma from going. I could not. He understands what the climate is but he still wants to go."

And Dempsey feels the Americans should, not only to give their younger players experience with the international game, but to show FIBA they're a good partner. With their precautions in place, Dempsey said the Americans have done everything they can to be prepared — and now it's Calipari's turn.

"I said, 'OK Cal, now that we've got this behind us, how about you stop worrying about that?'" Dempsey said. "We'll keep worrying about that, you go win us a gold medal."

Rodman's N. Korea trip off to uncharacteristic low-key start

By ERIC TALMADGE, Associated Press

PYONGYANG, North Korea (AP) — Dennis Rodman's visit to North Korea has been uncharacteristically low-key so far. On the agenda? Bowling and a visit to the zoo.

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There is no clear sign that the former NBA bad boy will meet leader Kim Jong Un, as he did on previous visits to the isolated country. Such a meeting, though, typically wouldn't be announced in advance.

Rodman watched a women's basketball team practice at a gym Wednesday and visited the birthplace of North Korean founder Kim Il Sung, the grandfather of the current leader. He refused to answer questions about his trip, saying only, "A little hot, baby, it's a little hot. But it's cool, it's cool."

What, if anything, substantive Rodman is doing in North Korea remains unclear. He has said he is just going to have a good time but has also hinted he is "trying to open a door" for better relations between Washington and Pyongyang.

He is scheduled to meet the sports minister, visit a newly built high-tech science complex and the Pyongyang Zoo, and go bowling before he leaves Saturday.

His four past trips in 2013 and 2014 generated a storm of publicity, most of it unfavorable, and did little in terms of diplomacy. Critics of engagement with North Korea say Rodman's visits legitimize the country's ruling regime.

In 2014, Rodman arranged a basketball game with other former NBA players and North Koreans and regaled leader Kim with a rendition of "Happy Birthday." On the same trip, he suggested an American missionary was at fault for his own imprisonment in North Korea, remarks for which he later apologized.

Americans are regarded as enemies in North Korea because the two countries never signed a peace treaty at the end of the 1950-53 Korean War. Thousands of U.S. troops are based in South Korea, and the Demilitarized Zone between the North and South is one of the most heavily fortified borders in the world.

U.S and North Korean officials say Rodman had nothing to do with the release of American student Otto Warmbier, who had been serving a 15-year sentence in a North Korean prison for alleged anti-state acts. A plane carrying Warmbier arrived late Tuesday at an airport in Cincinnati.

Three other Americans remain imprisoned in North Korea.

Growing frenzy outside court as Cosby deliberations wear on

By MARYCLAIRE DALE and MICHAEL R. SISAk, Associated Press

NORRISTOWN, Pa. (AP) — For all the ways the judge in Bill Cosby's sexual assault trial has streamlined the case inside the courtroom, the frenzy outside grows larger and wilder each day of jury deliberations.

The media presence, large but manageable during five days of testimony last week, has ballooned as the verdict seems near. Hotel rooms are sold out for miles. Victim advocates grow in number on the courthouse steps, and the Cosby camp's spin grows louder.

Cosby spokesman Andrew Wyatt, who guides the vision-impaired Cosby throughout his day, has drawn throngs of cameras with his updates on Cosby's mood — "very confident," is a common refrain — and assertions that the 79-year-old comedian isn't getting a fair shake.

On Friday, he took to the steps to float the idea that Cosby might testify when the defense case opened on Monday. It never happened, but the suggestion was enough to dominate the headlines just as prosecutors were closing their case with Cosby's damaging deposition testimony.

"Cosby's team is trying to plant seeds of doubt about this trial with his fans so they don't abandon him. They're tugging on the heart strings of nostalgia," said David La Torre, who ran Penn State's public relations during the Jerry Sandusky child sex abuse scandal. "Their parallel strategies make sense, given what's at stake for Mr. Cosby. He's fighting for his personal and professional lives."

On Tuesday, as jury deliberations stretched into a second day without signs of a verdict, Wyatt steered reporters to a former colleague of accuser Andrea Constand who said Constand had once suggested she would try to set up a famous man to get money. The judge had barred her hearsay testimony from the trial, but Wyatt made sure her statement got out.

Constand alleges Cosby gave her three sedatives he claimed were an herbal remedy and then groped her breast and genitals while she was paralyzed and unable to fight him off. Cosby said he was in a romantic relationship with the young staffer on the women's basketball team at his alma mater, Temple University, and that the encounter was consensual.

"If he's found guilty, his estate would likely take an enormous financial hit that would devastate his family. That's why their approach makes practical sense, even if it makes some feel uncomfortable," La Torre said. Jurors appeared tired and spent when they decided to call it quits late Tuesday after about 16 hours of deliberations. They'll resume Wednesday morning.

The judge praised them for being remarkably conscientious as they consider three counts of felony aggravated indecent assault that could put Cosby in prison for the rest of his life.

The jury's day began Tuesday by reviewing more than a dozen passages from Cosby's decade-old deposition, including his telling Constand the pills were "three friends" to make her relax.

Cosby left the courthouse on Wyatt's arm Tuesday night, shouting the "Fat Albert" catchphrase "hey, hey, hey" and giving a thumbs-up as he got in his SUV. He didn't comment to reporters.

The AP does not typically identify people who say they are victims of sexual assault unless they grant permission, which Constand has done.

For more on Cosby, including trial updates, historical photos, videos and an audio series exploring the case, visit <http://www.apnews.com/tag/CosbyonTrial>.

Ed Gillespie wins GOP nomination, will face Northam

By ALAN SUDERMAN, Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Virginia Lt. Gov. Ralph Northam won the Democratic nomination in the closely watched race for governor Tuesday, defeating a more liberal insurgent challenger in a contest to be one of the party's standard-bearers against President Donald Trump.

Northam will face Ed Gillespie in the general election. The former Republican National Committee chairman eked out an uncomfortably close victory against an outspoken Trump supporter who made preserving Virginia's Confederate history a top campaign issue.

Although the Democratic contest garnered the most pre-election attention, Gillespie's narrow victory against former Trump state campaign chairman Corey Stewart provided the night's biggest surprise. Gillespie was expected to win easily, and the close contest shows Trump's enduring appeal among GOP voters in Virginia and a potentially rocky path forward for Republicans in a state where Democrats have won every statewide election since 2009.

