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Thursday, Aug. 3

Senior Menu: Roast turkey, mashed potatoes and gravy, baked squash, fresh fruit, whole wheat bread.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle at 2 p.m.

Friday, Aug. 4

Senior Menu: Baked fish, baked potato, 3-bean salad, peach cobbler, whole wheat bread.

Olive Grove: Wine on 9, 6 p.m.

Sunday, Aug. 6

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship at 9 a.m.

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

Monday, Aug. 7

Senior Menu: Baked pork chop, au gratin potatoes, broccoli, cookie, whole wheat bread.

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

Official Notices

Brown County (Updated 7-26)
Groton City Book (updated 7-26)
Groton Area School (updated 7-26)
Frederick Area School Book (updated 7-26)
Westport Town Book (updated 7-26)
Frederick Town (updated 7-18)
Other Official Notices Book
Claremont Town Official Notices Book

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

NOW OPEN

Harris
Auto Body ABDN

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

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**“I have learned
that there is more
power in a good
strong hug than
in a thousand
meaningful
words.”**

-Ann Hood-

Chicken Soup
for the **Soul**

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GROTON KIWANIS CLUB

Twelve members and two guests attended Wednesday's noon Kiwanis meeting.

Lee Schinkel introduced his guest, John Zarycki, from Groton.

Chuck Padfield has become a new member of the club.

Mike Ehreshman was program leader, and introduced Erin Smith, daughter of Dr. Steve and Carol Smith. Erin just graduated from GHS last spring, and registered at SDSU, Brookings, next fall.

Erin spoke on her recent Trip to Germany, for a 10 day trip. The group of young people there worked on Conflict and Resolutions." While they toured many places, including the Berlin Wall, and a concentration camp.

Next week's program leader is Lori Giedt, followed by Steve Giedt.

Plans are being made to serve the club's annual tailgate supper, served at the GHS football field, before the Homecoming game.

Heirloom Recipes Sought

HURON, S.D. – Fairgoers will have the chance to enter a favorite family recipe in the Greater Midwest Foodways Heirloom Recipe Competition at the South Dakota State Fair in the Women's Building on Sunday, Sept. 3.

This competition seeks the best made-from-scratch family recipe suitable for a family or community dinner. To encourage participants to delve deep into their family's culinary history, submitted recipes must be at least 50 years old.

Registration forms and competition rules can be found on the South Dakota State Fair website under the special events tab. Pre-registration is encouraged. Along with the registration form, a prepared dish and recipe must be submitted for judging for the competition on Sunday, Sept. 3.

The judging will be based on a criteria of 50 percent history, 40 percent prepared recipe, and 10 percent appearance and display.

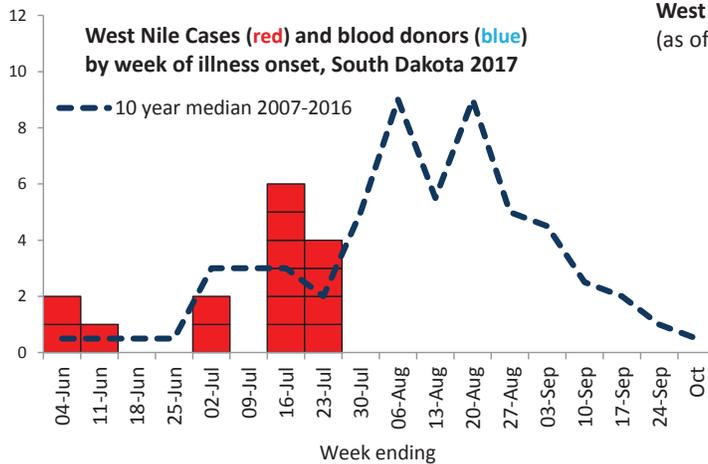
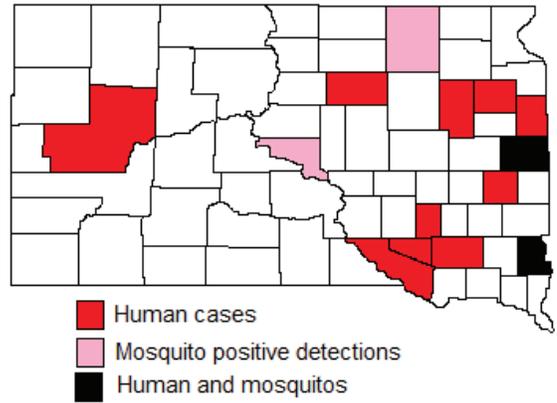
The Greater Midwest Foodways Alliance says it is dedicated to exploring, celebrating and preserving unique food traditions and their cultural contexts in the American Midwest. By hosting public events, developing archival resources and generating publications, the Alliance aims to celebrate the distinctiveness of a region.

