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Fri., June 23, 2017

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Friday, June 23

Senior Menu: Sloppy joe on wheat bun, oven roasted potatoes, mixed vegetables, crunchy cranberry salad.

Legion: at Redfield Tourney

Jr. Teener: at Milbank Tourney

Olive Grove: Chamber Golf Tourney, 18 holes, noon shotgun.

24

Legion: at Redfield Tourney

Jr. Teener: at Milbank Tourney

Jr. Legion: hosts Mobridge for 2 games, 1:30 p.m.

25

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship at 9 a.m.

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

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

First Presbyterian: Bible Study at 9 a.m., Worship at 10 a.m.

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

Legion: at Redfield Tourney

Jr. Teener: at Milbank Tourney

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

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

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Groton Chiropractic Clinic

Carol McFarland-Kutter, D.C.
1205 N 1st St., Groton 397-8204



“It is better
to fail in
originality than
to succeed in
imitation.”

-Herman Melville

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There was a pretty rainbow in the southwest sky early Wednesday morning and a rain shower moved through the area. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Shirlee Briggs has been busy scraping, priming and painting the community center in Groton. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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See that storm sewer pipe on the far side. It was just .03 of a foot (less than 4 inches) in the way of the city water main. The water main pipe was lowered about 18 inches to give plenty of clearance for the storm sewer pipe. Two 45 degree mechanical joints were installed Thursday morning. Pictured above are Branden Abeln and Dwight Zerr as the project was just getting finished up.



Dwight Zerr was tightening up the fittings as the project was being completed.

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Above: City Supervisor Terry Herron observes the work being done on the water main.



Left: The city had a power pole less than six inches in the way of the ADA ramp and the three-phase line had to be moved. Dan Sunne is putting protective hoses on the line as he begins transferring the lines to the insulators on the pole. (Photos by Tina Kosel)

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Keagan Tracy



Taylor Diegel

(Photos by Paul Kosel)

**Any group wanting
memory mates and/or
photo buttons may
contact Paul at
Groton Photography to
set up an
appointment.
Call or text him at
605/397-7460.**



Luke Thorson is loading up the ball thrower for the players in the outfield during Legion practice Wednesday evening. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Cade Larson



Tate Larson



Kaleb Antonson



Cole Simon

U12 Groton beats Redfield in pair of games

Groton's U12 team defeated Redfield in the first game, 14-2. Cade Larson had a three RBI home run and a single, Kaleb Antonsen had a double, Aeydon Johnson had a home run and a single, Ryan Groeblichhoff had two singles and Caleb Hanten, Braxton Imrie and Colby Dunker each had a single.

Tate Larson pitched three innings with six strike-outs, three hits and one walk. Ryan Groeblichhoff pitched the last inning with one hit.

Groton scored seven runs in the third inning to win the second game, 10-6.

Jacob Lewandowski had a home run, Aeydon Johnson had a double, and getting a single each were Cade Larson, Kaleb Antonsen, Cole Simon, Colby Dunker and Ryan Groeblichhoff.

Groeblichhoff pitched two innings with three strike-outs, four hits and one walk. Cole Simon pitched for three innings with six strike-outs, six hits and one walk.

Drought Monitor

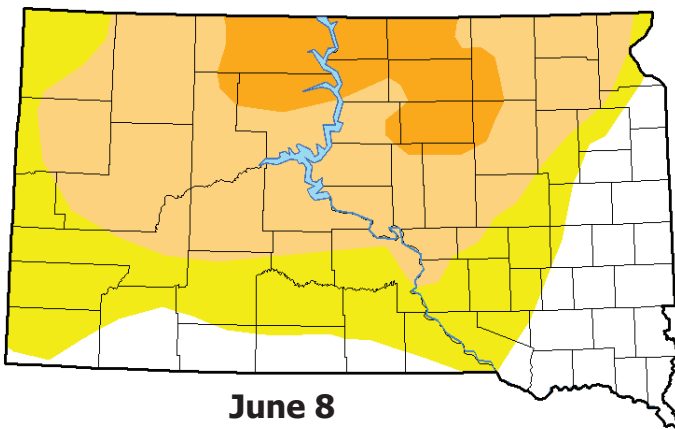
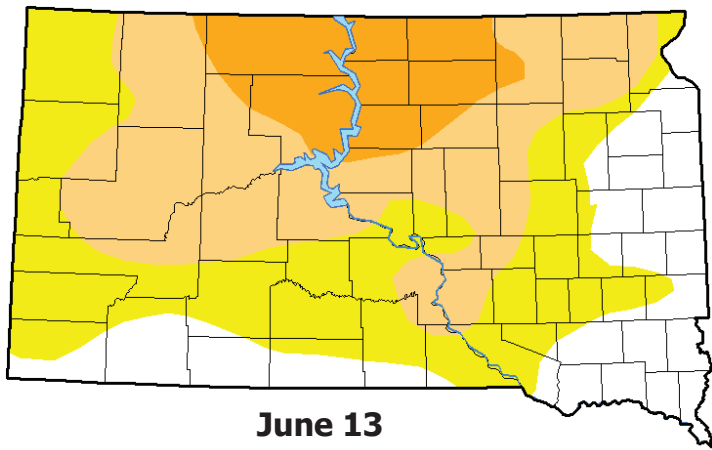
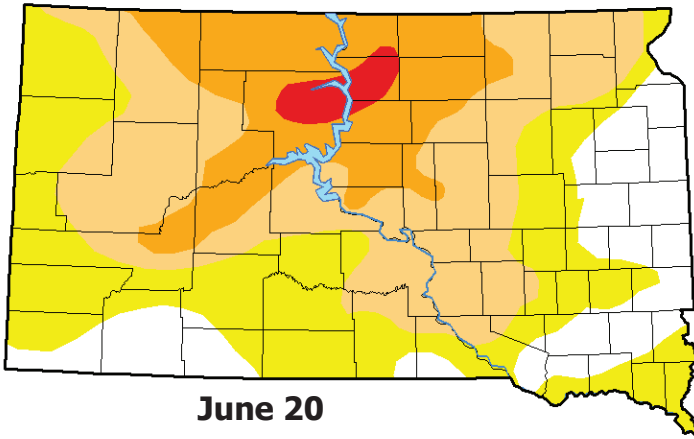
While significant rains (1.5-3 inches) fell across northern and eastern North Dakota, northeastern South Dakota, and northern Minnesota (see Midwest) and provided some relief, little or no rain worsened conditions across eastern Montana, western and southern North Dakota, and the western half of South Dakota. Dry conditions during the past 30-days also allowed for a D0 expansion into central and southeastern Montana, northeastern Wyoming, and central and northeastern Nebraska (and into northwestern Iowa – see Midwest). Fortunately, cooler air finally filtered into the northern Plains as highs in the 90s and 100s degF during the previous week were replaced with 70s and 80s degF this period. With May-July normally the wettest time of the year in the northern High Plains (some areas typically receive half to two-thirds of their ANNUAL precipitation), a lack of adequate late spring and early summer rainfall can impact the region for the rest of the year.

In northeastern Montana, most locations in nearly 20 counties have experienced 5-25% of normal precipitation since the end of April. Numerous locations have reported near- or record low precipitation since April 1, while temperatures for the past 30-days have averaged 1 to 4 degF above normal. The March-May period was the 14th warmest such period since 1895 for Montana, according to NCEI. While river flows remain normal across the state, northeast and eastern Montana are driven by dry land farming. The subnormal rainfall has been evaporated due to high winds and temperatures, with the Evaporative Stress Index at very high values for northeastern Montana. As for surface and root zone soil moisture, 95-98% of all Mays since 1948 have been wetter than this year in northeastern Montana, with percentiles dropping below the tenth percentile for wetness. The flash drought has quickly deteriorated crop conditions, with the June 9 forecast for winter wheat down 26% from the 105.35 million bushels produced last year, while June 18 USDA/NASS reported 37% of the spring wheat and 26% of pastures were in poor or very poor condition. Numerous field reports indicated poor or even no spring wheat emergence, and the ones that did emerge are stunted and badly need moisture. There has been little growth in pastures and ranges, and many were brown (dormant) with little or no dryland hay cut expected, impacting livestock feed and grazing. Accordingly, D3(S) was added to the driest areas where 2- and 3-month SPIs were D4, departures were greatest, and where impacts were the bleakest. D2 was expanded southward into southern Garfield County, while D1 was expanded westward and southward.

In the Dakotas, western areas typically receive over two-thirds their annual precipitation during April-July, so a lack of adequate late spring and early summer rains are critical to dryland farming and livestock grazing and cuttings of pasture and range grasses. Similar to northeastern Montana, southwestern North Dakota and northern South Dakota have seen the lowest precipitation as compared to normal since April, with deficits of 3-6 inches at 60-days and 4-8 inches at 6-months. Temperatures have also averaged well above normal the past few weeks, and combined with strong winds, have evaporated much of the soil moisture much quicker than expected. Where recent rains have fallen (mainly in the eastern sections), some recovery of the crops and pastures have occurred, but winter wheat fields and other small grains

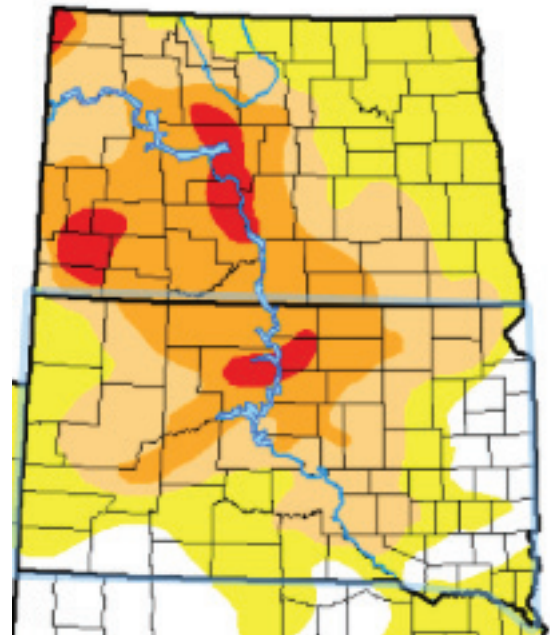
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that were planted early are much drier than corn, soybean, or later planted fields. The long fall (or late freeze) the Dakotas had last year contributed to the depletion of soil moisture this spring as the depth of the frozen ground was much shallower than usual and thawed much earlier and quicker this spring. In addition, many of the current drought areas were in drought last year, had exhibited short-term recovery over the winter, but the deficits were never fully erased, thus the soil moisture profile was susceptible to rapid drying this spring. In the June 18 USDA/NASS report, South Dakota crops rated poor or very poor included: 64% spring wheat; 17% corn; 16% soybeans; 34% sorghum; winter wheat 50%; oats 36%; and pastures 49%. For North Dakota, it was: 24% spring wheat; 10% corn; 11% soybeans; 20% barley; 30% oats; and 54% pastures. Topsoil (and subsoil) moisture rated short to very short was 55% (55%) and 43% (38%) for South Dakota and North Dakota, respectively. Based upon the numerous tools at varying time periods (30-, 60-, 90-, and 180-days) and reported impacts, the D2 was extended westward into western North Dakota and southward in South Dakota, with D3 areas drawn for the worst indicators over the varying time periods. D0 was also extended southward into Nebraska as the past 30-days were very dry and warm which could lead to rapid soil moisture depletion if the weather doesn't improve.

The Dakotas



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GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

School Board Meeting June 26, 2017 – 7:00 PM – GHS Conference Room

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of year ending District bills.

2. Approval of North Central Special Education Co-Op (NCSEC) agenda items...as fiscal agent.

3. Approval of year ending North Central Special Education Co-Op bills.

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.

2. School Board Committee Reports:

a. Building, Grounds, & Transportation: Clint Fjelstad, Merle Harder, Marty Weismantel

b. Personnel, Policy, & Curriculum: Deb Gengerke, Grant Rix

c. Negotiations: Kelly Kjelden, Steve Smith

3. Update on Groton Area Elementary Renovations and Addition.

4. Consider Change Orders on Groton Area Elementary Renovations and Addition:

a. CCO#3: Miscellaneous PR 3, 4, 5, and 6

b. CCO#4: Plumbing Chases/Door Infill

c. CCO#5: JK Room Revisions

d. CCO#1: Additional Window Room 063

e. CCO#2: Classroom Sink Plumbing

5. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Authorize Business Manager to make necessary Contingency Fund transfers to cover year-ending deficit accounts in General Fund.

2. Adopt Supplemental Budget for Capital Outlay and Special Education in accordance with SDCL 13-11-3.2.

3. Approve budget amendment to Capital Outlay Fund in accordance with SDCL 13-16-6.

4. Discussion/Decision on repair of Bus #09.

5. Open and approval fuel oil, diesel/gas quotes.

6. Open and approve newspaper quotes and designate Official Newspaper.

7. Approve hiring Joel Guthmiller as Boys and Girls Golf Coach for 2017-2018 school year.

8. Approve resignation of Joel Guthmiller as Assistant Volleyball Coach.

9. Other items, as ay be appropriate or as deemed necessary.

ADJOURN



The Life of Marian Raines

Services for Marian Raines, 88, of Groton will be 11 a.m., Monday, June 26, 2017 at Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Groton. Pastor Marcia Sylvester will officiate. Burial will follow in Union Cemetery, Groton. Visitation will be held one hour prior to services on Monday.

Marian passed away June 21, 2017 at Groton Care and Rehabilitation Center.

Marian Edith was born on February 8, 1929 at Britton, South Dakota to Oscar Jule and Frances (Quarve) Christenson. As a small child, she moved to North Dakota. She was confirmed in the Brampton Lutheran Church and graduated from Brampton High School. In 1947, she married Earl Anderson and together they had a son, Dean. In 1951 she married Donley Raines and to this union one son, Lee and a daughter, Susan were born. Marian worked as a bank teller, a nurse's aid, receptionist and clerk during her lifetime in Britton, Hecla, Moberly, Groton and Harlingen, Texas. They moved back to Groton in 2004 and she resided there until her death.

Marian's hobbies were knitting, crocheting, playing bridge and Rummikub and reading. She also loved to be in her kitchen cooking, canning, freezing and baking bread, rolls, cookies and her famous donuts. She had a green thumb and enjoyed all beautiful flowers and plants that grew both inside and outside her apartment.

Celebrating her life are her children, Dean Anderson of Aberdeen, Lee Raines (Julie Jerome) of Austin, Texas, Susan (Pete) Jahraus of Pierre, two grandsons, Matthew (Allison) Jahraus of Garretson, Michael

(Stef) Jahraus of Orlando, Florida, great-grandsons; Dylan, Ryan, Jordan and Brady, her brother, Bernard (Sally) Christenson of Pierre, brother-in-law, Ben Schaller of Groton, sister-in-law, Dorothy Christenson of Claremont, her kind and loving friend, Tony Goldade of Groton and many nieces and nephews.

Honorary Casketbearers will be Jim & Linda Bahr, Sharon Zoellner, June Ackman, Lori Westby and Rita Englert.

Casketbearers will be David Christenson, Roger Christenson, Scott Christenson, Brad Christenson, Ronnie Frericks and Travis Christoffer.

Preceding her in death were her parents, her husband, Donley, sister, Jean Schaller and brother, Rollin Christenson.

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Today in Weather History

June 23, 1914: A destructive, estimated F3 tornado moved east across Altamont Township in Brown County. All buildings were destroyed on at least four farms. A man was killed trying to keep his family from being blown out of a shallow cellar.

Another storm moved east from the southeastern part of Watertown to north of Goodwin. Over 200 homes were heavily damaged at Watertown by both an estimated F2 tornado and downburst winds. Barns were destroyed on three farms east of Watertown. The estimated cost was at \$200,000.

June 23, 2002: A powerful supercell thunderstorm produced six tornados from eastern McPherson County and across northern Brown County during the evening hours. The first tornado to touchdown was a brief F0, and occurred 6.4 miles northeast of Leola and resulted in no damage. The second tornado was an F1 and touched down 8.5 miles northeast of Leola and crossed over into Brown County where it dissipated 9 miles northwest of Barnard. This tornado brought down many trees and a barn and caused damage to the siding and the roof of a farmhouse in McPherson County. A third weak satellite F0 tornado occurred following the dissipation of the second tornado and resulted in no damage. A fourth, stronger F3 tornado developed 6 miles west of Barnard and moved east before dissipating 3 miles southeast of Barnard. This tornado brought down some high power lines along with a support tower and tossed a pickup truck 100 yards into a group of trees. The pickup truck was totaled. The tornado caused extensive damage to two farmhouses, several farm buildings, and farm equipment. One farmhouse lost the garage and had many trees completely snapped off down low and debarked. The fifth tornado developed 5 miles southeast of Barnard and became a violent F4 tornado. This tornado caused damage to one farmhouse, several outbuildings, trees, and equipment as it moved northeast and strengthened. The tornado then completely demolished two unoccupied homes, several outbuildings, along with destroying or damaging some farm equipment before dissipating 7.6 miles northeast of Barnard. The sixth tornado was a weak satellite F0, which occurred with this violent tornado and caused no damage. The F4 tornado was the first recorded in Brown County and one of few recorded in South Dakota. The total estimated property loss exceeded a million dollars.

1944: The deadliest and strongest tornado for the state of West Virginia occurred on this day. The Shinnston Tornado that ravaged a path of destruction from Shinnston to Cheat Mountain, then on to Maryland and ending in Pennsylvania in the Allegheny Mountains, is the only twister to produce F4 damage in West Virginia. This tornado killed 103 people. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the History Channel.

1947 - Twelve inches of rain fell in forty-two minutes at Holt, MO, establishing a world rainfall record. That record was tied on January 24-25, 1956, at the Kilauea Sugar Plantation in Hawaii, as their state record was established with 38 inches of rain in 24 hours. (The Weather Channel)

1972 - Hurricane Agnes deluged Pennsylvania and New York State with torrential rains resulting in the most costly flood in U.S. history. In the Middle Susquehanna Valley of Pennsylvania, 24 hour rainfall amounts were generally 8 to 12 inches, with up to 19 inches in extreme southwestern Schuylkill County. At Wilkes-Barre, PA, the dike was breached destroying much of the town. Flooding resulted in 117 deaths and 3.1 billion dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1981 - A young woman from Lubbock, TX, was struck by lightning. The bolt of lightning struck just above her right shoulder near her neck, and passed right to left through her body, tearing her warm-ups, causing her tennis shoes to explode, and lifting her two feet into the air. (The Weather Channel)








1987 - Thunderstorms in southern Texas produced wind gusts to 116 mph near Quemado. Thunderstorms in New York State produced 5.01 inches of rain in 24 hours at Buffalo, an all-time record for that location, and produced an inch of rain at Bath, PA. The temperature at Fairbanks AK soared to 92 degrees, establishing a record for the date. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Record cold temperatures were reported in the High Plains Region. Rapid City, SD, reported a record low of 39 degrees, in sharp contrast to their record high of 102 degrees two days earlier, on the 20th. (The National Weather Summary)

2010: An F2 tornado destroyed approximately 50 homes and caused damages estimated to be \$15 million in Midland, Ontario. 12 people were reported to be injured. Ontario provided immediate provincial assistance of up to \$1 million to aid in cleanup and repairs.