Northam wound up handily defeating former U.S. Rep. Tom Perriello, who ran as an unapologetic liberal crusader supported by prominent national Democrats like Sens. Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren as the best candidate to take on Trump.

Northam, a usually low-key pediatric neurologist, won running as a pragmatist with the state Democratic establishment's firm support. He gave a fiery victory speech Tuesday, vowing to win over Perriello supporters and lead Democrats in retaking control of the state House of Delegates in the general election.

"It is time for us to get back on offense and stop playing so much defense," Northam said.

The general election is expected to be an early referendum on the president and a preview of what the 2018 midterm elections will look like. Virginia is one of only two states electing new governors this year, and the swing-state contest is likely to draw intense national scrutiny for signs of how voters are reacting to Trump's first year in office.

At Northam's event in Arlington, there were cheers and high fives as news spread that he had been declared the victor.

Hyun Lee, 37, of Centreville, Virginia, who had done phone banking and knocked on doors for Northam, was one of the people at the party.

"I trust his leadership. I trust his dedication to all Virginians," Lee said of Northam. "He cares for everyone."

Perriello made a surprise entrance into the race in January and faced an uphill climb from the beginning. He energized many new-to-politics voters who oppose Trump but was ultimately unable to expand the universe of Democratic primary voters enough to counter Northam's advantages.

Perriello pledged in his concession speech to help Northam and said his campaign had shown that a

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"movement" is "rising up."

"I don't know about you, but I'm inspired to keep fighting tonight," Perriello said.

Northam essentially had been campaigning for years, making key contacts with influential power brokers like prominent African-American politicians and religious leaders, and building up a large cash advantage that let him outspend Perriello on TV advertising in the closing weeks of the race.

In the Republican race, Gillespie enjoyed a huge fundraising advantage against Stewart and state Sen. Frank Wagner as well as the support of most state Republican lawmakers. Gillespie ran largely on pocketbook issues, like lowering the state income tax rate, but kept Trump at arm's length.

Kevin Felty, a Norfolk Republican, said he voted for Gillespie because of his fundraising prowess in what's likely to be a bloody general campaign. Felty, a 48-year-old surgical assistant, said a GOP victory in Virginia would wrestle back the "narrative being touted in the mainstream media that the Democrats are gaining traction" under Trump.

"I see this as the midterm of the midterms," said Felty, who voted for Trump and remains steadfast in his support. "I think it has bigger consequences than people imagine."

At his victory party, Gillespie joked that he'd been fiscally prudent by not spending any more than was necessary to win the primary and asked the supporters of Stewart and Wagner to get behind him.

"We want you to be part of our effort," Gillespie said, adding that Virginia cannot afford another four years with a Democrat as governor.

But it's unclear how much Stewart supporters will rally behind Gillespie. Stewart repeatedly blasted the former Washington lobbyist as a product of the "swamp" Trump had pledged to drain, and said Tuesday evening that he's against party unity for unity's sake.

"There's one word you will never hear from me and that's 'unity.' Because look, folks, we've been backing down too long ... in defense of our culture, our heritage and our country," said Stewart, who did not immediately concede.

Isaac Smith, 21, of Charlottesville, who campaigned for Stewart, said Stewart's showing was "remarkable" given the fact that he was badly outspent. Smith viewed the results as a vindication of Trump.

Asked if he would support Gillespie in the general election, Smith said: "At most, I will vote for him. I will not campaign for him."

Associated Press reporters Ben Finley in Norfolk, Jessica Gresko in Arlington, Matthew Barakat in Woodbridge and Alanna Durkin Richer in Richmond contributed to this report.

Rodman begins sightseeing on NKorea trip he hopes opens door

By ERIC TALMADGE, Associated Press

PYONGYANG, North Korea (AP) — Dennis Rodman, the former NBA bad boy who has palled around with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, began sightseeing in Pyongyang on Wednesday during a trip he said he hoped would "open a door" for his former "Celebrity Apprentice" boss — President Donald Trump.

Hours after his arrival the previous day, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson announced that North Korea had released an American student serving a 15-year prison term with hard labor for alleged anti-state acts. A plane carrying Otto Warmbier arrived late Tuesday at an airport in Cincinnati. His parents say he has been in a coma and was medically evacuated.

Tillerson said the State Department secured his release at Trump's direction, and a spokeswoman was firm in saying Rodman's trip had nothing to do with Warmbier's release.

Rodman, one of the few people to know both of the nuclear-armed leaders, sported dark sunglasses and athletic wear as he left his hotel in a black limo Wednesday morning without comment. He is scheduled to meet North Korea's sports minister before he leaves the country on Saturday.

He was met by North Korean Vice Minister of Sports Son Kwang Ho at the airport, saying then, "I'm just here to see some friends and have a good time."

It was a relatively low-key arrival after his four past trips since 2013 generated a lot of publicity — most of it unfavorable — and did little in terms of diplomacy. His current visit has already been roundly criticized

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by some for its timing, during high tensions between the U.S. and North Korea over its weapons programs and recent missile launches.

"Well, I'm pretty sure he's pretty much happy with the fact that I'm over here trying to accomplish something that we both need," Rodman said in Beijing when asked if Trump was aware of the trip.

Rodman said the issue of several Americans detained by North Korea is "not my purpose right now," in remarks made in Beijing before the release of Warmbier was publicly disclosed.

The University of Virginia student from suburban Cincinnati who publicly confessed to trying to steal a propaganda banner left North Korea on Tuesday morning, a foreign ministry official confirmed.

Warmbier's parents said in a statement to The Associated Press that they had learned only a week ago that their son has been in a coma since March 2016.

In Seoul, South Korea, U.S. Undersecretary of State Thomas Shannon said "we pray for him and we pray for his family."

Tillerson said the State Department is continuing to discuss three other detained Americans with North Korea.

In 2014, Rodman arranged a basketball game with other former NBA players and North Koreans and regaled leader Kim with a rendition of "Happy Birthday." On the same trip, he suggested an American missionary was at fault for his own imprisonment in North Korea, remarks for which he later apologized.

Any visit to North Korea by a high-profile American is a political minefield.

Rodman has been criticized for failing to use his influence on leaders who are otherwise isolated diplomatically from the rest of the world. He has generally brushed off such criticism as unfair because as an athlete and celebrity he shouldn't be expected to solve difficult political problems.

Americans are regarded as enemies in North Korea because the two countries never signed a peace treaty to formally end the 1950-53 Korean War. Thousands of U.S. troops are based in South Korea, and the Demilitarized Zone between the North and South is one of the most heavily fortified borders in the world.