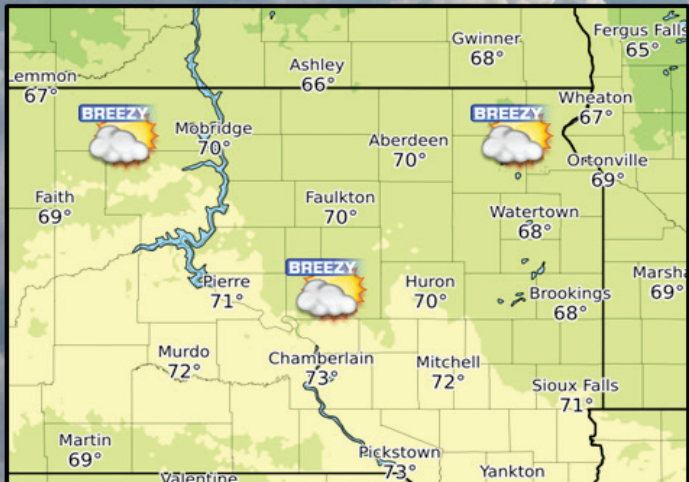
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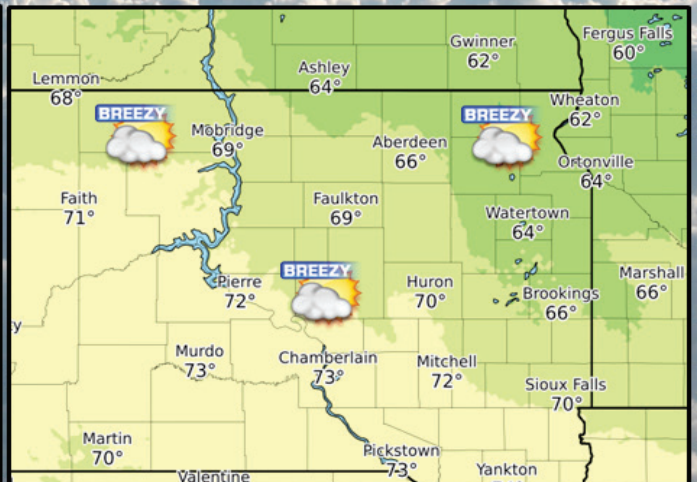
Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
						
Gradual Clearing and Breezy	Partly Cloudy and Breezy then Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny and Breezy	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny
High: 70 °F	Low: 43 °F	High: 66 °F	Low: 40 °F	High: 70 °F	Low: 46 °F	High: 77 °F

Cooler Temperatures Moving in Today and Saturday
Breezy Northwest Winds As Well

Today's Highs



Saturday's Highs



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD



June 23, 2017 5:55 AM CDT

Published on: 06/23/2017 at 6:01AM

A cold front moved through the region last night, leaving cooler temperatures and breezy northwest winds in its wake. Highs today will be in the upper 60s to lower 70s, with mostly cloudy skies this morning giving way to partly cloudy skies this afternoon. Even cooler temperatures are expected on Saturday, with only low to mid 60s for highs across eastern areas. Throw in some breezy northwest winds again on Saturday, and it will feel downright chilly!

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 79.5 F at 6:12 PM

Low Outside Temp: 59.8 F at 8:21 AM

High Gust: 23.0 Mph at 6:56 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 104° in 1911

Record Low: 33° in 1942

Average High: 80°F

Average Low: 56°F

Average Precip in June: 2.90

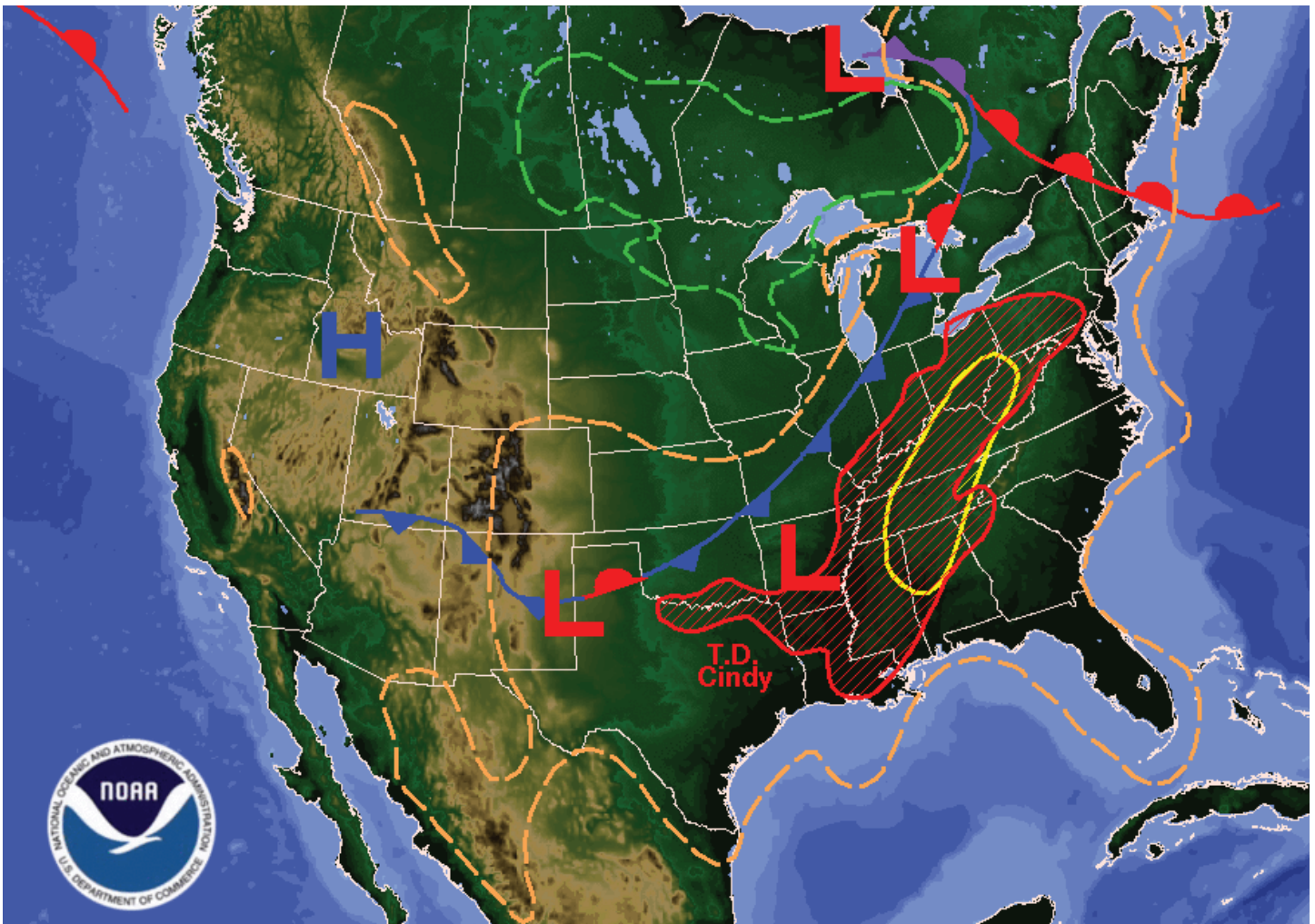
Precip to date in June: 2.52

Average Precip to date: 9.98

Precip Year to Date: 5.71

Sunset Tonight: 9:26 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:46 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Fri, Jun 23, 2017, issued 6:24 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds 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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THE GREATNESS OF GOD

Martin Luther once wrote to a friend, "Your thoughts of God are too human!" That certainly was not true of David.

David saw the greatness of God and the glory of His creation: "O Lord, our Lord the majesty of Your name fills the earth! Your glory is higher than the heavens!" Perhaps he was thinking about the time when there was nothing and no one but God. Perhaps he was allowing his mind to wander and entertain the idea that God chose to make Himself known to man. It may have been that David was "awe-struck" to think of the possibility that he could actually communicate with God or get His attention by calling on Him.

And he continues His thoughts about the greatness of God when he writes of His "majesty and glory" – the power that He has over the heavens, the earth and all that is in and on the earth. Nothing is beyond Him.

Notice two very important things: David begins with "O Lord" – describing his personal relationship with God. He knew that by "speaking" His name he would get God's attention. How impressive is that! This powerful God is present with him at that moment and is personally concerned about him and will respond to him if he calls upon him. And this is just the beginning.

Notice that "O Lord" is followed by "Our Lord" which includes all of us. God, speaking through David, wants us to know that He, this "majestic" God, is always thinking of us, watching over us and concerned about us.

Prayer: O Lord, Our Lord – how humbling it is to know that You, our Creator, are also our Companion. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 8:1 LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens.

News from the Associated Press

California AG bans state travel to Texas, 3 other states

By **KATHLEEN RONAYNE** and **SOPHIA BOLLAG**, Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — California's attorney general blocked state-funded travel to Texas and three other states on Thursday in response to what he considers anti-LGBT rights laws enacted this year.

Democratic Attorney General Xavier Becerra added Texas, Alabama, South Dakota and Kentucky to the list of places where state employee travel is restricted. Lawmakers passed legislation last year banning non-essential travel to states with laws that discriminate against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. North Carolina, Kansas, Mississippi and Tennessee are already on the list.

California taxpayers' money "will not be used to let people travel to states who chose to discriminate," Becerra said.

It's unclear what practical effect California's travel ban will have. The state law contains exemptions for some trips, such as travel needed to enforce California law and to honor contracts made before 2017. Travel to conferences or out-of-state trainings are examples of trips that could be blocked. Becerra's office couldn't provide information about how often state employees have visited the newly banned states.

Texas was added to the list because of a law that lets child welfare organizations deny services and adoptions to families because of "sincerely held religious beliefs" that Becerra's office says would allow LGBT discrimination. Similar laws were enacted in Alabama and South Dakota. Kentucky's new law could allow LGBT discrimination in schools, according to Becerra's office.

"California may be able to stop their state employees, but they can't stop all the businesses that are fleeing over taxation and regulation and relocating to Texas," said John Wittman, a spokesman for Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, a Republican.

Fresno State, a public California university, is scheduled to play football against the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa this fall. A request for a legal opinion on whether public university sports' travel is exempt from the ban has been filed with Becerra's office, but no ruling has been issued.

Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey's press office did not have an immediate comment.

Associated Press writer Kim Chandler in Montgomery, Alabama, contributed.

Thune: Drought aid triggered for 6 South Dakota counties

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — U.S. Sen. John Thune says drought aid is coming to ranchers with cattle in six counties of South Dakota.

Thune said Thursday the U.S. Drought Monitor indicates those counties are now categorized as being in extreme drought. That triggers three months of payments under the Livestock Forage Program to eligible producers with grazing livestock.

The counties are Campbell, Dewey, Walworth, Potter, McPherson and Edmunds.

Thune says grazing livestock producers who experience extreme drought need quick assistance to provide additional feed and grazing.

The Republican senator co-authored the Livestock Forage Program which was first included in the 2008 farm bill and later in the 2014 farm bill.

U.S. Rep. Kristi Noem says she's urging the USDA to quickly provide producers relief.

Drought conditions have prompted many ranchers to sell off cattle.

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Sanford, clinic work to merge but move is contested

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — Sanford Health is on the verge of absorbing another health care provider in the Dakotas, though the move is being contested in federal court.

Sanford has signed a merger agreement with Mid Dakota Clinic, which has nearly 100 physicians who serve patients in the Bismarck-Mandan area. There were no layoffs planned due to the merger.

The integration of the two health care systems will be ongoing through the next year, if approved by regulators.

However, the Federal Trade Commission and North Dakota Attorney General are trying to block the merger, filing a joint complaint Thursday in U.S. District Court alleging the deal would violate antitrust law by significantly reducing competition in Bismarck-Mandan.

The regulators are seeking a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction to stop the deal until the matter can go to trial.

The two providers told The Bismarck Tribune that the actions are “extremely frustrating” and that they used national, legal and economic experts to evaluate the partnership.

Officials said there will be no interruptions to patient care, and clinic patients can continue seeing their current doctors and going to the hospital of their choice.

“Both of our organizations recognized by working together we could not only navigate the enormous challenges in the health care landscape, but we could increase access to existing services while offering new services to our patients,” said Shelly Seifert, chairwoman of the clinic’s board.

The merger should speed construction projects in several treatment areas including women’s health and children’s cancer, said Sanford Bismarck Executive Vice President Craig Lambrecht. It also will allow the combined provider to recruit a number of subspecialists, such as pediatric gastroenterology, so patients will no longer have to travel outside the community for care, officials said.

Sanford Health was formed in 2009 when Sanford in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, merged with Meritcare in Fargo, North Dakota. Three years later, the new Sanford Health bought Medcenter One in Bismarck. Sanford now bills itself as one of the largest health systems in the nation, with 45 hospitals and nearly 300 clinics in nine states and four countries.

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

Contract awarded for Lewis and Clark pipeline project

TEA, S.D. (AP) — The organization responsible for a system that delivers water to towns and rural water systems in South Dakota, Iowa and Minnesota has awarded a contract to construct a pipeline.

The Lewis and Clark Regional Water System board of directors said Thursday that a roughly \$2.2 million contract has been awarded to Winter Brothers Underground, of Sioux Falls, to construct the 3.8-mile MCWC-East service line along Six Mile Road in southeastern Sioux Falls.

After the pipeline and a meter building are completed, the infrastructure will provide a third and last connection for Minnehaha Community Water Corporation. Nearly \$2.7 million had originally been budgeted for the work.

Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press

Rapid City Journal, Rapid City, June 22

War on drugs just got tougher

It was just 14 months ago when Pennington County Sheriff Kevin Thom told a state oversight council that meth use had “gone off the charts” and was “out of control” in parts of South Dakota.

Since then, the state has appropriated several hundred thousand dollars to bolster treatment opportunities, start a marketing campaign to warn youth and others of the dangers of meth, and to incentivize

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those on probation and parole to stop using a drug that is almost instantly addicting.

It appears, however, that these efforts have been akin to putting a finger in a dyke that is about to crumble. Meth use has skyrocketed in the past year and is often a key ingredient in violent crimes.

Now, however, meth and the madness and mayhem it creates has a rival and experts say its potency makes it far more dangerous. It's called fentanyl analog and should alarm everyone who is concerned about public health and public safety.

On Tuesday, the Lawrence County State's Attorney's Office announced that nine people were indicted on 50 felony drug charges. The primary drug cited was fentanyl analog. The investigation that led to the indictments came after two Spearfish residents, ages 23 and 38, died in January after using the synthetic opioid that the National Institute on Drug Abuse says is 50 to 100 more times potent than morphine, making it extraordinarily lethal.

The Lawrence County indictments come just one week after a 19-year-old Chamberlain man was arrested for possessing 20,000 fentanyl pills worth \$500,000.

Until recently, fentanyl has been seen as primarily a big-city problem in a few states. In 2014, the Centers for Disease Control reported that 80 percent of fentanyl seizures occurred in 10 eastern states.

Since then, however, this killer drug has swept through the nation and now has surfaced in central and western South Dakota where many of us feel insulated from drug epidemics and their fatal consequences. The drug, however, has the potential to sweep through a state like a plague. In New Hampshire, for example, the number of fentanyl-related deaths climbed from 145 to 283 from 2014 to 2015, according to the National Drug Early Warning System. The state's population is only around 1.3 million people.

In Lawrence County, 37-year-old Eric Reeder now faces 20 felony charges, including two counts of first-degree manslaughter. Spearfish police said the suspect told them he ordered the fentanyl on the darknet and they were delivered to him. Also facing a first-degree manslaughter charge is 32-year-old Ashley Kristina Kuntz.

The Lawrence County Sheriff's Office, the Lawrence County State's Attorney's Office and Spearfish police are to be congratulated for pursuing this case and seeking convictions on manslaughter charges. It's become all too clear that our ongoing war on drugs has become a lot tougher and the stakes are even higher.

It is a problem that requires an immediate and strong response from law enforcement. In the meantime, we all have a duty to report any suspected drug activity to law enforcement and to do everything possible to protect our families and loved ones from this devastating drug.

The Daily Republic, Mitchell, June 22

Local justice reform better for juveniles, county's future

An innovative approach to improving relationships between youths and law enforcement is coming to Davison County.

In short, the program is meant to redirect youth away from the justice system while still being held accountable for their actions when dealing with criminal matters. Davison County State's Attorney Jim Miskimins told the county commission this week he's received approval from a First Circuit Court judge to move forward with the program.

According to a data compilation from SD Kids Count, there were an estimated 89,814 children and youths ages 10 to 17 in South Dakota in 2015. Of those 1,983 lived in Davison County. And while that age range is only about 10 percent of our county's total population, it's an influential time in a person's life.

That's why we're hoping this new approach is successful. The main vision of South Dakota's Detention Alternatives Initiative is to get youths who are already involved in the juvenile justice system to become healthy adults who can contribute to the community.

Miskimins on Tuesday explained the new program will be an "officer friendly" approach in which law enforcement officers "are not just citing kids into court, but they're working on solutions for families, building relationships with children and their families."

That seems to be a proactive way to make youth and children less afraid of officers and a way to lower

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recidivism, or the tendency for criminal to reoffend.

We hope this program helps the long-term fight against crime and drug abuse in Mitchell and the local region. If officers can give some leeway to juvenile offenders early in their life, perhaps those youths can learn from their mistakes and recognize the second chance they were given.

This is a strong approach to making Mitchell and Davison County a better place to live. And we think our law enforcement officers and other involved agencies will take positive steps in helping guide it in the right direction.

We're excited to see the outcome and appreciate Miskimins for the initiative.

American News, Aberdeen, June 22

A user-friendly Aberdeen

If you aren't from Aberdeen, good luck in understanding the "unwritten rules" of living in South Dakota's third-largest city.

Not everyone in Aberdeen knows "how it's always been done." And some of our traditions are, frankly, a little unusual.

From uncontrolled intersections to long-gone-but-still-used landmarks like "The Starlite," a newcomer to Aberdeen might feel lost, even after spending a fair amount of time here.

Think of it this way: There is likely not one student at Northern State University or Presentation College who will understand directions if they are told to "turn by the Lumber Company."

That is not user-friendly information.

This is a critical issue as Aberdeen tries to welcome newcomers — new students, new workforce, new residents — to our city. These people, and their positive experiences, are important to keep this a growing, vibrant, relevant community.

Here's an example. In our very newsroom, our summer intern asked "What's with all the streets with no stop signs?" She is not from Timbuktu; in fact, she is from St. Paul, Minn., and is not unfamiliar with small, rural communities. This is exactly the kind of person Aberdeen leaders would like to recruit and retain and make into a true Aberdonian.

We can also guess she doesn't want to be in a fender-bender in her neighborhood.

There have been some welcome steps. We are big fans of the blue-and-orange "wayfinding" signs getting visitors to key hotspots.

We also like the red (orange? camo?) carpet that is rolled out for hunters every year.

Can that warm welcome be extended beyond those special occasions?

Change is hard. Looking outside yourself is difficult. Understanding a need, however small, can be costly. We are not suggesting that stop signs be put at every intersection in the university neighborhood area. However, is there no signage that can help? Any handouts? How does someone driving in that area know to yield, for instance?

Aberdeen is in a fight for talent. It is already difficult to recruit talent to this city; why add any friction to that transaction?

Here's something we can get behind: The Edge Underground, a new networking program being launched by the Aberdeen Area Chamber of Commerce. The first event is Saturday, and aims to attract and retain individuals early in their careers.

The program is for those between the ages of 20 and 40, with a special emphasis on those who have lived in the Aberdeen area for five years or fewer.

That's a good step.

We implore all of our leaders — city, county, business, education — to reach out to the young people of this city, to find out why they come, why they stay, and what frustrates them about living in Aberdeen, South Dakota.

We ask our friends and neighbors to look out for these newcomers, and make them feel at home.

And while you're at it, tell them to slow down at intersections, and yield to the driver on the right.

Daugaard: Cuts to Medicaid could reduce federal deficit

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard says cuts to Medicaid in the U.S. Senate Republicans' health care bill may be the sole opportunity to reduce the federal deficit in Congress.

The Republican governor told the Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2t09pOF>) on Thursday that cutting Medicaid funding for low-income Americans could offer savings the government needs. Senate Republicans released their plan the same day to eliminate much of former President Barack Obama's health care law.

Daugaard says the Medicaid provision likely wouldn't impact the "most frail" populations that are receiving coverage. He says everyone wants to provide care for people who need help, but at the same time "we don't want to end up becoming like Greece."

The newspaper says the governor didn't express support or opposition to the bill Thursday.

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

Big Stone City man dies of injuries suffered in Monday crash

WILMOT, S.D. (AP) — A Big Stone City man hurt in a vehicle crash Monday has died of his injuries.

The Highway Patrol says 77-year-old Roland Karels lost control of his vehicle on state Highway 123 Monday afternoon and it overturned south of Wilmot.

Karels was flown to a Sioux Falls hospital, where he died Wednesday.

Sentenced to jail time served for failing to report abuse

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A man who failed to report that his wife was physically abusing a child who later died has been sentenced to time already served in jail by a federal judge in the District of South Dakota.

Judge Jeffrey Viken said Wednesday that because Mitchell Wisecarver had accepted responsibility and because of his ill health, the 17 months he's already served in jail is enough.

The Rapid City Journal (<http://bit.ly/2sFJFUY>) says the 44-year-old Wisecarver earlier pleaded guilty to hiding a felony.

His wife, Lori Wisecarver, has pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in the death of 2-year-old Jayden Locke. The boy died from injuries in February 2015, several months after the couple took custody of him. She will be sentenced Sept. 14.

Information from: Rapid City Journal, <http://www.rapidcityjournal.com>

Drought conditions worsen in South Dakota from last week

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Drought conditions in South Dakota have worsened over the past week.

The latest U.S. Drought Monitor map shows 2 percent of the state being in extreme drought. None of the state was in that category a week ago.

Another 18 percent of the state is rated in severe drought, and 31 percent is in moderate drought. Much of the rest of the state is rated abnormally dry.

The areas of extreme and severe drought are in north central south Dakota.

Drought conditions are harming crops and also have prompted many ranchers to sell off cattle. Gov. Dennis Daugaard last week issued an emergency declaration easing hay and transportation restrictions.

Authorities ID Spearfish man killed in dump truck crash

SPEARFISH, S.D. (AP) — Authorities have identified a Spearfish man who died after a dump truck crash in western South Dakota's Lawrence County.

The Highway Patrol says 43-year-old Alan Campbell lost control of the truck Monday morning on a curve on a rural road about 3 miles west of Spearfish.

The truck collided with several trees and rolled, and Campbell later died from his injuries. He was alone in the truck.

Lawsuit by student whose rape charge got dismissed approved

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A federal judge has ruled that a student can move forward with a lawsuit against a Sioux Falls university that expelled him over a sexual assault allegation that was later dismissed.

Koh Evan Tsuruta is seeking unspecified damages from Augustana University for loss of educational opportunities, emotional injury and loss of future income. He alleges that the university employees handling his case weren't properly trained in investigating and adjudicating allegations of rape.

Tsuruta was expelled when he was criminally charged after a woman with whom he had been drinking in July 2015 accused him of rape. The charges were dismissed in March 2016 without explanation.

Augustana's lawyers last fall asked that the lawsuit be dismissed, saying the school didn't violate any of Tsuruta's rights and that he was trying to "seek vengeance" but had no case.

U.S. District Judge Karen Schreier recently denied the school's request, the Argus Leader reported (<http://argusne.ws/2rVzv5P>).

"Tsuruta has pleaded sufficient facts to support his claims," she wrote in her June 16 order.

Augustana officials declined comment. Tsuruta first sued the school in October 2015 to halt proceedings to expel him until his criminal case was resolved. A federal judge denied his request and that lawsuit was dismissed.

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

Storm causes damage to senior facility in Castlewood

CASTLEWOOD, S.D. (AP) — Storms caused extensive damage to a senior living facility in Castlewood.

KELO-TV (<http://bit.ly/2sXLPIW>) reports the Castlewood Assisted Living facility was evacuated when hail and strong winds moved through the area Wednesday night.

Hamlin County sheriff's officials are advising against travel in the community because of so many downed trees and power lines. The storm temporarily knocked out power in the area.

Information from: KELO-TV, <http://www.keloland.com>

Kyle man sentenced to time served in child death case

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Kyle man who admitted failing to report that his wife had been physically abusing a child who later died will not see further jail time.

Forty-four-year-old Mitchell Wisecarver was sentenced Wednesday to time already served behind bars — about 1 ½ years. He'll be on supervised release for a year.

Forty-three-year-old Lori Wisecarver in February admitted killing the 2-year-old boy she was raising. She'll be sentenced in September for second-degree murder.

Jayden Locke died from injuries in February 2015, a few months after the couple took custody of him.

Sioux Falls Mayor Mike Huether rules out a run for Congress

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sioux Falls Mayor Mike Huether says he will not seek the U.S. House seat being vacated by Kristi Noem.

Huether's second term as mayor ends next May, and there had been some speculation that he might make a run for Congress. He announced Wednesday that he will not do so, despite encouragement "from folks all across the great state of South Dakota."

Huether did not say what his plans are after he leaves the mayor's office.

The one-time Democrat announced earlier this year that he was changing his affiliation to independent. Noem plans to run for governor next year.

Pierre landscaping crew uncovers human skull fragment

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — State officials are studying a human skull fragment that was uncovered by a landscaping crew in Pierre.

Police were called to the scene Wednesday afternoon. Authorities believe the skull fragment was in a load of rock used during landscaping in the area 17 years ago.

An archaeologist from the State Historical Society was brought to the scene but found no other bones.

The skull fragment will be taken to the state forensic laboratory and then sent to an expert in Kansas for further analysis.

State positioned for growth in biotechnology

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Experts say South Dakota's agri-business strengths and its emerging health care sector puts the state in a great position for growth in the biotechnology industry.

Dr. Christoph Bausch with SAB Biotherapeutics says biotechnology in South Dakota is small, but powerful. Bausch's Sioux Falls company works on genetic modification of livestock to produce human antibodies to fight diseases.

The Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2sXOLiG>) says the state's companies are involved in a wide range of biotech research; including enzymes, ethanol, antibodies, biomedical devices and genomic medicine.

Bausch says the downside is that biotech businesses lack facilities in South Dakota. Most research parks equipped to handle biotech companies' special needs are largely full. He says the state risks losing that business if it can't invest in housing those companies.

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

Total solar eclipse casts spotlight on rural Oregon town

GILLIAN FLACCUS, Associated Press

MADRAS, Ore. (AP) — Just before sunrise, there's typically nothing atop Round Butte but the whistle of the wind and a panoramic view of Oregon's second-highest peak glowing pink in the faint light.

But on Aug. 21, local officials expect this lookout point just outside the small town of Madras to be crammed with people from around the world, all hoping for the first glimpse of the moon's shadow as it crosses Mount Jefferson's snow fields. Then, a solar eclipse will throw the entire region into complete darkness for two minutes.

The first coast-to-coast total solar eclipse to cross the continental United States in 99 years will first be visible in Oregon, and Madras is predicted to be among the country's best viewing spots because of its clear, high-desert skies, flat landscape and stunning mountain views.

Up to 1 million eclipse chasers will descend on Oregon for the celestial event, and officials are bracing for as many as 100,000 of them in and around Madras.

In this vast expanse of ranches and farms, rural, two-lane roads could mean traffic jams of cosmic proportions. Every hotel in Madras is booked, some residents are renting their homes for \$3,000 a night, and campers are expected to flood the national forests and grasslands during peak wildfire season.

The state's emergency coordination center will gear up, and first responders will prepare to respond to any trouble as they would for an earthquake or other natural disaster. Cell towers could be overwhelmed, traffic will be gridlocked, and police and fire stretched to the max managing the crowds.

"Bring extra water, bring food. You need to be prepared to be able to survive on your own for 24 to 48 to 72 hours, just like you would in any sort of emergency," said Dave Thompson, spokesman for the Oregon Department of Transportation. "This is pretty much a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and it's really worth seeing. But you've got to be prepared or you won't enjoy it."

When the moon passes between the sun and the Earth, the path of totality — meaning total darkness — from the moon's shadow will begin on Oregon's coast, then cross the north-central part of the state

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from west to east.

But as the hype builds, authorities are increasingly worried that people who planned to watch from the notoriously foggy coast could move east at the last minute if the forecast sours. And Oregonians who live outside the path of totality could decide to drive to one of the prime viewing spots at the spur of the moment, creating havoc on the roads, said Cory Grogan, spokesman for the Oregon Office of Emergency Management.

In addition, many tourists will be camping in hot, tinder-dry conditions, or even sleeping in their cars. First responders have been planning for months for a worst-case scenario: evacuating tens of thousands of people while trying to get fire engines through gridlocked roads. Cellular towers also may be crippled by the volume of people texting, calling and posting photos, making it difficult for fire crews to communicate.

Federal and local officials will stage engines and other resources at key locations, and firefighters from other agencies and private companies will send extra crews. But it's impossible to plan for everything, and tourists frustrated with traffic may use forest access roads as shortcuts, further raising fire risk, said Kent Koeller, a recreation planner with U.S. Forest Service outside Madras.

"Just driving off-road - having that contact with a hot muffler or a catalytic converter - could start an ignition," he said. "And in these fine fuels, it could spread very quickly."

Lysa Vattimo was hired two years ago to coordinate the town's planning efforts with more than 50 local, state and federal agencies. She spends her days trying to think of every possible consequence of having tens of thousands of people in a town of just 6,500 — and her nights worrying she missed something.

The town and surrounding campsites have rented nearly 700 portable toilets, including some from as far as Idaho, to meet demand. Sanitation trucks will run almost around the clock, transporting trash to 50-yard-long (46-meter-long) dumpsters before it rots in triple-digit temperatures.

Gas stations are filling their underground tanks in advance, and businesses are being told to use cash only, to avoid bringing down the wireless network. Banks are stocking their ATMs, local hospitals have canceled vacations, and pregnant women close to their due dates are being told to leave to avoid getting stuck.

"What we've asked our residents to do is get prepared ahead of time. About a week out, fuel up on propane, gas, whatever fuels they need, get their prescriptions, go to the doctor, do what you need to do," she said. "And then stay home."

In Madras, hotels were booked years ago, and spots at 25 campgrounds in and around the town are going fast. Farmers are renting out their land for pop-up campgrounds, and thousands of parking spaces for day trippers are getting snapped up.

The Black Bear Diner, one of the town's most popular restaurants, expects to serve 1,000 people a day during the week leading up to the eclipse. Owner Joe Davis has ordered five weeks of food for one week of business and will have an abbreviated menu of 10 items to speed service.

"The Black Bear Diner has been here in Madras 18 years, and I'm sure this will be by far the busiest week - and probably double the busiest week - that we've seen," he said.

But amid all the hubbub and anxiety, most residents have kept sight of the wonder.

Darlene Hoffman is one of the few here who watched the last total solar eclipse to touch Madras 38 years ago. Hoffman, 80, recalls how the birds stopped singing and the horses prepared to sleep as the sky gradually darkened and a hush fell over the land.

"It was really something to see. It really was," she said. "That amazed me more than anything."

Follow Gillian Flaccus on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/gflaccus>

Ending guessing game, Trump admits there are no Comey tapes

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and ERIC TUCKER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ending a month-long guessing game that he started with a cryptic tweet and that ensnared his administration in yet more controversy, President Donald Trump declared he never made and doesn't have recordings of his private conversations with ousted former FBI Director James Comey,

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"With all of the recently reported electronic surveillance, intercepts, unmasking and illegal leaking of information," Trump tweeted Thursday, he has "no idea" whether there are "tapes" or recordings of the two men's conversations. But he proclaimed "I did not make, and do not have, any such recordings."

That left open the possibility that recordings were made without his knowledge or by someone else. But he largely appeared to close the saga that began in May, just days after he fired Comey, then the head of an investigation into Trump associates' ties to Russian officials. Trump has disputed Comey's version of a January dinner during which the director said the president had asked for a pledge of loyalty.

Trump responded at that time, via Twitter, that Comey "better hope that there are no 'tapes' of our conversations before he starts leaking to the press!"

That apparently angry missive triggered a series of consequences, each weightier than the last. Comey has suggested that the tweet prompted him to ask an associate to release damaging information to the media. The resulting news reports built pressure on a top Justice Department official to appoint an independent prosecutor to oversee the Russia investigation. That special counsel, former FBI Director Robert Mueller, is now reportedly investigating Trump's own actions in a probe that could dog his presidency for the foreseeable future.

Trump showed concern about that situation as well, telling Fox News Channel in an interview that Mueller is "very, very good friends with Comey which is bothersome."

In that interview that aired Friday morning on "Fox & Friends," Trump also suggested a motivation behind the tapes tweet.

"When he found out that I, you know, that there may be tapes out there, whether it's governmental tapes or anything else, and who knows, I think his story may have changed," Trump said. "I mean you'll have to take a look at that, because then he has to tell what actually took place at the events."

Trump added: "And my story didn't change. My story was always a straight story. My story was always the truth."

Trump's declaration now that there are no recordings appears to settle a key dynamic in that investigation: It's now the president's word against Comey's notes.

Without recordings, Comey's version of his conversations with Trump — which he documented at the time, shared with close associates and testified about to Congress — will likely play a key role as prosecutors consider whether Trump inappropriately pressured the lawman to drop the investigation into former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn. Investigators will also weigh the credibility of Comey against a president who has shown a wobbly commitment to accuracy.

Trump's tweets, old and new, left many perplexed about whether there was motive or strategy behind the whole affair. The president appeared to enjoy ginning up mystery and spinning Washington reporters about the possibility there was a trove of surreptitiously recorded Oval Office conversations.

"I think he was in his way instinctively trying to rattle Comey," former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, a longtime Trump confidant, said before the Thursday tweets. "He's not a professional politician. He doesn't come back and think about Nixon and Watergate. His instinct is: 'I'll out-bluff you.'"

Thursday's revelation came a day ahead of a deadline to turn over any tapes to the House intelligence committee. The timing drew attention away from the release of the Senate's health care bill, which the White House hopes can provide Trump a much-needed legislative victory to boost his sagging poll numbers.

But the episode tired Trump's defenders and aides, who for weeks have been dodging questions about the recordings. Advisers who speak to Trump regularly have said he had not mentioned the existence of tapes during their conversations. More than a half-dozen aides said they were unaware of any recording devices. All demanded anonymity to speak about private discussions with the president.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Thursday she didn't think Trump regretted the initial tweet. As for his possible motivation, she would only say it was perhaps about "raising the question of doubt in general." She also could not explain Trump's new reference to possible surveillance.

Trump's earlier suggestion about tapes evoked the secret White House recordings that led to Richard Nixon's downfall in the Watergate scandal. Under a post-Watergate law, the Presidential Records Act, re-

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recordings made by presidents belong to the people and can eventually be made public. Destroying them would be a crime.

Mark Warner of Virginia, top Democrat on the Senate intelligence committee, said, "This administration never ceases to amaze me." He said the tweeting is an example of Trump's "willingness to just kind of make things up."

"It's remarkable the president was so flippant to make his original tweet and then frankly stonewall the media and the country for weeks," Warner said. "I don't know how this serves the country's interests."

This is not the first time that Trump, the former star of reality TV and tabloids, has manufactured a melodrama that begins with bluster but often ends with a whimper.

Trump flirted with presidential runs in 1988 and 2000 before abandoning them. He offered to help rebuild the World Trade Center in 2004 but never followed through. And his embrace of birtherism, which questioned whether Obama was born in the United States and was eligible to become president, fueled his own political rise. He never produced any evidence.

The pattern has continued since Trump's election.

On New Year's Eve, he claimed he knew "things that other people don't know" about foreign hacking of last year's election, and that the information would be revealed "on Tuesday or Wednesday." Those days came and went without an answer. In March, he tweeted the incendiary claim that he was wiretapped by his predecessor, a charge he's never supported.

He's brought trouble to his White House.

At a Senate committee hearing this month, Comey suggested that the president's reference to possible recordings inspired him to disclose to the media through an intermediary a memo he had written of their Oval Office conversation. In that meeting, according to the memo, Trump told Comey he hoped he would let the Flynn investigation go. Comey said he understood that to be a request to drop the probe.

One week after the memo was disclosed, the Justice Department appointed Mueller as special counsel to take over the investigation into contacts between Russia and the Trump political campaign.