A statement issued in New York by a Rodman publicist said the former NBA player is in the rare position of being friends with the leaders of both North Korea and the United States. Rodman was a cast member on two seasons of Trump's TV reality show "Celebrity Apprentice."

Rodman tweeted that his trip was being sponsored by Potcoin, one of a growing number of cybercurrencies used to buy and sell marijuana in state-regulated markets.

There is an internet urban legend that North Korea is a pothead paradise and maybe even the next Amsterdam of pot tourism. But the claim that marijuana is legal in North Korea is not true — it's considered a controlled substance in the same category as cocaine and heroin.

Americans have been sentenced to years in North Korean prisons for seemingly minor offenses and likely could not expect leniency if the country's drug laws were violated.

Associated Press journalists Mark Schiefelbein in Beijing, Mari Yamaguchi in Tokyo and Matthew Lee in Washington contributed to this report.

Key takeaways from Attorney General Sessions' testimony

By **SADIE GURMAN** and **ERIC TUCKER**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Attorney General Jeff Sessions gave more than two hours of sometimes heated testimony Tuesday, with Democrats demanding details of matters including conversations with President Donald Trump, interactions with the Russian ambassador and the firing of FBI Director James Comey. The appearance before the Senate intelligence committee gave Sessions a chance to defend himself, but offered little new insight.

Some takeaways from Sessions' appearance before the committee:

COLLUSION

Sessions, a close Trump adviser during the battle for the presidency, said in his opening statement that it was a "detestable and appalling lie" to suggest he was aware of or participated in any collusion between Russia and the Trump campaign. He said he never met with, or had conversations with, Russians about

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election interference.

Sessions recused himself from the Russia probe in March after it was revealed he twice met with the Russian ambassador during the campaign but failed to say so at his confirmation hearing. Sessions reiterated Tuesday those meetings were in his capacity as a lawmaker and not about the campaign.

RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR

Sessions was adamant he never had a third meeting with the Ambassador Sergey Kislyak. He did allow for the possibility the men could have had a brief interaction "in passing" at a well-attended reception at the Mayflower Hotel before an April 2016 foreign policy speech by then-candidate Trump. But Sessions said he had no recollection of that.

He's been hounded by speculation over the possibility of a third meeting, with Democratic senators calling for an investigation. But he angrily denounced such claims as "secret innuendo," a likely reference to media accounts of a closed-door briefing lawmakers had last week with Comey that suggested the FBI had been looking into whether another meeting had taken place.

RECUSAL

Sessions insisted he stepped aside from the Russia investigation because he was a principal adviser to the Trump campaign, not because he did something wrong or was a subject of the probe. Comey testified publicly last week the FBI was aware of reasons it would be problematic for Sessions to remain involved in the probe before he recused himself.

Sessions was sworn in Feb. 9 but did not actually step away from the investigation until March 2, the day after The Washington Post reported on his two previously undisclosed Kislyak meetings. But he said Tuesday he anticipated the conflict of interest and effectively recused himself on his first day on the job, and was never briefed on the Russia investigation.

He disputed that his involvement in Comey's firing violated the recusal. He said he and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein had long discussed their concerns with Comey's job performance. Namely, they were upset with his very public handling of the Hillary Clinton email probe, which Sessions said was a "usurpation" of Justice Department authority.

Sessions said it would be "absurd" to suggest that a recusal from a single investigation would render him unable to manage the leadership of the FBI.

EXECUTIVE PRIVILEGE

Sessions repeatedly refused to discuss private conversations with Trump on a wide variety of topics. He did not say he was using executive privilege, but rather adhering to longstanding tradition of Justice Department leaders not revealing private conversations with the president. That position was similar to the one taken at a separate hearing last week by the country's intelligence chiefs.

His refusals to comment, including about conversations with Trump on Comey's firing, repeatedly irked Democrats. But time and again, Sessions returned to lines such as "I am not able to discuss with you or confirm or deny the nature of private conversations that I may have had with the president on this subject or others."

The Justice Department subsequently released decades-old memos from its Office of Legal Counsel that it said supported Sessions' position.

COMEY

Sessions contradicted Comey, who last week told the intelligence committee that after an encounter with Trump in which he said Trump pressured him to back off an investigation into the former national security adviser, Comey "implored" Sessions to make sure he was never left alone with the president again — but that Sessions didn't respond.

"He didn't recall this, but I responded to his comment by agreeing that the FBI and Department of Justice needed to be careful to follow department policy regarding appropriate contacts with the White House,"

Sessions told the panel.

He also said Comey should have shared his concerns about the Trump conversation with another Justice Department official, Dana Boente, who was then acting deputy attorney general, and would have been Comey's direct supervisor.

If Comey had information that Sessions would need to recuse himself, he said, that would have been "double reason" to talk to Boente.

No longer out of bounds: Trump allies question Mueller probe

By **JULIE BYKOWICZ** and **JILL COLVIN**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Criticism of special counsel Robert Mueller used to be off limits. No more.

Some of President Donald Trump's closest allies — including one of his sons — have begun questioning whether Mueller's wide-ranging probe is becoming too political, as the investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 election intensifies. The White House finally said Tuesday evening that Trump has "no intention" of firing Mueller, amid speculation and concern that he was weighing that option.

The effort to muddy the waters surrounding the investigation is coming amid growing White House concern that the probe could detract from the president's agenda for months or years to come. Senators on Tuesday questioned both Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein on how the inquiry is being handled.

Until now, Mueller had drawn widespread praise from Republicans and Democrats alike. Trump, who isn't typically shy about leveling criticism, especially on Twitter, hasn't commented on the longtime former FBI director. And leading Republican legislators on Tuesday waved off the idea of firing Mueller, with House Speaker Paul Ryan saying that his advice was to "let Robert Mueller do his job" and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell voicing confidence in the special counsel.

But expressions of discontent with Mueller are bubbling up nonetheless.

Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich led one line of attack with a tweet that said "Republicans are delusional if they think the special counsel is going to be fair." He added that fundraising records show some of the lawyers whom Mueller selected for his team have contributed to Democrats.

"It makes sense to point out any level of bias, to highlight any biases inherent in Mueller and this probe in order to force him to be transparent," Gingrich said. He said Trump had called him Monday night and the two discussed Gingrich's concerns about the probe.

Tuesday morning, Trump supporter Ari Fleischer, who served as President George W. Bush's press secretary, again highlighted the issue of Mueller's probe being handled by attorneys who have donated mostly to Democrats, a message that Donald Trump Jr. quickly retweeted to his own 1.7 million followers.

Peter Carr, a spokesman for Mueller, declined to comment on the issues Gingrich and others have raised. In general, it is impermissible to ask prospective government hires about their political leanings, including whether they've made donations.

Both Fleischer and Gingrich had previously vouched for the character and integrity of Mueller, who was appointed FBI director by Bush and whose term was extended an extra two years by Democratic President Barack Obama.

Anxiety about the probe — and fresh concerns about the political leanings of some of the attorneys involved — is percolating in the West Wing of the White House.

Chris Ruddy, a Trump friend and the CEO of the conservative website Newsmax, raised the possibility of the president considering terminating Mueller, a potentially explosive option.

White House officials said late Monday that Ruddy was at the White House that day, but said he hadn't meet with the president and never spoke with him about the issue.

Still, it took until Tuesday night for the White House to actually dispute Ruddy's suspicion.

On Trump's plane ride home after a trip to Wisconsin, Sarah Huckabee Sanders told reporters he "has no intention" of firing Mueller, even though she maintained that "the president has the right to."

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A person close to Trump's legal team said earlier Tuesday that there have been no discussions about firing Mueller with the legal team. The person spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations.

But Ruddy opened a new line of questions about Mueller's impartiality — the fact that Trump had considered Mueller for the FBI director's job before he was named special counsel.

Trump interviewed Mueller for the director's position days before Rosenstein picked Mueller as special counsel for the Russia probe, Sanders confirmed Tuesday. The interview was first reported by PBS.

Other Trump supporters homed in on the sequence of Mueller's job interviews.

Sam Nunberg, who worked for Trump's presidential campaign, said it "could seem to be a conflict" for Mueller to first interview with the president to be a possible replacement for fired FBI Director James Comey and then days later to be named as the special counsel heading an investigation that could look into Comey's firing.

But Stephen Gillers, a New York University professor who specializes in legal and judicial ethics, said the Mueller interview with Trump presented "no conflict whatsoever."

It would be hard to make the case, he said, that the experience of interviewing for FBI director would make it impossible for Mueller to fairly exercise the broad discretion afforded to prosecutors.

Trump has repeatedly denied colluding with Russia during the presidential campaign, and Comey and others have testified that there is no evidence to the contrary. Still, Gingrich said any special counsel with an agenda can "all of the sudden find something procedural and technical to latch onto."

With few exceptions, Trump's allies are urging him not to move to dismiss Mueller, which would be both politically and technically complicated. Rosenstein would be the one to fire Mueller, which he repeatedly assured senators Tuesday he would not consider without "good cause."

Rosenstein is charged with Mueller's fate because Attorney General Jeff Sessions recused himself from all matters having to do with the Trump-Russia investigation. Sessions told senators on Tuesday that he'd recused himself because he was part of Trump's campaign.

Gingrich and Ruddy said it would be a "mistake" for Trump to remove Mueller, although both said they see the probe as unnecessary.

Barry Bennett, a GOP strategist who served as an adviser to Trump's campaign, said he believed it would be too damaging for Trump to try to remove Mueller, but that he had concerns about the appearance that the probe was being politicized.

"I think that he should be more cognizant of making sure that the people who come to work with him are non-partisan, for his own credibility," Bennett said of Mueller. Still, he said: "Bob Mueller did a great job as FBI director. I don't question his integrity at all, but he has to be careful not to create the impression of partiality."

AP sources: Trump tells senators House health bill 'mean'

By ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump told Republican senators Tuesday that the House-passed health care bill he helped revive is "mean" and urged them to craft a version that is "more generous," congressional sources said.

Trump's remarks were a surprising slap at a Republican-written House measure that was shepherded by Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., and whose passage the president lobbied for and praised. At a Rose Garden ceremony minutes after the bill's narrow House passage on May 4, Trump called it "a great plan."

The president's criticism, at a White House lunch with 15 GOP senators, also came as Senate Republican leaders' attempts to write their own health care package have been slowed by disagreements between their party's conservatives and moderates.

Trump's characterizations seemed to undercut attempts by Senate leaders to assuage conservatives who want restrictions in their chamber's bill, such as cutting the Medicaid health care program for the poor and limiting the services insurers must cover. Moderate GOP senators have been pushing to ease

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those restrictions.

Facing expected unanimous Democratic opposition, Republicans will be unable to pass a Senate bill if just three of the 52 GOP senators vote "no." Alienating any of them could make approving the measure trickier for Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., who's been hoping for a vote before Congress' July 4 recess.

Trump's comments were described by two GOP congressional sources who received accounts of Tuesday's White House lunch. They spoke on condition of anonymity to reveal a closed-door conversation.

Their descriptions of Trump's words differed slightly.

One source said Trump called the House bill "mean, mean, mean" and said, "We need to be more generous, more kind." The other source said Trump used a vulgarity to describe the House bill and told the senators, "We need to be more generous."

Two other congressional GOP officials confirmed that the general descriptions of Trump's words were accurate.

The sources say the president did not specify what aspects of the bill he was characterizing.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders declined to comment, telling reporters aboard Air Force One Tuesday evening, "We don't comment on rumors or private conversations."

The remarks provided ammunition to Democrats who have unanimously opposed the Republican effort to dismantle President Barack Obama's health care overhaul.

"Americans won't forget that @HouseGOP passed a 'mean' bill to rip healthcare from millions then celebrated @ the WH," said Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-Md.

In an embarrassing retreat, Ryan had to abruptly cancel a March vote on the House measure after a revolt by Republican conservatives and moderates that would have ensured its defeat.

The measure's final version reflected a compromise by conservative leader Rep. Mark Meadows, R-N.C., and centrist Rep. Tom MacArthur, R-N.J. They agreed to language letting states drop requirements under Obama's health care law protecting people with pre-existing medical conditions from higher premiums and requiring insurers to cover specific services like maternity care.

At the White House ceremony celebrating House passage, Trump and Ryan praised the legislation as the fulfillment of campaign promises Trump and GOP congressional candidates had long made to repeal Obama's 2010 statute.

"Many of you have been waiting seven years to cast this vote," Ryan said to the scores of Republican House members present. "Many of you are here because you pledged to cast this vote."