Associated Press writers Jill Colvin, Ken Thomas and Deb Riechmann contributed reporting.

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

Turkey rejects Gulf Arab states' demands over its Qatar base

By ADAM SCHRECK and JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Turkey on Friday rejected a key demand by several Arab states involved in a major dispute with Qatar, saying Ankara has no plans to shut down its military base in the small Gulf country.

The demand that Turkey pull out its forces was one of a steep list of ultimatums from Saudi Arabia and others who have cut ties with Doha that they say must be fulfilled within the next 10 days. Qatar has confirmed receiving the 13-point list of demands on Thursday from Kuwait, which is mediating the dispute, but has not yet commented on them.

The list says Turkey's military base in Qatar must be closed immediately, and insists that Doha also shutter broadcaster Al-Jazeera, cut back diplomatic relations with Iran and sever all ties with the Muslim Brotherhood. The Associated Press obtained a copy of the 13-point list in Arabic from one of the countries involved in the dispute.

Turkish Defense Minister Fikri Isik said on Friday that the Turkish base aims to train Qatari soldiers and increase the tiny Persian Gulf nation's security. According to the Milliyet newspaper's online edition, he also said that "no one should be disturbed by" the Turkish presence in Qatar.

Turkey has sided with Qatar in the dispute and its parliament has ratified legislation allowing the deployment of Turkish troops to the base. The military said a contingent of 23 soldiers reached Doha on Thursday.

Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain broke ties with Qatar and restricted access to land, sea and air routes earlier this month over allegations the Persian Gulf country funds terrorism — an

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accusation that President Donald Trump has echoed. The move has left Qatar, whose only land border is shared with Saudi Arabia, under a de facto blockade by its neighbors.

Qatar vehemently denies funding or supporting extremism. But the country acknowledges that it allows members of some extremist groups such as Hamas to reside in Qatar, arguing that fostering dialogue with those groups is key to resolving global conflicts.

Those countries have now given Qatar 10 days to comply with all of the demands, which include paying an unspecified sum in compensation.

Underscoring the growing seriousness of the crisis, state-run Qatar Petroleum acknowledged early Friday that some critically important employees "may have been asked to postpone" trips abroad "for operational reasons" as a result of the embargo against Qatar.

It described the move as "a very limited measure that could take place in any oil and gas operating company" to ensure uninterrupted energy supplies to customers.

Under Qatari law, foreigners working in the country must secure their employer's consent to receive an exit permit allowing them to leave. The practice, which has been in place for years, has been assailed by rights groups who say it limits workers' freedom of movement and leaves them open to abuse.

Qatari officials in Doha did not immediately respond to a request for comment from the AP. But the list included conditions that the gas-rich nation had already insisted would never be met, including shutting down Al-Jazeera. The network also had no immediate comment.

Qatar's government has said it won't negotiate until Arab nations lift their blockade. The demands were also likely to elicit Qatari objections that its neighbors are trying to dictate its sovereign affairs by imposing such far-reaching requirements.

"At the moment, there is no likelihood of bringing the matter back to the table," said Isik, the Turkish defense minister.

Earlier this week, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson had warned the demands must be "reasonable and actionable," underscoring the American administration's frustration at how long it was taking Saudi Arabia and others to formalize a list of demands, complicating U.S. efforts to bring about a resolution to the worst Gulf diplomatic crisis in years.

According to the list, Qatar must refuse to naturalize citizens from the four countries — Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt — and expel those currently in Qatar, in what the countries describe as an effort to keep Qatar from meddling in their internal affairs.

They are also demanding that Qatar hand over all individuals who are wanted by those four countries for terrorism; stop funding any extremist entities that are designated as terrorist groups by the U.S.; and provide detailed information about opposition figures that Qatar has funded, ostensibly in Saudi Arabia and the other nations.

Qatar's neighbors have also accused it of backing al-Qaida and the Islamic State group's ideology throughout the Middle East. Those umbrella groups also appear on the list of entities whose ties with Qatar must be extinguished, along with Lebanon's Hezbollah and the al-Qaida branch in Syria, once known as the Nusra Front.

More broadly, the list demands that Qatar align itself politically, economically and otherwise with the Gulf Cooperation Council, a regional club that has focused on countering the influence of Iran. Saudi Arabia and other Sunni-led nations have accused Qatar of inappropriately close ties to Iran, a Shiite-led country and Saudi Arabia's regional foe.

The Iran provisions in the document say Qatar must shut down diplomatic posts in Iran, kick out from Qatar any members of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guard, and only conduct trade and commerce with Iran that complies with U.S. sanctions. Under the 2015 nuclear deal, nuclear-related sanctions on Iran were eased but other sanctions remain in place.

The Revolutionary Guard has deployed its forces to conflict zones such as Syria and Iraq. It is not known to have a presence in Qatar.

Cutting ties to Iran would prove incredibly difficult. Qatar shares a massive offshore natural gas field with

Iran which supplies the small nation that will host the 2022 FIFA World Cup its wealth.

Also, not only must Qatar shut down the Doha-based satellite broadcaster, the list says, but also all of its affiliates. That presumably would mean Qatar would have to close down Al-Jazeera's English-language sister network.

Supported by Qatar's government, Al-Jazeera is one of the most widely watched Arabic channels, but it has long drawn the ire of Mideast governments for airing alternative viewpoints. The network's critics say it advances Qatar's goals by promoting Islamist movements like the Muslim Brotherhood that pose a populist threat to rulers in other Arab countries.

The list also demands that Qatar stop funding a host of other news outlets including Arabi21 and Middle East Eye.

Beirut-based political analyst George Alam said Qatar is unlikely to agree to the demands.

"They are impossible to be met because they interfere in Qatar's foreign policy and Qatar considers its foreign policy a sovereign matter that is nonnegotiable, he said.

If Qatar agrees to comply, the list asserts that it will be audited once a month for the first year, and then once per quarter in the second year after it takes effect. For the following 10 years, Qatar would be monitored annually for compliance.

Lederman reported from Washington. Associated Press writers Suzan Fraser in Ankara, Turkey; Hussain Al-Qatari in Kuwait City; Jon Gambrell in Dubai; Mustafa Najjar in Beirut; and Vivian Salama in Washington contributed to this report.

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Suicide car bomb in southwest Pakistan kills 11, wounds 20

By ABDUL SATTAR, Associated Press

QUETTA, Pakistan (AP) — A suicide car bomber struck near the office of the provincial police chief in southwestern Pakistan on Friday, killing at least 11 people and wounding 20, officials said. A breakaway Taliban faction later claimed responsibility for the attack.

The bombing came ahead of the Muslim holiday of Eid-al-Fitr, which follows the holy month of Ramadan, expected to end this weekend.

The explosion near the police chief's office in Quetta, the capital of Baluchistan province, was powerful enough that it was heard across the city, shattering windows on nearby buildings, said police spokesman Shahzada Farhat.

Wasim Beg, a spokesman at a government hospital, said the death toll from the bombing had risen to 11 throughout the morning. He said some people remained in critical condition.

TV footage showed several badly damaged cars and a road littered with broken glass.

Hours after the attack, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, a breakaway faction of the Pakistani Taliban, claimed responsibility for the bombing. Asad Mansoor, the militants' spokesman, said the bombing was part of their campaign aimed at enforcing Islamic laws in the country. He vowed more such attacks.

Anwarul Haq Kakar, a spokesman for the provincial government, blamed neighboring India for the blast but offered no evidence to back up the allegation.

Pakistan and India routinely trade charges of interference and inciting attacks on one another's soil.

On Thursday, Pakistan said that an Indian naval officer, Kulbhushan Jadhav, who was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on charges of espionage and sabotage, had petitioned for mercy.

Jadhav, who Pakistan said had crossed into Baluchistan from neighboring Iran, was arrested in March 2016 and sentenced to death in April.

In New Delhi, the Ministry of External Affairs insisted Jadhav was sentenced on "concocted charges" and

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expressed doubts about the existence of the petition for mercy. It also reiterated that the proceedings against Jadhav have been shrouded "in opacity."

Baluchistan has long been the scene of a low-level insurgency by Baluch nationalists and separatists, who want a bigger share of the regional resources or outright independence, but also attacks blamed on the Pakistani Taliban and others. Those militant groups include Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, which is considered a close ally of IS, as well as Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, which has taken credit for several previous attacks in Baluchistan and elsewhere and has bases in Pakistan's tribal regions.

Associated Press writers Katy Daigle in New Delhi and Munir Ahmed in Islamabad contributed to this report.

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

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

1. WHO IS STAKING IT ALL ON THE HEALTH CARE BILL

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has made himself practically the sole arbiter of the bill and will be largely responsible for the outcome, whether it's a win, a loss or a win that turns into a loss over time.

2. QATAR'S NEIGHBORS ISSUE PUNITIVE DEMANDS INCLUDING SHUTTERING AL-JAZEERA

Kuwait has given the embattled Gulf nation a list, obtained by the AP, from Saudi Arabia and other Arab nations that also include severing all ties with Iran, immediately closing Turkey's military base in Qatar and ending military cooperation with the NATO member.

3. SUPREME COURT COULD REVEAL TRAVEL BAN DECISION ANY TIME

The Supreme Court has almost certainly decided what to do about President Donald Trump's travel ban affecting citizens of six mostly Muslim countries.

4. WHO'S CALLING ITSELF 'BIGGEST VICTIM' AFTER DETAINED AMERICAN'S DEATH

In its first comments about Otto Warmbier since he died in Ohio, North Korea defends its treatment of its former detainee while saying it had "no reason at all to show mercy to such a criminal."

5. WHY THERE WILL BE PROTESTS AT GAY PRIDE PARADES

The protesters say increasingly corporate pride celebrations prioritize the experiences of gay white men while ignoring issues facing black and brown LGBT people.

6. US JUDGE HALTS DEPORTATION OF IRAQI CHRISTIANS

The U.S. district judge halted the deportation for 14 days while he decides whether his court has jurisdiction to hear the plight of 114 Iraqis who fear torture and possible death if they are sent back to Iraq.

7. PENCE TO VISIT FOCUS ON THE FAMILY AT KEY TIME FOR RELIGIOUS RIGHT

The vice president is celebrating the anniversary of the group, which has dialed back political involvement in an effort to withdraw from partisan culture wars.

8. WHERE EVERY HOTEL ROOM IS BOOKED FOR THE SOLAR ECLIPSE

As many as 100,000 people are expected to visit the Oregon town of Madras, predicted to be one of the best viewing locations for the Aug. 21 eclipse.

9. 76ERS TAKE FULTZ WITH NO. 1 PICK; LAKERS GRAB BALL

Fultz and Ball led a record-setting run of college freshmen opting for the NBA draft.

10. MASSIVE SEQUOIA TREE IS MOVING TWO BLOCKS

The tree, sent to Idaho's capital as a seedling by naturalist John Muir more than a century ago, is being moved Friday to make way for a hospital's expansion.

North Korea denies torturing American detainee Otto Warmbier

By KIM TONG-HYUNG, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea on Friday called itself the “biggest victim” in the death of an American student who was detained for more than a year and died days after being released in a coma.

Pyongyang’s official Korean Central News Agency denied that North Korea cruelly treated or tortured Otto Warmbier and accused the United States and South Korea of a smear campaign that insulted what it called its “humanitarian” treatment of him.

The comments published by the agency were North Korea’s first reaction to Otto Warmbier’s death in a U.S. hospital Monday after it released him for what it called humanitarian reasons.

Doctors at the hospital said Warmbier had suffered a severe neurological injury from an unknown cause. Relatives say they were told the 22-year-old University of Virginia student had been in a coma since shortly after he was sentenced to 15 years of hard labor in North Korea in March 2016.

His family and others have blamed North Korea for his condition.

Warmbier was accused of stealing a propaganda poster. Through statements on KCNA, North Korea said it dealt with him according to its domestic laws and international standards.

“Although we had no reason at all to show mercy to such a criminal of the enemy state, we provided him with medical treatments and care with all sincerity on humanitarian basis until his return to the U.S. ... considering that his health got worse,” the agency quoted an unnamed spokesman of Pyongyang’s Foreign Ministry as saying.

The spokesman also said that “groundless” speculation of torture and beatings could be refuted by American doctors who came to the North to examine Warmbier before his release and allegedly acknowledged that North Korean doctors had “brought him back alive” after his heart nearly stopped.

While Pyongyang accepted U.S. demands for Warmbier’s return on humanitarian grounds, Washington “totally distorted this truth and dared to clamor about ‘retaliation’ and ‘pressure’” on “dignified” North Korea, the spokesman told KCNA.

“To make it clear, we are the biggest victim of this incident and there would be no more foolish judgment than to think we do not know how to calculate gains and losses,” the spokesman said.

“The smear campaign against DPRK staged in the U.S. compels us to make firm determination that humanitarianism and benevolence for the enemy are a taboo and we should further sharpen the blade of law,” the spokesman added, referring to North Korea by its formal name, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

The spokesman said it was a “mystery” as to why Warmbier died days after returning home, but compared his death to the case of another American detainee, Evan Hunziker. Hunziker was detained in North Korea for months in 1996 for illegally crossing the border and committed suicide less than a month after he returned to the United States later that year.

The spokesman didn’t describe how Hunziker died, but claimed that the United States then “totally ignored” his death.

A separate KCNA article published hours earlier also criticized South Korea for using Warmbier’s case to seek the release of other detainees, including six South Korean citizens. South Korean President Moon Jae-in said in an interview with CBS television earlier this week that it was clear North Korea bears a heavy responsibility for Warmbier’s death.

The article said South Korea was tarnishing North Korea’s image with “slanderous talk about cruel treatment and torture.”

It demanded that South Korea return 12 restaurant workers who defected to the South last year. South Korea said the women defected on their own, while North Korea claimed they were deceived and abducted to the South.

The United States, South Korea and others often accuse North Korea of using foreign detainees to wrest diplomatic concessions. Three Americans remain in custody in the North.

Philippines: IS funded siege through Malaysian militant

MARAWI, Philippines (AP) — The Islamic State group helped fund the monthlong siege of a southern Philippine city through a Malaysian militant who was reportedly killed by troops, the Philippine military chief said Friday.

Gen. Eduardo Ano told The Associated Press that Malaysian Mahmud bin Ahmad reportedly channeled more than \$600,000 from the IS group to acquire firearms, food and other supplies for the attack in Marawi. Money believed to be from illegal drugs also funded the uprising, he said.

Mahmud was wounded in the fighting last month and reportedly died on June 7. A local militant leader, Omarkhayam Maute, also is believed to have been killed in the early days of intense fighting and troops were looking for their remains to validate the intelligence the military had received.

Troops are seeking the help of villagers to pinpoint the exact spot where Mahmud was reportedly buried, Ano said. Malaysian security officials have also received information of Mahmud's killing in Marawi and were trying to confirm it.

Two other rebel leaders, top Filipino militant suspect Isnilon Hapilon and Maute's brother, Abdullah, were still fighting in Marawi, he said.

A former Malaysian university professor who became radicalized and received training in Afghanistan, Mahmud appeared in a video showing militant leaders planning the Marawi siege in a hideout, a sign of his key role in the uprising. The AP obtained a copy of the video, which was seized by troops May 23.

A month ago, about 500 local militants, along with several foreign fighters, stormed into Marawi, a bastion of Islamic faith in the south of the predominantly Roman Catholic nation. Troops since then have killed about 280 gunmen, recovered nearly 300 assault firearms and regained control of 85 buildings. Many of the high rises were used as sniper posts to slow down the advance of government forces, the military said.

At least 69 soldiers and police and 26 civilians have died in the fighting. Only four Marawi villages remain in the hands of the militants, out of the 19 of 96 villages across the lakeside city of 200,000 people that the black flag-waving militants had occupied.

"They are constricted in a very small area. They're pinned down," Ano said. He said that three boatloads of gunmen who tried to join the militants were blasted by navy gunboats three days ago in Lake Lanao, which borders Marawi.

Ano said that the battle was taking longer because the militants were using civilians as human shields.

"We can just bomb them away or use napalm bomb to burn everything, but then, we will not be any different from them if we do that," he said.

The audacious attack by the heavily-armed militants and their ability to hold on to large sections of a city for weeks had surprised the government and sparked fears among Southeast Asian countries that the Islamic State group was seriously moving to gain a foothold in the region.

Australian Defense Minister Marise Payne said the Philippines accepted an offer of two AP-3C Orion aircraft to provide surveillance to local troops. The U.S. military has earlier deployed a spy plane and drones over Marawi.

Powerful clans and warlords, along with insurgencies, have effectively weakened law enforcement in large areas in the country's south, making it easier for militants to take over an area and hold it, said Sidney Jones, director of the Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict in Jakarta, Indonesia.

"I do think that martial law doesn't solve the problem and I think military strikes, especially airstrikes, don't solve the problem," Jones said. "It's much broader problem that needs a strategic solution."

Facing his worst crisis, President Rodrigo Duterte has declared martial law in the south to deal with the Marawi siege.

Philippine Foreign Minister Alan Peter Cayetano and his Malaysian and Indonesian counterparts met with top security officials in Manila Thursday to discuss the crisis. They agreed on a plan of action to combat terrorism and rising extremism and deal with the prospects of Asian fighters returning to their region from Syria and Iraq, where the IS group has been losing territory.

Associated Press writers Jim Gomez and Teresa Cerojano in Manila, Philippines, Rod McGuirk in Canberra, Australia, and Andi Jatmiko in Jakarta, Indonesia, contributed to this report.

McConnell faces hunt for GOP votes for Senate health bill

By ALAN FRAM and RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has finally unwrapped his plan for dismantling President Barack Obama's health care law. Now comes his next challenge — persuading enough Republicans to back the measure and avert a defeat that would be shattering for President Donald Trump and the GOP.

McConnell released the bill Thursday, drafted after weeks of closed-door meetings searching for middle ground between conservative senators seeking an aggressive repeal of Obama's statute and centrists warning about going too far. Erasing Obama's law has been a marquee pledge for Trump and virtually the entire party for years.

The bill would cut and redesign the Medicaid program for low-income and disabled people, and erase taxes on higher earners and the medical industry that helped pay for the roughly 20 million Americans covered by Obama's law. It would let insurers provide fewer benefits, offer less generous subsidies than Obama to help people buy policies and end the statute's tax penalties on people who don't buy policies and on larger firms that don't offer coverage to workers.

"I am very supportive of the Senate #HealthcareBill. Look forward to making it really special! Remember, ObamaCare is dead," Trump tweeted late Thursday.

Shortly after the 142-page bill was distributed, more than a half-dozen GOP lawmakers signaled concerns or initial opposition. McConnell, R-Ky., has little margin for error: Facing unanimous Democratic opposition, "no" votes by just three of the 52 GOP senators would sink the legislation.

McConnell, eager to approve the legislation next week, indicated he was open to changes before it reaches the Senate floor. But he said it was time to act.

"No amount of 11th hour reality-denying or buck-passing by Democrats is going to change the fact that more Americans are going to get hurt unless we do something," he said.

Democrats said the GOP measure would take coverage away from people and raise their out-of-pocket costs, all in the name of paring taxes on the wealthy.

"This bill may change, but Republicans will only be putting lipstick on a devastating blow to Americans' health care," said Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore.

Four conservative senators expressed opposition but openness to talks: Ted Cruz of Texas, Kentucky's Rand Paul, Mike Lee of Utah and Ron Johnson from Wisconsin. They said the measure missed delivering a GOP promise to Americans "to repeal Obamacare and lower their health care costs."

In an interview with Fox News Channel, Trump was asked about the four conservatives opposing the bill. "Well, they're also four good guys, four friends of mine and I think that they'll probably get there," he said. "We'll have to see."

Sens. Dean Heller of Nevada, facing a competitive 2018 re-election battle, Rob Portman of Ohio and Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia expressed concerns about the bill's cuts to Medicaid and drug addiction efforts.

Sen. Susan Collins of Maine reiterated her opposition to language blocking federal money for Planned Parenthood, which many Republicans oppose because it provides abortions. The bill would also bar using tax credits to buy coverage that includes abortions.

Obama held nothing back as he weighed in on Facebook.

"If there's a chance you might get sick, get old or start a family, this bill will do you harm," he wrote. He said amendments during the upcoming debate "cannot change the fundamental meanness at the core of this legislation."

The House approved its version of the bill last month. Though Trump lauded its passage in a Rose Garden ceremony, he called the House measure "mean" last week.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office said that under the House bill, 23 million fewer people would

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have coverage by 2026. The budget office analysis of the Senate measure is expected early next week. The Senate bill would phase out extra money Obama's law provides to 31 states that agreed to expand coverage under the federal-state Medicaid program. Those additional funds would continue through 2020, then gradually fall and disappear entirely in 2024.

The measure largely uses people's incomes as the yardstick for helping those without workplace coverage to buy private insurance. That would focus the aid more on people with lower incomes than the House legislation, which bases its subsidies on age.

Caroline Pearson, a senior vice president of the consulting firm Avalare Health, said the Senate subsidies would be smaller than Obama's because they're keyed to the cost of a bare-bones plan and because additional help now provided for deductibles and copayments would eventually be discontinued.

The bill would let states get waivers to ignore some coverage requirements under Obama's law, such as specific health services insurers must now cover.

States could not get exemptions to Obama's prohibition against charging higher premiums for some people with pre-existing medical conditions, but the subsidies would be lower, making coverage less affordable, Pearson said.

For the next two years, the Senate would also provide money that insurers use to help lower out-of-pocket costs for millions of lower income people. Trump has been threatening to discontinue those payments, and some insurance companies have cited uncertainty as a reason they are abandoning some markets and boosting premiums.

Supreme Court could reveal action on travel ban at any time

By MARK SHERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court has almost certainly decided what to do about President Donald Trump's travel ban affecting citizens of six mostly Muslim countries.

The country is waiting for the court to make its decision public about the biggest legal controversy in the first five months of Trump's presidency. The issue has been tied up in the courts since Trump's original order in January sparked widespread protests just days after he took office.

The justices met Thursday morning for their last regularly scheduled private conference in June and probably took a vote about whether to let the Trump administration immediately enforce the ban and hear the administration's appeal of lower court rulings blocking the ban.

The court's decision could come any time and is expected no later than late next week, after which the justices will scatter for speeches, teaching gigs and vacations.

Exactly when could depend on whether there are justices who disagree with the outcome and want to say so publicly. It might take time for such an opinion to be written — and perhaps responded to by someone in the majority.

It takes five votes to reinstate the ban, but only four to set the case for argument. Justice Neil Gorsuch, Trump's nominee who was confirmed in April, is taking part in the highest-profile issue yet in his three months on the court.

The case is at the Supreme Court because two federal appellate courts have ruled against the Trump travel policy, which would impose a 90-day pause in travel from citizens of Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

The 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, Virginia, said the ban was "rooted in religious animus" toward Muslims and pointed to Trump's campaign promise to impose a ban on Muslims entering the country as well as tweets and remarks he has made since becoming president.

The San Francisco-based 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said the travel policy does not comply with federal immigration law, including a prohibition on nationality-based discrimination. That court also put a hold on separate aspects of the policy that would keep all refugees out of the United States for 120 days and cut by more than half, from 110,000 to 50,000, the cap on refugees in the current government spending year that ends Sept. 30.

Trump's first executive order on travel applied to travelers from the six countries as well as Iraq, and took

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effect immediately, causing chaos and panic at airports over the last weekend in January as the Homeland Security Department scrambled to figure out who the order covered and how it was to be implemented.

A federal judge blocked it eight days later, an order that was upheld by a 9th circuit panel. Rather than pursue an appeal, the administration said it would revise the policy.

In March, Trump issued a narrower order, but it too has been blocked.

The justices have a range of options. They could immediately allow the administration to stop travel from the six countries and hear arguments on the administration's broader appeal in October. That's the path the administration has urged.

But the 90-day ban will have run its course by then, and there might be little left for the court to rule on.

The government has said the ban was needed to allow for an internal review of the screening procedures for visa applicants from the six countries.

That too should be complete before the Supreme Court reconvenes for its new term on October 2.

The administration also could issue a new ban that includes more countries or is permanent, or both. That might make the current case go away and also could give rise to new legal challenges.

The high court also might keep the ban on hold, but set the case for argument in October. This course might be palatable both to justices who object to the ban and those who don't like the breadth of the lower court rulings against the president.

But it also could mean that a new policy is in effect before the court ever hears the case.

The justices also could keep the ban from being reinstated and, at the same time, decline to review the lower court rulings. That outcome would essentially end the case.

One barrier to that option could be that the court usually likes to have the last word when a lower court strikes down a federal law or presidential action.

Detroit judge halts deportation of Iraqi Christians

By COREY WILLIAMS, Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — A judge on Thursday temporarily halted the deportation of more than 100 Iraqi Christians living in the Detroit area who fear torture and possible death if sent back to Iraq.

U.S. District Judge Mark Goldsmith said in a written order that deportation is halted for 14 days while he decides if his court has jurisdiction to hear their plight.

The Justice Department had argued that the detainees, including many who were recently rounded up after decades in the U.S., must go to immigration court to try to remain in the U.S., not U.S. District Court. But the American Civil Liberties Union said they might be deported before an immigration judge can consider their requests to stay.

Goldsmith heard arguments Wednesday. He said he needs more time to consider complex legal issues.

Potential physical harm "far outweighs any conceivable interest the government might have in the immediate enforcement of the removal orders before this court can clarify whether it has jurisdiction to grant relief to petitioners on the merits of their claims," Goldsmith said.

Most of the 114 Iraqis are Chaldean Christians, but some are Shiite Muslims and converts to Christianity. They were arrested on or about June 11 and the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement said all have criminal convictions.

Iraq recently agreed to accept Iraqi nationals subject to removal from the U.S.

"The court took a life-saving action by blocking our clients from being immediately sent back to Iraq," Lee Gelernt, deputy director of the ACLU's Immigrants' Rights Project, said in a release. "They should have a chance to show that their lives are in jeopardy if forced to return."

Besides the 114 arrested in the Detroit area, 85 other Iraqi nationals were arrested elsewhere in the country, according to ICE. As of April 17, there were 1,444 Iraqi nationals with final orders of removal from the U.S. Eight already have been returned to Iraq.

The detainees include Louis Akrawi, who served more than 20 years in Michigan prisons for second-degree murder. He was accused of arranging a shooting that killed an innocent bystander in 1993.

"He's 69 years old, he has two artificial knees, and he needs surgery on both eyes. Sending him back to Iraq is unfair," his son, Victor Akrawi, told The Detroit News.

Stabbing suspect was caretaker, studied insurance sales

By **ROB GILLIES** and **ED WHITE**, Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — The Canadian man charged with stabbing a police officer at the Flint airport in a possible act of terrorism was a part-time caretaker at the Montreal apartment building where he lived and had once studied to sell insurance, a landlord and an insurance company spokesman said Thursday.

Amor Ftouhi kept the building stairwells clean and always paid his rent on time, his landlord told The Associated Press. The 49-year-old originally from Tunisia lived in a two-bedroom apartment with his wife and children and "never made any trouble," Luciano Piazza said.

Investigators are working to learn more about Ftouhi, whom they describe as a lone-wolf attacker who made his way to the seemingly random destination of Flint, a struggling Michigan city once known for its sprawling General Motors factories but now better known for lead-tainted water.

Once in the U.S., he unsuccessfully tried to buy a gun, but instead managed to buy a knife, David Gelios, head of the FBI in Detroit said Thursday. He did not elaborate.

Licensed gun dealers first must put purchasers through an electronic background check of U.S. law enforcement databases, which could make Canadians ineligible, said Brady Schickinger, director of the Michigan Coalition for Responsible Gun Owners.

The attack Wednesday at Bishop International Airport, about 50 miles (80.46 kilometers) northwest of Detroit, was being investigated as an act of terrorism, but authorities said they have no indication that the suspect was involved in a "wider plot," Gelios said.

Ftouhi, a dual citizen of Canada and Tunisia, stabbed airport police Lt. Jeff Neville with a large knife after yelling "Allahu akbar," the Arabic phrase for "God is great." According to the FBI, Ftouhi said something similar to "you have killed people in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, and we are all going to die."

He was immediately taken into custody and was charged in a criminal complaint with committing violence at an airport. Acting U.S. Attorney Dan Lemisch said more charges are coming in the days ahead. Ftouhi is in custody and has a bond hearing scheduled for Wednesday.

He wanted to identify an international airport, but, Gelios said, authorities "have absolutely no indication that he had any association with anyone in the Flint area or, thus far, in Michigan."

Ftouhi was "neither on the radar of Canadian authorities or FBI or United States authorities," Gelios said.

The suspect indicated to court officials that he has lived in Canada for 10 years and has three children. A pretrial services officer told a judge that he had worked on and off as a truck driver. He indicated "no mental or physical health problems and no drug or alcohol use," the officer, Linsey Carson, said.

Meanwhile, Neville was "doing well" at a hospital, airport Director Craig Williams said Thursday.

Investigators have no information to suggest that the suspect received any training, Gelios said.

Ftouhi's Facebook page reveals little about him. He has three friends and appeared several years ago to enjoy playing a Facebook video game called Army Attack. His only postings in the past four years are a pair of Arabic-language YouTube videos — one discussing ways to memorize the Quran and another showing how to prevent someone from swallowing their tongue.

His page also lists that he worked for a Canadian insurance company called Industrial Alliance. A company spokesman said he was studying to become a sales representative but left after five months before obtaining his certificate.

Police in Canada were searching a Montreal apartment. Montreal police spokesman Benoit Boiselle said officers were assisting the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in the search on behalf of an FBI request.

Three people staying at the residence had been taken in for questioning, Boiselle said.

Mohcin Asrii, a 27-year-old student who lived directly below Ftouhi's third-floor apartment, expressed shock that a middle-aged man with a wife and three children could be accused of carrying out the stabbing.

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"I knew him well enough to say hello, not much more than that," he told AP. "He came across as strict, quiet. He walked with his head down."

The Villeray-St Michel-Parc Extension borough where Ftouhi lived is a large, ethnically diverse Montreal neighborhood, with almost half of its 142,000 residents born outside Canada, according to city figures. Almost 8,000 claim Arabic as their first language.

North African emigrants often choose to settle in the French-speaking province of Quebec, drawn by its immigration policies that favor francophone applicants.

Investigators said they also want to know more about Ftouhi's movements within the U.S.

He legally entered the U.S. at Champlain, New York, on June 16 and was in Michigan by at least June 18, said Gellios, who would not say whether Ftouhi entered the U.S. under a so-called trusted traveler program.

He spent some time in public, unsecured areas of the airport before going to a restroom where he dropped two bags before attacking the officer with a 12-inch knife that had an 8-inch serrated blade, Gellios said.

Neville "fought him to the end," managing to stop the stabbing and bring Ftouhi to the ground as other officers arrived to help, according to Chris Miller, the airport police chief.

Ftouhi asked an officer who subdued him why he did not kill him, according to the criminal complaint. Police described him as "cooperative" and said he was talking to investigators.

Gillies reported from Toronto. Associated Press writers Jeff Karoub, Mike Householder and Corey Williams in Detroit; Ashraf Khalil and Tammy Webber in Chicago; Kenneth Thomas in Washington; Sadie Gurman in Phoenix, Arizona; and freelance writer Patrick Lejtenyi in Montreal also contributed to this report.

Brexit: May offers hope for EU citizens, wins guarded praise

By RAF CASERT and LORNE COOK, Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — British Prime Minister Theresa May promised Thursday that EU citizens will not be immediately kicked out of Britain when it leaves the union and says their fate will be a top priority in Brexit negotiations — prompting guarded praise from other EU leaders at a tense time for the continent.

May's proposals at an EU summit were a carefully timed gesture days after talks began on Britain's departure. German Chancellor Angela Merkel called them "a good start."

May laid out benchmarks for the rights of 3 million EU citizens living legally in Britain and how they should be shielded from excessive harm because of the divorce. She made it clear that Britain wants reciprocal measures for the 1.5 million British citizens living in the EU. The issue of citizens' rights is especially sensitive in the Brexit talks.

Under May's proposal, EU citizens with legal residence in the UK will not be asked to leave and will be offered a chance to regularize their situation after Brexit, a senior British official said. May also promised to cut the burdensome bureaucracy such paperwork can involve, the official said.

"No one will face a cliff edge," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity since May made the proposal at a closed-door EU summit dinner.

Merkel welcomed May's promises, but insisted that "there are, of course, many, many other issues." She mentioned the bill that Britain will have to pay to leave and questions about how to deal with the border between Northern Ireland and EU member Ireland.

"It means we have lots left to do," Merkel said.

Austrian Chancellor Christian Kern said May's proposals are "a first step" but warned there are still many European citizens in Britain who would not be covered by the proposals. "We are now at the start of all this and we don't know whether it will be a sprint or a marathon," he said.

The Dutch prime minister, Mark Rutte, said there are "thousands of questions to ask" about May's proposals, and questioned why the British leader was laying them out with EU leaders instead of with the Brexit negotiators.

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Britain's departure in 2019 will cause the EU to lose one of its biggest members and a global player, but the other EU nations were already looking at some of the spoils of the divorce. They will decide in November where the EU agencies currently based in Britain will move to on the continent, EU chief Donald Tusk announced.

The bloc's medicines and banking agencies are now in London, and almost every EU nation wants one of the two agencies. On Thursday, the EU leaders agreed on procedures for a fair pick.

Discord over whether Britain's exit process could still be reversed surfaced at the summit.

Tusk said when British friends asked him if he could imagine a way for Britain to remain part of the bloc, he told them: "The EU was built on dreams that seemed impossible to achieve. So who knows?"

"You may say I am a dreamer but I'm not the only one," Tusk added, quoting a lyric from the late John Lennon's "Imagine."

Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel, however, said the will of the British people who voted in a June 2016 referendum to leave the EU had to be respected.

"I am not a dreamer. And I am not the only one," Michel said.

Michel insisted Brexit negotiations should proceed without fanciful distractions.

"What we also need is certainty, for our companies in Belgium, in Europe," he said. "If we back this image that Brexit perhaps would not happen, it brings an uncertainty."

Merkel also focused on imagining an EU without Britain.

"For me, shaping the future of the 27 (remaining) member states has priority over the question of the negotiations with Britain on its exit," Merkel said.

French President Emmanuel Macron pledged at his first EU summit as head of state to breathe new life into a European Union stung by Britain's departure and deeply divided over the best way to accommodate refugees.

He pushed at the summit for joint European defense, a joint budget for countries that use the euro and a tougher stance against the U.S. and China on trade.

Macron promised to forge ahead with Germany to make the bloc stronger and more relevant to citizens.

"Europe is not, to my mind, just an idea. It's a project, an ambition," he told reporters.

On the opening day of the two-day leader's summit, the EU announced agreements on extending sanctions against Russia and on fighting climate change.

After a string of small-scale terrorist attacks in European capitals this week, the EU leaders also agreed to join efforts seeking to curb online extremism and crack down on Europeans who go abroad to fight jihad. They also agreed to jointly develop or purchase military equipment like drones.

Associated Press writers Angela Charlton in Brussels and Geir Moulson in Berlin contributed to this report.

Parole denied for Manson follower Krenwinkel in California

By DON THOMPSON, Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Officials denied parole Thursday for convicted killer Patricia Krenwinkel — a follower of cult leader Charles Manson — after considering whether battered women's syndrome affected her state of mind at the time of the notorious murders nearly five decades ago in California.

Krenwinkel, 69, was previously denied parole 13 times for the slayings of pregnant actress Sharon Tate and four other people.

The next night, she helped kill grocer Leno LaBianca and his wife Rosemary in what prosecutors say was an attempt by Manson to ignite a race war.

The decision on parole came six months after commissioners postponed the latest hearing so officials could investigate whether Krenwinkel was battered by Manson.

"They were willing to discount the level of control through the violence, threats, intimidation that was substantiated by their own investigators," Krenwinkel's attorney, Keith Wattley, said after the hearing.

State law requires commissioners to give "great weight" to whether physical, emotional or mental abuse

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affected offenders to the point that "it appears the criminal behavior was a result of that victimization."

Krenwinkel was denied parole for five more years at the hearing at the California Institution for Women east of Los Angeles, where she is incarcerated.

She was a 19-year-old secretary living with her older sister when she met the 33-year-old Manson at a party. She testified that she left everything behind three days later to follow him because she believed they had a budding romantic relationship.

She said in December that her feelings faded when Manson became physically and emotionally abusive, and trafficked her to other men for sex.

She said she left him twice only to be brought back, and that she was usually under the influence of drugs and rarely left alone.

"I thought I loved him. I thought — it started with love, and then turned to fear," she said.

Tate's sister, Debra Tate, attended the hearing and said commissioners rejected the intimate partner battering argument in part because Krenwinkel had multiple sex partners at the time.

"She has no insight into the crime and is still minimizing her offense," Tate added.

The commissioners did not immediately release the reason for their decision.

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey praised the parole denial, saying Krenwinkel remains dangerous.