Asked to comment on Trump's remarks about the House measure, Ryan spokeswoman AshLee Strong said, "Congressional Republicans, with President Trump's support, are working to repeal and replace this terrible Obamacare law that is harming Americans."

Meadows, who chairs the conservative House Freedom Caucus, said, "I have no knowledge of the president characterizing the health care bill in any other way than to suggest that we need to lower premiums and" protect people with pre-existing conditions.

MacArthur's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Trump's description of the bill MacArthur helped resuscitate. Just last weekend, Trump used his golf club in Bedminster, N.J., to hold a fundraising event for MacArthur that netted \$800,000.

Trump had not publicly criticized the House bill previously. But in a May 28 tweet that raised questions about his intent, he said: "I suggest that we add more dollars to Healthcare and make it the best anywhere. ObamaCare is dead - the Republicans will do much better!"

After the meeting with senators, Trump flew to Wisconsin, where, for the second week in a row, he highlighted the stories of people whose health care premiums have increased — people the White House has dubbed "Obamacare victims."

After meeting with two such couples after landing in Milwaukee, Trump pointed to "millions of American families" he said "continue to suffer from Obamacare while Congressional Democrats obstruct our efforts to rescue them."

Trump did not discuss the House GOP health care plan in any detail, but said the Senate is getting ready

to do something.

AP reporters Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar, Kenneth Thomas and Jill Colvin contributed to this report.

Uber recommendations show company was 'out of control'

By TOM KRISHER and BARBARA ORTUTAY, AP Business Writers

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — It's clear from former Attorney General Eric Holder's recommendations on how to fix Uber's dysfunctional management that the male-dominated company grew huge without even the most basic procedures to prevent sexual harassment, bullying and other bad behavior.

The 13-page document from Holder's firm Covington & Burling LLP released Tuesday exposes a startup-turned-goliath that permitted misconduct, had few policies to protect employees and ran with little board supervision.

The recommendations, adopted unanimously by Uber's board, show clearly that the next version of Uber, called 2.0 by CEO co-founder Travis Kalanick, will have to be much different from the free-wheeling company that flouted regulations and disrupted the taxi business to become the world's largest ride-hailing company.

Kalanick told employees Tuesday that he'd be taking an indefinite leave of absence.

And in another strange twist, board member and hedge fund partner David Bonderman resigned Tuesday night after making what he called an inappropriate remark about women at a meeting to explain Holder's recommendations to employees.

The Holder investigation started after former engineer Susan Fowler posted a blog in February detailing harassment during the year she spent at Uber, writing that she was propositioned by her manager on her first day with an engineering team. She reported him to human resources, but was told he would get a lecture and no further punishment because he was a "high performer," she wrote.

After interviewing 200 witnesses, Holder had to make such basic recommendations as setting clear policies to protect workers from harassment, and that the human resources department get a better handle on keeping records and tracking employee complaints. It even suggests such simple procedures as using performance reviews to hold leaders accountable and requiring all employees to turn in receipts so the company can make sure expenses match its values.

The recommendations "definitely paint a picture of a company that was out of control and pretty chaotic," says Elizabeth Ames, a senior vice president at the Anita Borg Institute, a nonprofit aimed at advancing women in the technology business.

Holder also suggests that Uber change its written cultural values to promote positive behavior, inclusion and collaboration. The company should eliminate values that justified poor behavior, such as "Always Be Hustlin'," "Meritocracy and Toe-Stepping" and "Principled Confrontation."

Holder also called for trimming Kalanick's job duties, shifting day-to-day functions to a yet-to-be-hired chief operating officer. During Kalanick's leave, his leadership team will run the troubled company.

Kalanick wrote that he needs time off to grieve for his mother, who died in a May boating accident. He also said he's responsible for the company's situation and needs to become a better leader — echoing comments the 40-year-old CEO made earlier this year after a heated argument with an Uber driver over pay was captured on video.

Ames said the recommendations were strong but indicated Uber had few policies, and the ones it had were not followed.

The board unanimously approved the recommendations on Sunday, including a suggestion that a senior executive be tasked with making sure they are implemented. Apparently because of distrust of some leaders, Holder recommended that care be taken to make sure the executive "is viewed positively by the employees."

The company released only Holder's recommendations, not his full report, citing the need to protect employees who complained.

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Liane Hornsey, Uber's chief human resources officer, said implementing the recommendations "will improve our culture, promote fairness and accountability, and establish processes and systems to ensure the mistakes of the past will not be repeated."

Holder also recommended adding independent directors and replacing the board chairman, co-founder Garrett Camp, with an independent person. The board currently has eight voting members, three from within the company.

Uber was also advised to diversify its workforce. Its diversity figures are similar to the rest of Silicon Valley, with low numbers for women and underrepresented minorities. In the U.S., less than a third of Uber's workers are female.

In addition, the report says diversity and inclusiveness should be a key value that's included in management training.

After Fowler posted her blog, Uber Technologies Inc. made changes in human resources and opened a 24-hour employee hotline. Last week, the company fired 20 people including some managers at the recommendation of Perkins Coie, which separately investigated 215 employee complaints.

On Sunday, Emil Michael, Uber's senior vice president for business and a close ally of Kalanick, left the company.

Under Kalanick, Uber has disrupted the taxi industry and turned the San Francisco-based company into the world's most valuable startup. Uber's valuation has climbed to nearly \$70 billion.

Besides the harassment complaints, in recent months Uber has been threatened by boycotts, sued and subject to a federal investigation over its use of a fake version of its app to thwart authorities looking into whether it is breaking local laws.

A company can be aggressive yet have strong values, said Joseph Holt, a business ethics professor at the University of Notre Dame. He cited Starbucks as example.

"Having a good reputation for ethics is a competitive advantage," Holt said.

At the employee meeting Tuesday morning, Bonderman remarked that if a woman was added to the board that there likely would be more talking, according to a recording obtained by Yahoo.

By evening, Bonderman resigned and put out a statement saying the comment was careless and inappropriate. "I do not want my comments to create distraction as Uber works to build a culture of which we can be proud," the statement said.

Krishner and Auto Writer Dee-Ann Durbin contributed from Detroit.

Lawmakers demand new strategy for 16-year Afghan war

By **LOLITA C. BALDOR** and **ROBERT BURNS**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senators sharply criticized Pentagon leaders Tuesday for not completing a new strategy for the 16-year-old war in Afghanistan, as Defense Secretary Jim Mattis acknowledged that "the enemy is surging right now."