William Portanova, a defense attorney and former prosecutor who is not affiliated with the case, said commissioners would seem justified in denying Krenwinkel's parole even if they found that she was a victim of domestic violence.

"It was such a calculated act of insanity perpetrated by people that were so weak that they followed a madman into murder, and I think the parole board is justified in worrying that such weak-mindedness may be permanent and therefore the danger of reoffending, if released, is too high to take the chance," he said.

Wattley said Krenwinkel should also be freed because of her age now and because she was just 21 and less culpable during the murders. He said he will consider asking a judge to overturn the parole panel's decision.

"The politics and the public outcry outweighed the law," Wattley said. "She sufficiently changed her life, transformed herself, and she's not a danger anymore."

Krenwinkel in December recounted how she chased down and repeatedly stabbed Abigail Folger, 26, heiress to a coffee fortune, at Tate's home on Aug. 9, 1969, and helped Manson and other followers kill grocer Leno LaBianca and his wife Rosemary the following night.

Manson and his right-hand man, Charles "Tex" Watson, told her to "do something witchy," she said, so she stabbed La Bianca in the stomach with a fork, then took a rag and wrote "Helter Skelter," "Rise" and "Death to Pigs" on the walls with his blood.

Intimate partner battery was also briefly discussed during the last parole hearing for Manson follower Leslie Van Houten, 67, in 2016. The commissioners recommended that she be paroled, but Gov. Jerry Brown blocked her release.

Krenwinkel became the state's longest-serving female inmate when fellow Manson follower Susan Atkins, the third woman convicted in the series of slayings, died of cancer in prison in 2009.

Anthony DiMaria, the nephew of victim Thomas Jay Sebring who died during the first massacre, criticized commissioners' consideration of intimate partner battering, part of what he said "has become the twisted metamorphosis of a killer into victim."

He later praised the commissioners for considering all the circumstances, including Krenwinkel's heinous crimes, in rejecting her parole.

"Sadly, there are millions of intimate partner battery victims in this country," he said in remarks prepared for the hearing. "But fortunately, it's safe to say, that almost none of them suddenly become a maniacal predator that stalks, pounces, butchers and mutilates her victims."

Juror: Cosby panel was concerned about 'politics' of case

By JOE MANDAK and MICHAEL RUBINKAM, Associated Press

PITTSBURGH (AP) — A juror in Bill Cosby's sexual assault trial said Thursday that some jurors were concerned that prosecutors waited 10 years to charge him, expressing suspicion that politics had played a role in the case.

The juror told The Associated Press that the panel was almost evenly split in its deliberations, with a similar number of jurors wanting to convict the 79-year-old entertainer as acquit him on charges he drugged and molested a woman at his Philadelphia-area home in 2004.

He was the second juror to speak out after the jury deadlocked in the case. A mistrial was declared Saturday after 52 hours of deliberations. Prosecutors plan to put Cosby on trial again.

The juror who spoke to the AP questioned the long delay in bringing charges against the TV star, suggesting that "no new evidence from '05 to now has showed up, no stained clothing, no smoking gun, nothing."

In reality, prosecutors reopened the investigation in 2015 after the public release of a deposition that Cosby gave in 2005 and 2006 as part of accuser Andrea Constand's lawsuit against him — testimony that hadn't been offered when another district attorney passed on the case in early 2005. Prosecutors used Cosby's deposition as evidence at the criminal trial.

The juror spoke to the AP on the condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive deliberations.

Constand, a former Temple University employee, told jurors Cosby gave her pills that made her woozy and then penetrated her with his fingers as she lay paralyzed on a couch, unable to tell him to stop. Cosby has said his encounter with Constand was consensual.

Constand, now 44, initially went to police about a year after she said Cosby assaulted her, but a prosecutor declared her case too weak to bring charges.

A decade later, another district attorney revived the probe after excerpts from Cosby's lurid deposition about drugs and sex became public and dozens of women came forward also alleging sexual assault by him. Cosby was charged shortly before the statute of limitations was set to expire.

The juror who spoke to the AP said other jurors expressed the view in the deliberating room that "politics was involved."

"I think they created this whole thing, a case that was settled in '05, and we had to bring it up again in '17 with no new evidence," the juror said.

The juror declined to reveal whether he wanted to convict or acquit Cosby but left little doubt about how he felt.

He said he was suspicious of Constand's story, questioning why she waited to tell authorities and suggesting the clothing she wore to Cosby's house had influenced his view of their encounter.

"When you ask for help on your resume, on your resignation letter, which she did, and he, Mr. Cosby, invites her to his home and she arrives in a bare midriff with incense and bath salts, that's a question," said the juror, appearing to lump several meetings between Cosby and Constand into one.

Cosby, he said, seemed more truthful in his deposition, in which he acknowledged giving pills to Constand before their sexual encounter. The comedian also described how, in the 1970s, he obtained prescriptions for the powerful sedative quaaludes for the purpose of offering them to women with whom he wanted to have sex.

"He openly admitted that what he gave 'em, he gave 'em pills," the juror said. "He almost incriminated himself. It was very, very honest from his side. You could believe from his testimony what he did, but not from her."

The juror characterized the deliberations as tense.

"Crying by men and by women and more than one," he said. "And the tears came towards the end, it was so tense."

Another juror told ABC News on Wednesday that jurors had voted 10-2 to convict Cosby on two of three counts against him. The juror who spoke to the AP confirmed that vote but said three people then changed their minds. He said the panel was typically more "evenly split" and "up the middle."

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Cosby is eager to get back to work following the mistrial, a spokesman said. A series of town halls is planned to help educate young people about the problems their misbehavior could create, spokesman Andrew Wyatt told a Birmingham, Alabama, TV station. The issue "is bigger than Bill Cosby" and can affect any young person, especially young athletes, Wyatt said, without elaborating.

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

Rubinkam reported from northeastern Pennsylvania.

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

Cindy weakens but still stirs weather over wide swath

By KEVIN MCGILL, Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — A suspected tornado near Birmingham, Alabama, flattened businesses and injured one person Thursday, while the mayor of a coastal Louisiana town urged residents to evacuate ahead of a rising tide — two lingering effects of a weakening Tropical Depression Cindy that was fueling harsh weather across the Southeast.

The walls of a liquor store and an oil-change service in Fairfield, west of Birmingham, collapsed in the apparent twister. A fast-food restaurant also was among the damaged businesses. Dean Argo, a spokesman for the Alabama Alcoholic Beverage Control Board said one employee of the liquor store was hurt.

Meteorologist Jason Holmes of the National Weather Service said trees were down and buildings were reported damaged along the Interstate 20 corridor on the western outskirts of Birmingham, Alabama's most populous city. The weather service had issued tornado warnings earlier for the Birmingham and Tuscaloosa areas.

Meanwhile, the Gulf Coast was still suffering from the effects of Cindy, a former tropical storm in the Gulf of Mexico that crawled ashore early Thursday near the Louisiana-Texas state line. Downgraded to a tropical depression, Cindy weakened as it crossed Louisiana toward Arkansas but a broad circulation around the system swept moist Gulf air over the South, fueling severe weather and pushing up coastal tides.

In the low-lying Louisiana town of Lafitte, south of New Orleans, Mayor Tim Kerner urged residents in and around the town to seek higher ground because of rising water.

"The tide's rolling in. It's getting to a dangerous level," Kerner said. Streets and yards in the town were covered and Kerner worried that homes, even those in parts of town protected by levees, might be flooded. "I'm hoping not," he added.

"Certainly it's not been as bad as we feared. That's the good news, Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards said in Baton Rouge. "The bad news is it's not over yet."

As a slow-moving tropical storm that formed Tuesday in the Gulf, Cindy was blamed for one death: a 10-year-old boy, Nolan McCabe of St. Louis, Missouri, was vacationing with his family on the Alabama coast when he was hit by a log washed in by a large wave. Cindy also caused widespread coastal highway and street flooding and several short-lived tornadoes, but no other deaths.

In Louisiana, Edwards said two fishermen reported missing in a coastal area were located and rescued Thursday. A day earlier off Texas, the U.S. Coast Guard helped the four-member crew of a shrimp trawler limp to shore at Freeport after the crew radioed in distress amid fears of sinking.

Authorities warn driving rains could still cause dangerous flash floods. "That continues to be the threat," said Ken Graham, of the weather service office near New Orleans. "Not only around the center of Cindy. The impact of rain can be hundreds of miles away."

Heavy rain was forecast to spread over the Tennessee and Ohio valleys on Thursday, then move Friday and Saturday into the central Appalachians. At 4 p.m. CDT Thursday, Cindy was about 45 miles (75 kilometers) south of Shreveport. It maximum sustained winds of 20 mph (32 kph) and was heading northeast,

expected to move into Arkansas Thursday night.

National Weather Service statistics show roughly 12 inches (300 millimeters) of rain had fallen in some spots along the Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida coasts since Tuesday.

Forecasters warned that flash floods remained a danger as the storm moved north. But Cindy was also bringing rain to an area that needed it. Southeastern Arkansas hadn't seen significant rain in more than a week.

"If there's not so much rain, it could end up being beneficial," corn and rice farmer David Hillman said in Almyra, Arkansas, 55 miles (90 kilometers) southeast of Little Rock. "A couple inches? Yes. I don't think we'd have a problem with that. Now if we get wind and it knocks the corn down, well, I don't want that."

In southwest Louisiana, not far from where Cindy came ashore before dawn, trucks navigated knee-high water in the streets of Cameron Parish — but there was no serious flooding. "We haven't heard of water getting into homes," said Ashley Buller, an assistant in the parish emergency office. "Mostly a few downed trees, power outages."

In Gulfport, Mississippi, Kathleen Bertucci said about 10 inches (250 millimeters) of rain water found its way into her business selling granite countertops. "It's pretty disgusting, but I don't have flood insurance because they took me out of the flood zone," Bertucci said.

Some threats could be lurking in the flood waters, including floating colonies of fire ants that Alabama officials warned about in a statement.

And in Ocean Springs, Mississippi, there was another worry in a neighborhood where streets and some homes flooded Thursday.

"One of our safety concerns is alligators," said local neighborhood watch organizer Erin West. "We have several alligators in the nearby ponds and it's springtime and they like to move around during springtime and everything."

Associated Press writers Melinda Deslatte in Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Jeff Amy and Emily Wagster in Jackson, Mississippi; Jay Reeves in southern Mississippi; Kimberly Chandler in Montgomery, Alabama; Kelly Kissel in Little Rock, Arkansas; Brendan Farrington in Tallahassee, Florida; and Jeff Martin in Atlanta contributed to this report.

Pelosi defends leadership following special election loss

By ERICA WERNER, AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi defended her leadership, and her job, on Thursday in the face of needling from President Donald Trump and grumbling from fellow House Democrats exasperated after a high-profile special election loss.

"So you want me to sing my praises, is that what you're saying?" the California Democrat remarked dismissively to reporters when asked why she should stay on as leader. "Well, I'm a master legislator. I'm a strategic, politically astute leader. My leadership is recognized by many around the country."

"That is why I'm able to attract the support that I do, which is essential to our elections, sad to say," Pelosi added, in a reference to her unparalleled fundraising hauls.

Pelosi's defiant comments came as Democrats remained angry and divided after throwing some \$30 million into a House race in Georgia on Tuesday, only to end up with a loss that wasn't even very close. Republican Karen Handel beat Democrat Jon Ossoff by around 5 percentage points in the suburban Atlanta district previously represented by Tom Price, now the Health and Human Services secretary.

Democrats lost another race in South Carolina that same night, and that followed previous disappointments in Montana and Kansas.

All the races were on GOP-friendly terrain. Pelosi and other Democratic leaders insisted that they demonstrated important progress by coming in a close second, and have a good shot at taking back the House in next year's midterm elections. They must pick up 24 seats to do so.

But some rank-and-file House Democrats scoffed at such explanations and raised questions about Pelosi's

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continued leadership. A group of her critics met Thursday in New York Democratic Rep. Kathleen Rice's office, though it was not clear what if anything would come of it.

"If we take back the House in 2018 then I think she'd stay leader," said Rep. Ruben Gallego, D-Ariz. "If we don't, then I think it's incumbent upon her and all of us to reassess who our leadership should be."

Trump himself weighed in over Twitter Thursday morning with digs at Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York.

"I certainly hope the Democrats do not force Nancy P out. That would be very bad for the Republican Party - and please let Cryin' Chuck stay!" Trump wrote.

Pelosi brushed off the tweet, contending that Trump hadn't actually written it himself because "it's a classic Republican line."

In fact Pelosi, 77, has emerged as a favorite GOP bogeyman and was the target of a barrage of negative advertising in the Georgia House race, mocking her as a San Francisco liberal and tying her to Ossoff.

The apparent effectiveness of such attacks alarmed some fellow Democrats, and they show no signs of letting up. On Thursday, the National Republican Senatorial Committee sent out a press release attacking Nevada Democratic Rep. Jacky Rosen over her ties to Pelosi. Rosen is a likely candidate for Senate against the most endangered GOP Senate incumbent, Dean Heller of Nevada.

Pelosi said Republicans will always make a target of Democratic leaders, saying they did so with legendary former House Speaker Tip O'Neill and many others.

"Usually they go after the most effective leaders because they want to diminish the opportunity that we have," Pelosi said.

"I think I'm worth the trouble, quite frankly."

Pelosi, 77, has led the House Democratic caucus for nearly 15 years, from the minority into the majority and back again. She has beat back all comers, including last fall, when Democratic Rep. Tim Ryan of Ohio ran against her. Ryan fell well short but garnered dozens of votes, enough to underscore dissatisfaction with Pelosi and with her aging leadership team that has left promising young Democrats with few places to rise.

Pelosi also incorrectly predicted that Democrats were poised to take back the House last year, leading some of her colleagues to feel that this time around, she needs to deliver. Democrats have been chafing in the minority since they were thrust there in 2010 after risky votes in favor of President Barack Obama's initiatives including the Affordable Care Act.

But Pelosi continues to command great loyalty from many in the House, and she insisted her position was not in jeopardy.

"I feel very confident in the support that I have in my caucus," she said. "We don't agonize. We organize. So let's get started on winning the races where we really do have a chance."

Associated Press writer Kevin Freking contributed to this report.

'Pizzagate' gunman in DC sentenced to 4 years in prison

By JESSICA GRESKO, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — An online conspiracy theory dubbed "pizzagate" ended Thursday with real-world consequences when a North Carolina man was sentenced to prison for arming himself with an assault rifle, traveling to the nation's capital and firing his weapon inside a neighborhood pizza restaurant.

Edgar Maddison Welch's "ill-conceived plot" last year did "actual damage to the lives of real people," a judge said before sentencing him to four years in prison.

Judge Ketanji B. Jackson said she'd never seen a case like Welch's, and she gave him a punishment on the upper end of guidelines, in part to send a message to others. If Welch believed an internet conspiracy theory that children were being harmed at the restaurant, he should have notified law enforcement, not attempted to take the law into his own hands, the judge said during Thursday's hearing in U.S. District Court in Washington.

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Jackson said it was "sheer luck" that no one was physically injured when Welch entered Washington's Comet Ping Pong restaurant on Dec. 4 armed with an AR-15 assault rifle and a revolver. He was there just about a month after the election of President Donald Trump to investigate unfounded internet rumors about prominent Democrats harboring child sex slaves at the restaurant.

As diners and staff fled, leaving half-eaten pizza and cups of soda, Welch went through the restaurant. At one point, he fired his AR-15 at a locked closet, but he discovered there were no children being held in the restaurant and surrendered peacefully.

Welch's sentence was just below the 4 ½ years prosecutors sought and above the 1 ½ years Welch's attorney asked for.

During the hearing, the 29-year-old Welch spoke briefly to apologize, saying he realized that his words "cannot undo or change what already happened." In a letter filed with the court, he wrote that he is "truly sorry for endangering the safety of any and all bystanders who were present that day," but he didn't talk about the conspiracy theory that motivated him to act, saying just that he came to Washington "with the intent of helping people I believed were in dire need of assistance."

On Thursday, he sat quietly in an orange jail jumpsuit throughout most of the hearing as his mother, father, sister and fiancée sat in the front of the courtroom.

Welch's attorney, Dani Jahn, said that Welch's actions were "reckless" and "misguided," but she said Welch, a father and former emergency medical technician, had acted with the intent of defending children.

Welch, who is from Salisbury, North Carolina, pleaded guilty in March to interstate transportation of a firearm and ammunition and assault with a dangerous weapon. Though the rumors he went to investigate were unfounded, they have upended the lives of those who worked in the restaurant.

The restaurant's owner, James Alefantis, said in court that the "viscous web of lies" about his business has been traumatic for him and his staff. He still needs security there, he said, and has suffered both emotionally and financially. In letters to the judge and in court, employees described the terror of Welch's actions, with some saying they have depression and nightmares and need trauma counseling.

But Alefantis also said he is hopeful.

"I am hopeful that those who provoke fear, traffic in lies and perpetuate conspiracy will awake to the tangible harms that result from their actions," he said in court. "I am hopeful that one day reason will prevail before a shot rings out again in a place of warmth and love and communal gathering."

Follow Jessica Gresko on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/jessicagresko>

Iraqis: IS blew up mosque in 'formal declaration of defeat'

By BALINT SZLANKO and SINAN SALAHEDDIN, Associated Press

MOSUL, Iraq (AP) — With their control of Mosul slipping away, Islamic State militants decided to send a message of defiance: They blew up the 12th century al-Nuri Mosque, along with its famous leaning minaret.

The mosque, destroyed Wednesday night, would have been a symbolic prize in the fight for Iraq's second-largest city. It was from a pulpit in that mosque that the extremists' leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, declared a caliphate in the lands they had seized in Iraq and Syria in July 2014.

According to Iraqi officials, the destruction of the landmarks indicated that IS defenses are crumbling and the campaign to retake Mosul — launched more than eight months ago — is in its final stages.

"They knew that the battle had been decided in favor of the Iraqi forces and they knew that we were going to enter the mosque in only a few hours," said Iraqi special forces Lt. Gen. Abdul-Wahab al-Saadi, adding that his troops were only 50 meters (yards) from the mosque site.

"That's why they exploded it," he said.

Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi tweeted early Thursday that the mosque's destruction was an admission by the militants that they are losing the fight, calling it a "formal declaration of their defeat."

Inside western Mosul, residents were still reeling from the loss of the iconic structure that was blown up during the celebration of Laylat al Qadr, the holiest night of the year for Muslims.

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The "Night of Power" commemorates when the Quran was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad during the holy month of Ramadan, which is in its waning days. The minaret that leaned like Italy's Tower of Pisa had stood in Mosul for more than 840 years and was known as al-Hadba.

"It is a shock, a real big shock," Amir al-Jumaili, a professor at the Archaeology College in Mosul, told The Associated Press.

Mohammed Tariq al-Bayati recalled growing up next to the mosque.

"I was in my grandfather house. I remember we used to play under its shade," al-Bayati said. After learning of its destruction, he said he felt like his childhood had also been demolished.

"It is the city's icon, I can say that Mosul has died," the longtime resident added.

An IS statement posted online shortly after the destruction of the landmarks was reported by the Ministry of Defense blamed a U.S. airstrike.

A spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition rejected the claim. U.S. Army Col. Ryan Dillon told the AP that coalition planes "did not conduct strikes in that area at that time."

IS fighters initially tried to destroy the minaret in July 2014, saying the structure contradicted their fundamentalist interpretation of Islam. Mosul residents converged on the area, however, and formed a human chain to protect it.

The destruction of the mosque and the leaning minaret is only the latest in a long series of priceless archaeological and cultural sites that the militants have ravaged across Iraq and Syria.

In addition to pillaging hundreds of treasures and artifacts, IS fighters have damaged or destroyed dozens of historic places, including the town of Palmyra in Syria, home to one of the Middle East's most spectacular archaeological sites; the 2,000-year-old city of Hatra; and the nearly 3,000-year-old city of Nimrud in Iraq's Euphrates River valley.

Earlier this month, Mosul residents reported IS fighters had begun sealing off the area around the al-Nuri Mosque. They said the militants ordered families to leave the area, likely in preparation for their final stand.

"This is a crime against the people of Mosul and all of Iraq, and is an example of why this brutal organization must be annihilated," U.S. Maj. Gen. Joseph Martin, the commander of coalition ground forces in Iraq, said in a statement.

Patrick Martin, a research analyst with the Institute for the Study of War, suggested the move may have more to do with optics than a sign of an imminent defeat.

"This robs Iraqi security forces of a symbolic victory," Martin said.

"Iraqi security forces capturing the building where ISIS announced the caliphate would have been a huge media win and message to Iraqis in general, so destroying the mosque robs them of that," he added.

The destruction also feeds into the IS narrative that the United States and the coalition is inflicting massive destruction as they try to retake Mosul, Martin said.

The mosque sat at the heart of the Old City, the last IS stronghold in Mosul. Iraqi forces launched a push into the Old City earlier this week, but progress has been slow as the last militants there are holed up with an estimated 100,000 civilians, according to the United Nations.

The U.N. special envoy to Iraq, Jan Kubis, said the destruction "is a clear sign" of the IS group's imminent collapse.

"This latest barbaric act of blowing up a historic Islamic site adds to the annals of Daesh's crimes against Islamic, Iraqi and human civilization," Kubis said in a statement, using another acronym for the group. "The destruction ... shows their desperation and signals their end."

While the destruction of the mosque demonstrates how much the security forces have achieved, Martin said, "we don't want to lose sight of the fact that there is a lot more work to be done." That's a reference to the pockets of IS-held territory in Iraq and the work that lies ahead for government security forces to hold the terrain retaken from the extremists.

Formally launched in October, the fight for Mosul has displaced more than 850,000 people. While Iraqi forces have had periods of swift gains, combat inside the city has largely been grueling and deadly for both security forces and civilians.

Al-Jumaili, the archaeology professor, said he long feared the destruction of the mosque and minaret

was inevitable.

"It was the last icon for the historic city of Mosul and a valuable symbol," he said. "I am sure Mosul residents could not sleep last night."

Salaheddin reported from Baghdad. Associated Press writer Lolita Baldor in Washington contributed.

Americans and guns: It's complicated

By LISA MARIE PANE, Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Americans have long had a complex relationship with guns.

Now, a new study shows that the country's deep political divide is reflected in attitudes toward gun control. The Pew survey released Thursday found a sharp drop since 2000 in overall support for gun control despite common ground on some key issues.

For example, when people were asked whether it was more important to protect gun rights or control gun ownership, 51 percent favored gun control and 47 percent favored gun rights. Compare that with responses in 2000, when two-thirds of those surveyed said they supported gun control measures.

People in the new survey were in broad agreement when asked about specific gun control measures.

Some 89 percent supported preventing the mentally ill from buying guns and 84 percent of all adults supported background checks for private sales and at gun shows.

Barring gun purchases for people on no-fly lists won support from 83 percent, while 71 percent of adults, including a small majority of gun owners, supported a federal database tracking gun sales.

The survey showed wide disparities in how people view firearms along political, gender, racial and geographic lines. The gaps come at the start of President Donald Trump's term. He is seen as one of the most gun-friendly presidents and could be supported by a GOP-controlled Congress, although there has been little action on gun issues since January.

About half of the public said making it more difficult to purchase a firearm would mean fewer mass shootings, while a little over one-third said it would have no impact.

Most people attribute gun violence to the ease in illegally getting access to a firearm, and the public can't decide whether making it easier to legally purchase a firearm would lower or raise the crime rate.

Republicans have made the most significant shifts on guns while Democrats have remained consistent in their views, said Kim Parker, Pew's director of social trends research.

"This reflects that the issue has really become more polarized, more driven by partisan attitudes," Parker said.

The study also showed that people in the United States, whether they own a firearm or not, have broad exposure to guns. At least two-thirds have lived in a household with guns and about 70 percent have fired a gun.

The main reason most cited for wanting to own a gun? Protection.

Two-thirds of gun owners say they own a gun to protect themselves or loved ones. Nearly one-third of gun owners have five or more. Still, just one-quarter of them said they usually carry a firearm outside the home.

That willingness to purchase a firearm is despite the fact that 44 percent of adults said they personally know someone who was shot and about one-quarter say they or a family member have been threatened or intimidated by someone with a gun.

The Pew Research Center sought to better understand Americans' "complex relationship" with firearms. Researchers wanted to see people's views on various policy issues — from safe storage of firearms around children to limits on who and where someone can carry a gun.

In Iowa, boisterous Trump turns back the clock to campaign

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa (AP) — He railed against the “fake news” media. He urged the Senate to put more “heart” into its health care bill. And he mused about putting solar panels on a Mexican border wall.

Buoyed by the embrace of his loyal supporters and Republican victories in a pair of special elections, President Donald Trump shrugged off the cloud of scandal that has enveloped his White House and turned back to the clock to 2016, delivering a vintage campaign-style performance in a key Midwest battleground state he won a year ago.

“We’re 5-0 in special elections,” Trump said, reveling in Georgia Republican Karen Handel’s congressional victory in an election viewed as an early referendum on his presidency. “The truth is, people love us ... they haven’t figured it out yet.”

Savoring the cheers from a boisterous crowd that packed an arena in downtown Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Trump also applauded Republican Ralph Norman, who notched a slimmer-than-expected win in a special election to fill the South Carolina congressional seat vacated by Mick Mulvaney, Trump’s budget director, and mocked Handel’s challenger, Jon Ossoff, saying the Democrats “spent \$30 million on this kid who forgot to live in the district.”

Trump, no stranger to victory laps, turned his visit into a celebration of his resilience despite his tumbling poll numbers. With the appearance in Cedar Rapids, he has held five rallies in the first five months in office.

The event underscored Trump’s comfort in a campaign setting. He laughed off the occasional heckler, repeated riffs from last year’s rallies and appeared far more at ease when going after Democrats in front of adoring crowds than he seems in trying to push through his own legislative agenda from the confines of the White House.

Trump’s aides are making a renewed push to get the president out of Washington, which is consumed by the investigations into Russian meddling in last year’s election and Trump’s firing of his FBI director.

Campaign rallies energize Trump by placing him in front of supporters who have stuck by him and are likely to dismiss the investigations as inside-Washington chatter.

Iowa, with its large share of independent voters, could be a proving ground for whether Trump can count on the support of voters beyond his base. Unaffiliated voters — or “no party” voters, as they are known in Iowa — make up 36 percent of the electorate, compared with 33 percent who register Republican and 31 percent who register as Democrat.

Self-identified independents in Iowa voted for Trump over Democrat Hillary Clinton by a 13-percentage-point margin last year, according to exit polls conducted for The Associated Press and television networks. That margin helped Trump take the state by nearly 9 points after Barack Obama won it for Democrats the previous two elections.

Trump held a Des Moines rally in December as part of a “thank you” tour of states he had won, but he hasn’t returned to Iowa since.

Wednesday night, he praised his administration’s efforts to roll back regulations, derided wind power for killing birds in a state that uses a lot of it and revealed that he urged the Senate to create a health care plan “with heart. Add some money to it!”

He avoided any discussion of the scandals surrounding his presidency, other than one brief reference to the “witch hunt,” which is what he has dubbed the probes into his campaign’s ties to Russia.

Trump’s evening in Iowa began with a tribute to former Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad, whom he appointed the United States’ ambassador to China. He saluted Branstad, the longest-serving governor in the nation’s history and an early Trump backer, as “a legend” and “one great man.”

Trump’s stop at Kirkwood Community College was intended to draw attention to the school’s advancements in high-tech agriculture, but he resisted sitting behind the wheel of a virtual reality device that simulated a giant combine harvester. He was joined by Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross as part of the administration’s latest theme week, this time to highlight the importance of technology. He later hyped the wealth of Ross and chief economic adviser Gary Cohn, saying:

"Those particular positions, I just don't want a poor person. Does that make sense?"

But much of Trump's attention was on the suburbs of Atlanta, in the 6th Congressional District race.

Democrats had lavished attention and money on Tuesday's special election, hoping for a victory that would underscore Republican worries about Trump and serve as a harbinger of a Democratic wave in 2018.

Instead, Handel's victory, in a traditional Republican stronghold that rarely produces a competitive contest, was met with a sigh of relief among the GOP.

Trump tweeted several times during the night and capped the night off with a text message to supporters referring to his "Make America Great Again" slogan:

"The MAGA Mandate is stronger than ever. BIG LEAGUE."

Associated Press writer Jill Colvin in Washington contributed to this report.

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Trump publicly doubting that Russia meddled in election

By VIVIAN SALAMA, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump appeared to cast doubt on the assessment of 17 U.S. intelligence agencies that blame Russia for election meddling, questioning Thursday why the Obama administration didn't try to stop it.

"By the way, if Russia was working so hard on the 2016 Election, it all took place during the Obama Admin.," the president tweeted. "Why didn't they stop them?"

All 17 intelligence agencies have agreed Russia was behind the hack of Democratic email systems and tried to influence the 2016 election to benefit Trump. The findings are at the heart of an investigation into contacts that members of Trump's campaign team may have had with Russian officials during the campaign and the transition.

Trump, frequently lashes out at the Russia investigation as a "witch hunt" spearheaded by Democrats.

He tweeted Thursday that the Democratic National Committee turned down an offer from the Department of Homeland Security "to protect against hacks (long prior to election). It's all a big Dem HOAX!"

"...Why did the DNC REFUSE to turn over its Server to the FBI, and still hasn't? It's all a big Dem scam and excuse for losing the election!" he wrote.

A day earlier, former Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson told the House intelligence committee that in the late summer and into the fall, he was very concerned about the meddling in state election systems and that the department encouraged states to seek assistance from DHS. He said he was frustrated DHS learned of the hack into the DNC late in the game and that the committee refused help because it was using a private cyber security firm.

"In retrospect, it would be easy for me to say that I should have bought a sleeping bag and camped out in front of the DNC in late summer," Johnson said.

Johnson also addressed the Obama administration's political sensitivity when it came to warning of the Russian meddling, and alluded to problems created at the time by Trump's own statements.

"One of the candidates, as you'll recall, was predicting that the election was going to be rigged in some way. And so we were concerned that, by making the statement, we might in and of itself be challenging the integrity of the — of the election process itself," Johnson said.

Last month, Trump fired FBI Director James Comey, who was leading the agency's Russia probe. The president has come under harsh criticism by some who claim he threatened to undermine the investigation by firing Comey.

Special counsel Robert Mueller was later named to lead the investigation, and The Washington Post reported that Mueller is considering investigating Trump for obstruction of justice because he fired Comey.

The investigation has shadowed Trump from the outset, though he's denied any ties to Russia or knowledge of any campaign coordination with Moscow.

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Trump also claimed Thursday that Johnson "is latest top intelligence official to state there was no grand scheme between Trump & Russia." But Johnson didn't say that Wednesday. He said he wasn't aware of efforts by Trump or his campaign to collude with Russia beyond what the intelligence community already knows. Johnson also said Russian hacking didn't change election totals, but added that he can't be sure other meddling didn't influence public opinion.

"It is not for me to know to what extent the Russian hacks influenced public opinion and thereby influence the outcome of the election," he said.

Trump has picked fights with intelligence agencies in the past, blaming them for leaks about his associates' Russia ties. During the transition before his inauguration, he ripped into the intelligence community for being behind the leaks and even compared them to Nazi propaganda. "Intelligence agencies should never have allowed this fake news to "leak" into the public. One last shot at me. Are we living in Nazi Germany?" he tweeted in January.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Thursday that while the president doesn't think the election results were influenced by Russia, he has "made it clear that we have to protect the integrity of the electoral process."

Sanders pointed to comments Trump made at a January news conference, underscoring that he has not dismissed the idea that Russia hacked the U.S. election, but he also believes "we also get hacked by other countries and other people."

London fire: Tests show other high-rises have suspect panels

By **DANICA KIRKA, Associated Press**

LONDON (AP) — Tests so far have found that at least seven high-rise apartment buildings in England have combustible external panels like the ones believed to have contributed to a fire that killed 79 people in London, Prime Minister Theresa May's office said Thursday.

Downing Street said 600 buildings in the country have "similar cladding" to that of Grenfell Tower in North Kensington, which was destroyed by the June 14 blaze.

The Department for Communities and Local Government later said that figure refers to buildings with all types of cladding and that not all of them necessarily have cladding made from the same aluminum composite material as Grenfell Tower. Landlords are being asked to check what the cladding on their buildings is made from.

The tests are being urgently conducted as authorities try to determine whether cladding contributed to the rapid spread of the Grenfell Tower blaze, which engulfed the 24-story building in less than an hour. They still haven't said where and how the fire started.

May told the House of Commons on Thursday that government facilities have found combustible cladding after local officials submitted samples in the wake of the fire.

"The relevant local authorities and local fire services have been informed, and, as I speak, they are taking all possible steps to ensure buildings are safe and to inform affected residents," May said.

May encouraged the owners of both public and private tower blocks around the country to quickly forward samples of any similar material for testing. The government will work with local authorities to make sure any dangerous material is removed and residents are safe, she said.

The Department for Communities and Local Government said it would not identify the buildings with combustible panels until landlords have had the opportunity to inform tenants.

The local council in Camden, a borough of London, removed cladding from one of its buildings for further testing after initial tests showed some panels were "not to the standard that we had commissioned."

It was unclear whether the Camden example was one of the seven mentioned by the government.

However, the company that fitted the cladding to the Camden property towers oversaw the refurbishment of Grenfell Tower, a document posted on its website shows.

Rydon carried out the refit of the high-rises between May 2006 and October 2009, Britain's Press Association reported.

The company did not immediately respond to a request for comment by The Associated Press.

In another area of north London, Tottenham, residents at the Rivers Apartments came home to notices advising them that experts were "carrying out an immediate review of the exterior cladding."

Newlon, a nonprofit that manages the complex and others in London, said fire officials "made some straightforward recommendations for the building, which we have already started work on." It said the fire officials "were satisfied that Rivers Apartments is considered a low fire risk building."

Opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn called for urgent checks on around 4,000 buildings as Britain comes to grips with the potential ramifications of the disaster. Thousands need urgent assurances about their own safety, he said.

"At least 79 people are dead — it is both a tragedy and an outrage because every single one of those deaths could and should have been avoided," Corbyn said.

Corbyn compared the tragedy to the 1989 Hillsborough disaster in which 96 people were killed in the crush of a crowded soccer stadium, and recent sexual abuse scandals involving vulnerable children, arguing that the government had long turned a blind eye to the needs of the poor.

"The pattern is consistent: Working-class people's voices are ignored, their concerns dismissed by those in power," he said.

May has apologized for mistakes that were made in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower tragedy and promised that "no stone will be left unturned" in a public inquiry into its causes.

"For any guilty parties there will be nowhere to hide," she said.

May's comments came after the resignation of the top administrative official in the local government that serves the community devastated by the fire. Local residents and the central government have criticized the response to the tragedy.

Nicholas Holgate, chief executive of the Kensington and Chelsea council, came under intense pressure following last week's blaze. The first few days after the fire were marked by chaos on the ground as local authorities struggled to deal with the hundreds of people who were displaced.

Survivors who had lost everything found it hard to get information about missing loved ones or the services available to help them get back on their feet.

Ron Howard takes helm of Han Solo 'Star Wars' film

By JAKE COYLE, AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Ron Howard is taking command of the Han Solo "Star Wars" spinoff after the surprise departure of directors Phil Lord and Christopher Miller.

Lucasfilm announced their replacement director Thursday, two days after Lord and Miller left the project over creative differences. Howard gives the reeling production a veteran hand in the wake of Lord and Miller's exit in the midst of shooting.

Kathleen Kennedy, president of Lucasfilm, said filming will resume July 10. The untitled film, which stars Alden Ehrenreich as a young Han Solo, is about three-quarters of the way through production. It has several weeks of shooting left, along with reshoots.

Howard has shepherded Oscar winners like "A Beautiful Mind" and "Apollo 13." But his recent films, including the "Da Vinci Code" sequel "Inferno" and "In the Heart of the Sea," have struggled at the box office. He also has some history with Lucasfilm. He helmed the 1988 fantasy "Willow" and starred in George Lucas' 1973 breakthrough "American Graffiti."

"We have a wonderful script, an incredible cast and crew, and the absolute commitment to make a great movie," said Kennedy.

Disney reiterated the film's release date of May 25 next year, suggesting that — at least for now — the "Star Wars" spinoff will be released on schedule. Representatives for the studio declined to comment.

How producers and the Directors Guild of America handle the film's directing credit will also be closely watched. DGA rules govern the crediting of directors.

Lord and Miller had previously been considered among Hollywood's most sought-after directors, having turned "The Lego Movie" and "21 Jump Street" into unexpected and widely praised comedy hits. But re-

ports have circulated that the duo, who favor improvisation and irreverent humor, clashed with Kennedy and co-writer Lawrence Kasdan, a "Star Wars" veteran and executive producer.

"Unfortunately, our vision and process weren't aligned with our partners on this project. We normally aren't fans of the phrase 'creative differences' but for once this cliché is true," the directors said earlier in a joint statement. "We are really proud of the amazing and world-class work of our cast and crew."