Just a few hours later, President Donald Trump gave Mattis the authority to make decisions on U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan, U.S. officials told The Associated Press.

The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss the decision publicly before an official announcement, said the move gives Mattis the ability to adjust troop levels more quickly. Mattis can also end the current cap on Afghanistan troop levels.

At the Senate hearing earlier, Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., demanded that Mattis wrap up his plan for the war, threatening that, "unless we get a strategy from you, you're going to get a strategy from us." He said he had expected the plan in the first 30 to 60 days of the new administration and snapped: "We want a strategy. I don't think that's a helluva lot to ask."

Mattis, in response, told the Senate Armed Services Committee that he will provide details on the new strategy for the war in mid-July.

"We're putting it together now and there are going to be — there are actions being taken to make cer-

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tain that we don't pay a price for the delay," he said. "But we recognize the need for urgency and your criticism is fair, sir."

Mattis did not say what those steps are.

The U.S. has about 8,400 troops in Afghanistan. Army Gen. John Nicholson, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, has told Congress that he could use an infusion of U.S. and allied troops to bolster support for the Afghan army.

Earlier this year, the Pentagon was considering a request for roughly 3,000 more troops, mainly for training and advising. That decision, however, has been stalled by the broader administration review of Afghan policy and a push for NATO to contribute more troops.

Mattis, when pressed again about the plan, said getting a government-wide strategy can't be done quickly, and that there are ongoing efforts to ensure NATO participation so that it's "not all on the backs of American taxpayers."

He added: "We are not winning in Afghanistan right now. And we will correct this as soon as possible."

The Taliban's resurgence has been coupled with a growing threat from Islamic State militants trying to establish a foothold in the country. The increased fight has led to a recent string of American deaths.

Three U.S. soldiers were killed and another wounded Saturday when they were attacked by an Afghan soldier, who was then killed. And two U.S. Army Rangers died in a April 27 raid on an IS compound in eastern Afghanistan. Officials were investigating whether they were killed by friendly fire in the opening minutes of the three-hour battle. Their deaths came just days after a U.S. Army special forces soldier was also killed in the region.

The Afghanistan war has been dragging on since October 2001, and the U.S.-led coalition ended their combat mission against the Taliban in 2014 but they are increasingly involved in backing up Afghan forces on the battlefield.

Asked what he hoped the situation in Afghanistan would look like a year from now, Mattis said violence would be down, government corruption would be reduced and the Taliban would be "rolled back," with less freedom of movement on the battlefield.

Marine Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, added that he hoped Afghan troop casualties would be lower a year from now. And he said a key to that will be the need for the U.S. to assist the Afghans in planning operations and providing aviation support while Kabul works to increase its combat air power.

McCain, however, listed the names of the three 101st Airborne Division soldiers who were killed Saturday and said, "Let's not ask these families to sacrifice any further without a strategy which we can then take and implement and help you. I'm fighting as hard as I can to increase defense spending. It's hard when we have no strategy to pursue."

On separate issues, Mattis and Dunford were asked about the Mideast diplomatic rift and alleged Russian meddling in last year's U.S. presidential election.

On Russia, Mattis said, "This sort of misbehavior has got to face consequences, and not just by the United States but more broadly." He added that the Trump administration is working on a comprehensive cyber defense strategy, but in the meantime the U.S. has enough understanding of Russia's cyber actions to defend against them.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., asked Dunford whether the diplomatic rift between Qatar and several of its neighbors, including Saudi Arabia, is impeding U.S. military operations, given that the U.S. uses Qatar's al-Udeid air base as a critical air operations center for the wars.

"It is not," Dunford said.

China insurance mogul said unable to work, reported detained

By JOE McDONALD, AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — The Chinese insurer that owns New York City's Waldorf Astoria Hotel said Wednesday its chairman has turned over his duties to other executives following a report he was detained by regulators

amid accusations of possible financial misconduct.

Anbang Insurance Group Ltd. Chairman Wu Xiaohui was "temporarily unable to perform his duties due to personal reasons," said a one-sentence statement on the company website. It said Wu had authorized other executives to do his work and gave no other details.

On Monday, the magazine Caijing reported that Wu, who founded Anbang in 2004 and built it into one of China's biggest insurers, was detained last week by insurance regulators. Citing unidentified sources, it said authorities told the company about the detention but gave no reason.

Spokespeople for Anbang did not respond to phone calls or emails. The China Insurance Regulatory Commission did not respond to questions sent by fax.

Anbang has been under scrutiny since a multibillion-dollar global string of asset purchases, including buying the Waldorf for \$2 billion, raised questions about how it was paying for its buying spree.

The privately held company said the money was raised from shareholders. It denied a report by another magazine, Caixin, in April that Anbang improperly used payments from policyholders to increase its capital base.

More recently, the company has suffered setbacks including failing to complete several foreign takeovers. That included the proposed purchase of U.S.-based Fidelity & Guaranty Life for \$1.6 billion.

In May, Anbang was ordered to stop selling two financial products that regulators said violated industry rules.

Other Chinese insurers also have been investigated following complaints of reckless speculation in stocks and real estate. The chairman of the Chinese insurance regulator is under investigation by the national anti-corruption agency.

Regulators say reducing financial risks in the Chinese economy is a priority this year. Rising Chinese debt levels have prompted concern about the stability of the country's financial system.

Anbang has a reputation for unusually aggressive expansion in a Chinese insurance industry dominated by state-owned companies.

Earlier, the company discussed possibly investing in a Manhattan skyscraper owned by the family of Jared Kushner, U.S. President Donald Trump's son-in-law and adviser. Those talks ended in March without a deal.

Wu rarely talks to reporters or appears in public, but Caijing said he attended a series of public events in recent weeks. That included a May 12 meeting called by the insurance regulator to study a speech by President Xi Jinping about financial regulation.

Anbang said it raised 50 billion yuan (\$8 billion) from investors in 2014. That increased its registered capital fivefold to 62 billion yuan (\$9.5 billion), the biggest among Chinese insurers.

Caixin's April report said at least 30 billion yuan (\$4.3 billion) of that money really was payments from policyholders. The magazine said it was channeled back into the company through a complex ownership structure.

Anbang has more than 30,000 employees serving 35 million clients and has interests in life insurance, banking, asset management, leasing and brokerage services.

Online:

Anbang Insurance Group Ltd.: <http://en.anbanggroup.com/>

3 things to watch for from the Federal Reserve on Wednesday

By MARTIN CRUTSINGER, AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — There isn't much suspense about what the Fed will announce when its latest policy meeting ends Wednesday: That it's raising its key short-term interest rate for the third time in six months.

The job market — with unemployment at a 16-year low of 4.3 percent — has improved to such an extent that the Fed is thought to feel it's time to modestly raise its benchmark rate again. The move, to a still-low range of 1 percent to 1.25 percent, will likely lead to somewhat higher rates on some consumer and business loans. The idea is to ensure that the U.S. economy doesn't overheat.

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But beyond the announcement of another rate hike, anticipation surrounds the possibility that the Fed could signal policy shifts in a statement it will issue, in updated economic forecasts and in a news conference with Chair Janet Yellen. Investors want to know, for example, how fast the pace of rate increases may be in coming months or whether Washington's political paralysis has concerned the Fed.

Here are three things to watch for after the Fed's meeting ends:

FUTURE PACE OF RATE HIKES:

After leaving its benchmark rate at a record low near zero for seven years, the Fed has raised rates three times, by a quarter-point each time — once in December 2015, again last December and a third time in March. The Fed has previously forecast that it will raise rates three times in 2017.

Though investors have pegged the likelihood of a rate increase Wednesday at near 100 percent, there's much less certainty about the prospect or timing of any further hikes. Some Fed watchers expect another increase in September. Others say the Fed may want to wait until December. The reasoning is that the policymakers will want more time to determine whether a slowdown in growth and inflation at the start of 2017 was indeed "transitory," as they described it in May, or the start of another slump that could lead the Fed to halt its rate hikes.

Investors will be watching the language in the Fed's policy statement to describe the economy, along with Yellen's comments during her news conference.

One signal could come from the Fed's quarterly "dot plot." This is an illustration representing the anonymous forecasts of each Fed official — the board members as well as the 12 regional bank presidents — for the timing of future rate hikes. It's this chart that provides the current expectation of three rate increases during 2017.

BALANCE SHEET REDUCTIONS

Starting in 2008, the Fed expanded its balance sheet five-fold to its current \$4.5 trillion through purchases of Treasury and mortgage securities. The Fed began the purchases after it had cut its main policy lever, the federal funds rate, to a record low near zero. The bond purchases were intended to depress long-term borrowing rates as an additional way to energize the economy as it struggled to emerge from the Great Recession.

The Fed is no longer buying new bonds. But it's been replacing maturing bonds to prevent its portfolio from shrinking. Speculation has grown that Yellen may reveal details at her news conference of a plan to gradually reduce the portfolio.

One possibility suggested would have the Fed begin to pare its holdings late this year and then gradually shed incrementally larger amounts into next year, while allowing the financial markets to adjust to the impact.

Investors are keenly interested in whatever the Fed says about its balance sheet because gradual reductions in its portfolio could raise long-term rates, even if only slightly. The Fed will likely want to unveil its plan well in advance of actually trimming its portfolio to avoid spooking the markets.

WASHINGTON'S POLITICAL DYSFUNCTION

During his campaign, President Donald Trump pledged to pursue a program of deep tax cuts, less regulation, more infrastructure spending and tougher enforcement of trade rules. He billed his plan as a way to accelerate economic growth from the sluggish 2.1 percent annual rate of the past eight years. Trump said his program would double growth to 4 percent or better, though the administration based its first budget plan on achieving a lower but still highly ambitious goal of 3 percent annual growth.

The problem is that Trump's economic agenda remains stalled, in part because of resistance in Congress, in part because of a lack of details so far from the administration. Concern has also arisen that Congress could delay action on raising the federal debt limit and approving a new budget — possibilities that could upset markets.

Given such risks, analysts will be watching to see whether the Fed offers a more pessimistic outlook for the economy in the updated projections it will issue Wednesday. In its previous forecast in March, the Fed had predicted growth for this year and next year at 2.1 percent, unchanged from the lackluster pace of recent years.

Investors will also be listening for any signals Yellen sends about her own future. After Trump's surprise election victory, Yellen had announced that she planned to serve out her term, which ends in February. Trump has sent mixed signals about whether he would nominate Yellen for a second term.

In the meantime, Trump has three vacancies to fill on the central bank's seven-member board, an opportunity for him to begin influencing Fed policy. The administration has yet to nominate any candidates for Senate confirmation.

Asian stocks mixed after Wall Street gains

By **JOE McDONALD, AP Business Writer**

BEIJING (AP) — Asian stocks were mixed Wednesday following Wall Street's tech-driven rise as investors waited for word from the U.S. Federal Reserve on a possible interest rate hike.

KEEPING SCORE: The Shanghai Composite Index lost 0.5 percent to 3,137.93 while Tokyo's Nikkei 225 gained 0.1 percent to 19,915.97. Hong Kong's Hang Seng retreated 0.2 percent to 25,804.41. Sydney's S&P-ASX 200 advanced 0.9 percent to 5,826.90. Seoul's Kospi lost 0.2 percent to 2,369.84 and benchmarks in Singapore and Malaysia also retreated. New Zealand, Manila and Jakarta gained.

WALL STREET: U.S. stocks bounced back to record highs as investors put an end to a two-day drop for technology companies. Energy and consumer-focused companies also made outside gains. The Standard & Poor's 500 index picked up 0.5 percent to 2,440.35. The Dow Jones industrial average rose 0.4 percent to 21,328.47. The Nasdaq composite, which has a large concentration of technology companies, rose 0.7 percent to 6,220.37.

FED WATCH: The U.S. Federal Reserve ends a two-day policy meeting on Wednesday, and investors expect the central bank to raise interest rates for the third time since December. They also are watching for the Fed's latest views on inflation and hints on how aggressive it will be in raising interest rates in the future.

ANALYST'S TAKE: "Despite stubbornly low inflation, the Fed is widely anticipated to lift its interest rate tomorrow," said Ric Spooner of CMC Markets in a report. "In a further sign that the Fed is leading a gradual global exit from monetary stimulus, Canada's Central Bank Governor last night surprised markets with hawkish comments."

CHINA: Government data showed retail sales in May rose 10.7 percent from a year earlier, a small gain over the 10.3 percent rate for the first four months of the year. Factory output rose 6.5 percent over a year earlier, holding steady at April's rate. Growth in investment in factories, real estate and other fixed assets decelerated to 8.6 percent over a year earlier in the first five months of 2017, down 0.3 percentage points from the rate in January-April.