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

Experts: US exiting climate pact may doom some small islands

By **SETH BORENSTEIN** and **NICK PERRY**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — To small island nations where the land juts just above the rising seas, the U.S. pulling out of the Paris global warming pact makes the future seem as fragile and built on hope as a sand castle.

Top scientists say it was already likely that Earth's temperatures and the world's seas will keep rising to a point where some island states may not survive through the next 100 years. That likelihood increases, they say, if the United States doesn't follow through on promised cuts in heat-trapping carbon dioxide emissions. President Donald Trump this month said he'd withdraw the United States from the climate deal, prompting leaders of vulnerable islands to talk about their future with a mixture of defiance, hope and resignation.

"If we really push into action, we can save some (small islands) but we may not be able save all of them," said Hans-Otto Poertner, a German scientist who chairs the climate impacts study group for the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. "The chances are even less with the U.S. pulling out of the climate agreement in Paris."

While calling Trump's announcement "deeply disappointing," Marshall Islands President Hilda Heine told The Associated Press "I cannot give up on my people and my country and my culture. It's very important for us to be optimistic."

Heine and other island leaders are putting their hope in strong pollution curbs by China, other nations, individual American states and cities, as well as improved technology. While visiting Europe, she said "it's all the more important that Europe takes the lead on climate change."

Palau's environment minister F. Umiich Sengebau said he has no choice but to cling to hope.

"Right now some of the islands have disappeared," he said. "And so if we continue this trend our very existence as small islands could very well disappear in many instances."

The U.S. State Department said it considers engagement with other counties on climate change important and it will continue, including with small island states. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said after Trump pulled out of the agreement that the U.S. has cut its carbon dioxide emissions "dramatically" even before the Paris pact was reached.

When the Paris pact was being negotiated in 2015, small island nations successfully campaigned for a stricter but secondary target for limiting global heat-trapping emissions.

In 2009, world leaders adopted a goal to prevent 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming since the industrial era started, saying 2 degrees is a dangerous level of warming. The islands' tougher goal would try to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial time.

The world has already warmed about 1 degree Celsius, so the islands are really trying to prevent another half degree of warming Celsius (0.9 degrees Fahrenheit).

When Trump announced he would pull the U.S. out of the Paris treaty, scientists said that made the 2 degree goal close to unachievable and the 1.5 degree goal even more out of reach. Promised American pollution cuts were about one-fifth of the pledged global reductions hoped for in the accord. And even if all the pact's pledges were fully realized, it wouldn't stop warming from hitting 2 degrees without even stricter actions in the future, according to computer simulations.

"We are pushing the 1.5 (as a goal) but realistically I think we have passed the point that it can be

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achieved," said Kenrick Leslie, executive director of the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre . Trump's Paris pull-out, he said, has "thrown it right out the window."

Small islands "are the most vulnerable parts of the world," said scientist Jim Skea of the Imperial College in London, who chairs another UN climate panel. Exceeding 1.5 degrees "really makes the vulnerability threat for them more acute. It's kind of existential."

Scientists and carbon emissions computer modelers at Climate Analytics helped the small islands in their campaign called "1.5 to stay alive", and they say it is still possible, though unlikely, to limit the warming to that much.

That scenario involves overshooting the 1.5 degree goal and then eventually allowing no new carbon dioxide emissions into the air. But even that isn't enough so the world would have to somehow pull huge amounts of carbon dioxide out of the air, which is technically feasible but not practical at the moment, said Climate Analytics scientific adviser Carl-Friedrich Schleussner.

Recent studies have shown that the sea level rise in the past decade or so has accelerated compared to previous decades, said University of Colorado sea level expert Steve Nerem. He estimates a meter of sea level rise by the end of this century and emphasizes it could be worse with ice sheet melts in Greenland and Antarctica.

"Anything over a meter (a yard) is catastrophic for these small islands," Nerem said.

And the islands don't have to be underwater to become uninhabitable, he said, because sea level rise will make them more vulnerable to high tides and extreme storms.

Warming over 1.5 degrees also is likely to be devastating for coral reefs — which many of these small islands rely on for their fishing and tourism economies, Schleussner said.

Between rising seas that could swamp population centers and infrastructure like airports and seaports all over the Caribbean, the damage to reefs and fishing with increased warming will hurt Caribbean people in the pocketbooks and in their stomachs, several Caribbean climate officials said.

Ahmed Sareer, the Maldives ambassador to the United Nations and chairman of the Alliance of Small Island States, said the 1.5 goal is harder to achieve without the United States but not yet impossible.

"The island spirit is to never give up," Sareer said. "We are always a resilient people."

Perry reported from Wellington, New Zealand. Edith Lederer in New York and Josh Lederman in Washington contributed to this report.

Follow Seth Borenstein on Twitter: @borenbears. His work can be found here. Follow Nick Perry on Twitter at @nickperry and his work can be found here .

Kids today: They don't work summer jobs the way they used to

By PAUL WISEMAN, AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — It was at Oregon's Timberline Lodge, later known as a setting in the horror movie "The Shining," where Patrick Doyle earned his first real paycheck.

He was a busboy. The job didn't pay much. But Doyle quickly learned lessons that served him for years as he rose to become the CEO of Domino's, the pizza delivery giant:

Show up on time, dress properly, treat customers well.

"I grew up a lot that summer," he says.

As summer 2017 begins, America's teenagers are far less likely to be acquiring the kinds of experiences Doyle found so useful. Once a teenage rite of passage, the summer job is vanishing.

Instead of baling hay, scooping ice cream or stocking supermarket shelves in July and August, today's teens are more likely to be enrolled in summer school, doing volunteer work to burnish their college credentials or just hanging out with friends.

For many, not working is a choice. For some others, it reflects a lack of opportunities where they live, often in lower-income urban areas: They sometimes find that older workers hold the low-skill jobs that

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once would have been available to them.

In July 1986, 57 percent of Americans ages 16 to 19 were employed. The proportion stayed over 50 percent until 2002 when it began dropping steadily. By last July, only 36 percent were working.

Economists and labor market observers worry that falling teen employment will deprive them of valuable work experience and of opportunities to encounter people of different ethnic, social and cultural backgrounds.

But the longer-term trend for teen employment is down and likely to stay that way for several reasons: — Teenagers and their parents are increasingly aware of the value of a college education. A result is that more kids are spending summers volunteering or studying, to prepare for college and compete for slots at competitive schools.

In July 1986, just 12 percent of Americans ages 16 to 19 were taking summer classes. Thirty years later, the share had risen to 42 percent.

"Parental emphasis on the rewards of education has contributed to the decline in teen labor force participation," Teresa Morisi, a Labor Department economist, concluded in a February report on teen employment, which has been declining in the United States and other wealthy countries.

Nathan Miller, 19, of New Berlin, Wisconsin, didn't work throughout high school, choosing instead to play baseball and spend time with his family. He's forgoing summer employment again this year to play baseball and take a certified nursing assistant course at a high school.

Miller, who starts college in the fall, thinks the course may give him an edge in his quest to become a doctor.

"I'm going to try to get as much hours as I can as early as possible to get as much advantage as I can to get into a competitive med school," he says. "It's a competition out there."

— Teens who do want to work can find that older workers are standing in the way. The summer jobs teens used to take — flipping burgers, unpacking produce at the grocery store, cashiering at the mall — are increasingly filled by older, often foreign-born, workers. In 2000-2001, teens accounted for 12 percent of retail workers, researchers at Drexel University found. Fifteen years later, it was just 7 percent. Over the same period, the teenage share of restaurant and hotel jobs fell from 21 percent to 16 percent.

Americans increasingly keep working even as they near traditional retirement age — sometimes taking entry-level jobs to provide income as they transition to full-time retirement. Foreign-born workers have also increased their share of jobs in hotels and restaurants that require little education.

Many employers view older workers as more reliable — more likely to show up on time, or at all, and to better know how to handle customers, co-workers and suppliers.

— Many school districts have lengthened their academic years to try to boost student achievement, in the process shrinking summer vacation and the chance for teens to find work even if they want to. School years now often don't end well into June and resume before Labor Day.

"With a shorter summer off from school, students may be less inclined to get a summer job, and employers may be less inclined to hire them," Morisi writes.

The picture varies, of course, across demographic and racial lines. In poor urban neighborhoods, teens who want work struggle to find it. The summer jobs they used to get — scarce in the best of times — now often go to adults.

In wealthier areas, teens are more likely to be attending summer school, doing volunteer work, traveling with their families or pursuing sports or other extracurriculars.

In Loudoun County, Virginia, an affluent suburb of Washington, many businesses say they struggle to find teens willing and able to work summers.

"They're busy," says Tyler Wegmeyer, who raises fruits and vegetables and runs a pick-your-own farm in the Loudoun town of Hamilton. "They've got activities. They've got camps. Their families go on vacation. It's very rare I can get a kid to work all summer long."

A few years ago, Marty Potts' family, which has farmed in Loudoun County for decades, had to abandon its dairy operation, which requires many laborers, to focus on beef farming, which requires fewer. Even so, she says, "It's been two years since we've been able to get anybody."

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Not until now has Collin Shipp, 18, who just graduated from Loudoun's Woodgrove High School, ever looked for a summer job. A high school athlete, he spent previous summers trying to shave his time in the 400-meter dash and improving his distance in the triple jump.

"Track was my job," he says.

Paul Harrington, Neeta Fogg and Ishwar Khatiwada of Drexel's Center for Labor Markets and Policy studied average teen employment rates from June through August. They found that the percentage of employed 16-to-19-year-olds fell from 45 percent in 1986 to 30 percent last year. (Their numbers are lower than the July-only figures because teens are less likely to work in June and August.)

They forecast that teens' June-August employment rate will reach 30.5 percent this year, surpassing 30 percent for the first time since the recession year of 2009 and evidence of an overall improved job market.

But it's still a lot lower than it used to be. Drexel's Harrington laments the decline of summer employment for teens. In addition to providing on-the-job experience, summer work has proved especially valuable for poor urban youths. Harrington cites research showing that city teens who participate in summer jobs programs achieve higher school attendance and academic performance and are less likely to commit crimes.

The value of summer work is hardly confined to American teens. Emily Lyons, CEO of Femme Fatale Media Group, which provides models and dancers for corporate events, recalls a summer job that wasn't exactly pleasant.

The job stank. Literally.

Lyons spent the summer of 1998 working part time on an Ontario garlic farm, picking, sorting and packing the pungent plants.

"It was hard, dirty and strong-smelling work," she recalls. In business, she discovered, "you have to be able to wear many hats and be willing to get your hands dirty. You can't be too good for any role."

Lyons carried those lessons — and experience from other youthful jobs as a nanny, a hotel housekeeper and a blueberry picker — into a career as an entrepreneur and eventually to her current post as a chief executive.

"Every job along the way taught me different lessons that I carry with me today," she says.

AP writers Carrie Antfingher in Milwaukee and Candice Choi in New York contributed to this report.

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

World shares mixed as investors assess oil, China clampdown

By **KELVIN CHAN, AP Business Writer**

HONG KONG (AP) — World stock markets were mixed on Friday as oil prices stabilized and investors assessed Beijing's moves to tighten up on some Chinese companies as well as the latest survey on euro-zone economic growth.

KEEPING SCORE: European shares fell in early trading. France's CAC 40 shed 0.3 percent to 5,266.34 and Germany's DAX lost 0.3 percent to 12,761.29. Britain's FTSE 100 slipped 0.3 percent to 7,418.06. Wall Street was poised to open higher, with Dow futures up 0.1 percent to 21,368.00 and broader S&P 500 futures rising 0.1 percent to 2,435.30.

ASIA'S DAY: Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 index finished 0.1 percent higher at 20,132.67 and South Korea's Kospi added 0.4 percent to 2,378.60. Hong Kong's Hang Seng was practically unchanged at 25,670.05 while the Shanghai Composite in mainland China swung between gains and losses before ending 0.3 percent higher at 3,157.87. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 crept up 0.2 percent to 5,715.90.

EBBING ENERGY: Crude oil's extended decline this week and the effect it is having on broader financial markets weighed on investor sentiment and dragged down energy shares. Crude prices rose on Thursday for the first time in four days but prices are still near their lowest level since August. Benchmark U.S. crude rose 24 cents to \$42.98 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract rose 21 cents to settle at \$42.74 per barrel on Thursday. Brent crude, the international standard, added

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20 cents to \$45.42 per barrel.

QUOTEWORTHY: "Falling oil prices continue to temper sentiment in global macro markets," said Stephen Innes, senior trader at OANDA. "While the Nervous Nellies take solace as oil prices based overnight, don't get too comfortable as the oil patch narrative will likely be the primary catalyst in the coming months."

CHINA CLAMPDOWN: Mainland shares fluctuated as officials tightened up on some companies. Authorities ordered three popular internet services, including Sina Weibo, to stop streaming video after they violated censorship rules on sensitive issues. Adding to the pessimism, reports in the South China Morning Post newspaper and financial magazine Caixin on Thursday said the banking regulator is tightening up scrutiny of companies behind a wave of recent overseas acquisitions by ordering banks to check credit-risk exposure to Wanda, Fosun, Anbang and HNA.

EUROPEAN GROWTH: A monthly survey revealed that economic activity in the 19-country Eurozone slipped to a five-month low in June. However, the IHS Markit composite purchasing managers' index remained well into positive territory, with job creation and business confidence still strong.

MEDICAL SHARES: U.S. health care stocks rallied after the Senate unveiled its proposal to revamp how Americans get medical care. Investors were betting that overseas companies could also benefit from the bill, with Australian bionic ear maker Cochlear up 1.1 percent and blood plasma maker CSL up 1.7 percent.

CURRENCIES: The dollar slipped to 111.24 yen from 111.32 yen in late trading Thursday. The euro rose to \$1.1181 from \$1.1154.

Today in History By The Associated Press.

Today in History

Today is Friday, June 23, the 174th day of 2017. There are 191 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History:

On June 23, 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson, Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin (ah-LEK'-say koh-SEE'-gihn) and their advisers opened a three-day summit at Glassboro State College in New Jersey. The U.S. Senate voted 92-5 to censure Democrat Thomas J. Dodd of Connecticut for diverting campaign money to his personal use.

On this date:

In 1314, during the First War of Scottish Independence, the two-day Battle of Bannockburn, resulting in victory for the forces of Robert the Bruce over the army of King Edward II, began near Stirling.

In 1537, Spanish explorer Pedro de Mendoza, the founder of Buenos Aires, died aboard his ship while heading back to Spain.

In 1757, forces of the East India Company led by Robert Clive won the Battle of Plassey, which effectively marked the beginning of British colonial rule in India.

In 1892, the Democratic national convention in Chicago nominated former President Grover Cleveland on the first ballot.

In 1904, President Theodore Roosevelt was nominated for a second term of office at the Republican national convention in Chicago.

In 1931, aviators Wiley Post and Harold Gatty took off from New York on a round-the-world flight that lasted eight days and 15 hours.

In 1947, the Senate joined the House in overriding President Harry S. Truman's veto of the Taft-Hartley Act, designed to limit the power of organized labor.

In 1950, Northwest Orient Airlines Flight 2501, a DC-4, crashed into Lake Michigan with the loss of all 58 people on board.

In 1969, Warren E. Burger was sworn in as chief justice of the United States by the man he was succeeding, Earl Warren.

In 1972, President Richard Nixon and White House chief of staff H.R. Haldeman discussed using the CIA to obstruct the FBI's Watergate investigation. (Revelation of the tape recording of this conversation

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sparked Nixon's resignation in 1974.) President Nixon signed Title IX barring discrimination on the basis of sex for "any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."

In 1985, all 329 people aboard an Air India Boeing 747 were killed when the plane crashed into the Atlantic Ocean near Ireland because of a bomb authorities believe was planted by Sikh separatists.

In 1997, civil rights activist Betty Shabazz, the widow of Malcolm X, died in New York of burns suffered in a fire set by her 12-year-old grandson; she was 61. (Malcolm Shabazz pleaded guilty to arson and other charges and was placed in juvenile detention.)

Ten years ago: Roadside bombers in Iraq killed seven U.S. troops, four of them in a single blast near Baghdad. Searchers in Summit County, Ohio, found the body of Jessie Davis, a missing 26-year-old pregnant woman, in a park. (Bobby Cutts Jr., a former Canton police officer who was the father of Davis' unborn child, was later convicted of murder and aggravated murder and sentenced to 57 years to life in prison.)

Five years ago: Syria and Turkey desperately sought to ease tensions following an incident in which Syria shot down a Turkish reconnaissance plane, saying the plane had entered its airspace. Ashton Eaton broke the world record in the decathlon, finishing with 9,039 points at the U.S. Olympic trials in Eugene, Oregon. (Eaton later surpassed his own record with 9,045 points at the 2015 Beijing world championships.) The Daytime Emmys showered "General Hospital" with five trophies, including best drama; NBC's "Today" show won as best morning show and the syndicated "Jeopardy!" was named best game show.

One year ago: Britain voted to leave the European Union after a bitterly divisive referendum campaign, toppling Prime Minister David Cameron, who had led the campaign to keep Britain in the EU. A short-handed and deeply divided Supreme Court deadlocked 4-4 on President Barack Obama's immigration plan to help millions living in the U.S. illegally, effectively killing it. In a narrow victory for affirmative action, the Supreme Court upheld, 4-3, a University of Texas program that took account of race in deciding whom to admit. Appalachian music patriarch Ralph Stanley, 89, who helped define the bluegrass sound, died in Sandy Ridge, Virginia.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Diana Trask is 77. Musical conductor James Levine (luh-VYN') is 74. Actor Ted Shackelford is 71. Actor Bryan Brown is 70. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas is 69. Actor Jim Metzler is 66. "American Idol" ex-judge Randy Jackson is 61. Actress Frances McDormand is 60. Rock musician Steve Shelley (Sonic Youth) is 55. Actor Paul La Greca is 55. Writer-director Joss Whedon is 53. Rhythm-and-blues singer Chico DeBarge is 47. Actress Selma Blair is 45. Actor Joel Edgerton ("Loving") is 43. Rock singer KT Tunstall is 42. Rhythm-and-blues singer Virgo Williams (Ghostowns DJs) is 42. Actress Emmanuelle Vaugier is 41. Singer-songwriter Jason Mraz is 40. Football Hall of Fame electee LaDainian Tomlinson is 38. Actress Melissa Rauch is 37. Rock singer Duffy is 33. Country singer Katie Armiger is 26.

Thought for Today: "Suffering without understanding in this life is a heap worse than suffering when you have at least the grain of an idea what it's all for." — Mary Ellen Chase, American author (1887-1973).