BREXIT: The European Union moved to tighten its oversight of a key financial market based in London, threatening tens of thousands of jobs in Britain once the country exits the bloc. Draft regulations published by the EU executive Commission would force any clearinghouse considered important to the EU financial system to accept direct oversight from the bloc and, if requested, relocate to inside the EU. One report suggests that losing the market could cost the country 83,000 jobs, mostly in London, one of the world's top finance hubs.

TECH BOUNCE: Though U.S. tech stocks bounced back they still are below last week's record-high prices. Facebook rose 1.5 percent to \$150.68 while Microsoft gained 1.2 percent to \$70.65. Hard drive maker Western Digital added 3.9 percent to \$90.05. Even after their recent skid, technology companies have done much better than the rest of the market in 2017. Big tech companies like Apple and Alphabet have been responsible for a huge portion of the stock market's gains this year.

ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. crude fell 46 cents to \$46.00 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract gained 38 cents on Tuesday to \$46.46 a barrel. Brent crude, used to

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price international oils, shed 41 cents to \$48.31 a barrel in London. It gained 57 cents the previous session.
CURRENCY: The dollar declined to 110.02 yen from Tuesday's 110.04 yen. The euro gained to \$1.1250 from \$1.1205.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, June 14, the 165th day of 2017. There are 200 days left in the year. This is Flag Day.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 14, 1777, the Second Continental Congress approved the design of the original American flag, declaring: "Resolved, that the Flag of the thirteen United States shall be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the Union be thirteen stars, white on a blue field, representing a new constellation."

On this date:

In 1775, the Continental Army, forerunner of the United States Army, was created.

In 1801, former American Revolutionary War general and notorious turncoat Benedict Arnold died in London.

In 1922, Warren G. Harding became the first president heard on radio, as Baltimore station WEAR broadcast his speech dedicating the Francis Scott Key memorial at Fort McHenry.

In 1934, Max Baer defeated Primo Carnera with an 11th round TKO to win the world heavyweight boxing championship in Long Island City, New York.

In 1940, German troops entered Paris during World War II; the same day, the Nazis began transporting prisoners to the Auschwitz (OWSH'-vitz) concentration camp in German-occupied Poland.

In 1943, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*, ruled 6-3 that children in public schools could not be forced to salute the flag of the United States.

In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a measure adding the phrase "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance.

In 1967, the space probe Mariner 5 was launched from Cape Kennedy on a flight that took it past Venus. California Gov. Ronald Reagan signed a bill liberalizing his state's abortion law. The movie "To Sir, with Love," starring Sidney Poitier, was released by Columbia Pictures.

In 1972, the Environmental Protection Agency ordered a ban on domestic use of the pesticide DDT, to take effect at year's end.

In 1982, Argentine forces surrendered to British troops on the disputed Falkland Islands.

In 1985, the 17-day hijack ordeal of TWA Flight 847 began as a pair of Lebanese Shiite (SHEE'-eyet) Muslim extremists seized the jetliner shortly after takeoff from Athens, Greece.

In 1992, Mona Van Duyn became the first woman to be named the nation's Poet Laureate by the Library of Congress.

Ten years ago: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas declared an emergency after the Hamas militant group effectively took control of the Gaza Strip. James Ford Seale was convicted of kidnapping Charles Eddie Moore and Henry Hezekiah Dee, two black teenagers who were drowned by the Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi in 1964. (Seale, sentenced to life, died in prison in 2011 at age 76.) Ruth Graham, the wife of evangelist Billy Graham, died in Montreat, North Carolina, at age 87. Former U.N. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim died in Vienna at age 88. The San Antonio Spurs won their fourth NBA title in nine years as they defeated the Cleveland Cavaliers 83-82 in Game 4.

Five years ago: In dueling speeches in the battleground state of Ohio, Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, speaking in Cincinnati, described the Obama administration as the very "enemy" of people who create jobs; President Barack Obama, going second in Cleveland, asked the nation to buy into his vision for four more years or face a return to the recession-era "mistakes of the past."

One year ago: President Barack Obama angrily denounced Donald Trump's anti-Muslim rhetoric in the wake of the Orlando nightclub shooting, blasting the views of the presumptive Republican presidential nominee as a threat to American security; Trump responded by suggesting that Obama seemed angrier

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at him than he was at the gunman. Democrat Hillary Clinton brought a close to the presidential primary season with a win in the District of Columbia. A 2-year-old boy was dragged into the water by an alligator near Disney's upscale Grand Floridian Resort & Spa; the child's remains were found the following day. Actress Ann Morgan Guilbert (Millie Helper on "The Dick Van Dyke Show") died in Los Angeles at age 87.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Marla Gibbs is 86. House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer, D-Md., is 78. Writer Peter Mayle is 78. Actor Jack Bannon is 77. Country-rock musician Spooner Oldham is 74. Rock singer Rod Argent (The Zombies; Argent) is 72. President Donald Trump is 71. Singer Janet Lennon (The Lennon Sisters) is 71. Rock musician Barry Melton is 70. Rock musician Alan White (Yes) is 68. Actor Eddie Mekka is 65. Actor Will Patton is 63. Olympic gold-medal speed skater Eric Heiden (HY'-dun) is 59. Jazz musician Marcus Miller is 58. Singer Boy George is 56. Rock musician Chris DeGarmo is 54. Actress Traylor Howard is 51. Actress Yasmine Bleeth is 49. Actor Faizon Love is 49. Actor Stephen Wallem is 49. International Tennis Hall of Famer Steffi Graf is 48. Actor Sullivan Stapleton (TV: "Blindspot") is 40. Screenwriter Diablo Cody is 39. Actor Lawrence Saint-Victor is 35. Actor Torrance Coombs is 34. Actor J.R. Martinez is 34. Actor-singer Kevin McHale is 29. Actress Lucy Hale is 28. Pop singer Jesy Nelson (Little Mix) is 26. Country singer Joel Crouse is 25. Actor Daryl Sabara is 25.

Thought for Today: "I am not the flag; not at all. I am but its shadow. I am whatever you make me, nothing more. I am your belief in yourself, your dream of what a People may become." — From a Flag Day address by U.S. Interior Secretary Franklin Knight Lane (1864-1921) recounting what Old Glory "said" to him.