The 2017 South Dakota State Fair will run from Thursday, Aug. 31, through Monday, Sept. 4. Channel Seeds preview night will be Wednesday, Aug. 30. This year's theme is "Seriously Twisted Fun." For more information on State Fair events, contact the Fair office at 800-529-0900, visit www.sdstatefair.com or find them on Facebook or Twitter.

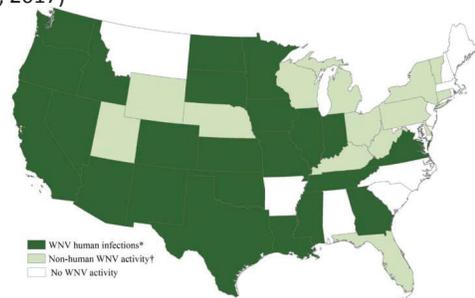
Agriculture is a major contributor to South Dakota's economy, generating \$25.6 billion in annual economic activity and employing over 115,000 South Dakotans. The South Dakota Department of Agriculture's mission is to promote, protect and preserve this industry for today and tomorrow. Visit SDDA online at <http://sdda.sd.gov> or find us on Facebook and Twitter. SD Ag Chat podcasts can be found in the Ag News section at <http://sdda.sd.gov/news>. You may subscribe, free of charge, through Google Play Music, iTunes or from <https://sdagchat.podbean.com/>.

West Nile update: South Dakota, 2 August 2017

- **15 human cases of West Nile virus disease** have been reported to the South Dakota Department of Health.
- **Deaths:** 0.
- **Viremic blood donors:** 0.
- **Counties with human WNV cases:** Brookings, Charles Mix, Clark, Codington 3, Davison, Deuel, Douglas, Faulk, Hutchinson, Lake, Lincoln 2, Meade.
- **Counties with WNV positive mosquito detections:** Brookings, Brown, Hughes, and Lincoln.



West Nile virus activity reported to CDC, by state — United States, 2017 (as of 1 August, 2017)



SD Department of Health phone 800-592-1861
 SD Department of Health: <http://westnile.sd.gov>
 SDSU WNV risk assessment: <http://mosquito.sdstate.edu>
 CDC West Nile: www.cdc.gov/westnile

By Doug Sombke

Epa's Dirty Rotten Scoundrels:

Finally Epa has confessed that its working model assessing origination of traffic area toxics has been underestimating gasoline petroleum octane enhancers contributions by 400%. This error contributes to the false perception "Who needs ethanol as a safe octane enhancer?" when it is diesel that creates the traffic area toxics thus misleading all to believe gasoline auto emissions are safe.

As president of South Dakota Farmers Union (SDFU) and on behalf of urban working class citizens who suffer traffic area toxics the most plus family farmers, I am calling out EPA and those who still drink the kool-aid of this fake traffic area toxics assessment. For all who breathe I am focused on the great precedent Senators Daschle and Dole established with their 1990 Clean Air Act Amendment to reduce traffic area toxics as lead was phased out.

I and SDFU policy have long supported and worked closely with our senator Daschle to build ethanol markets that serve all auto owners, rural economies and public health. We still do work closely with senator Daschle, his former chief of staff Pete Rouse, and his ethanol consultant Dave Hallberg. Working closely with this Daschle team I learned and participated in creating the history of the how and why this 1990 Clean Air Act amendment was legislated: Over that time period I learned about the chemistry of gasoline combustion that creates tailpipe benzene and related toxic emissions.

What I have learned about tailpipe emissions caused me to see the amazing irony in a Wall Street Journal editorial headline "Those Dirty Rotten Ethanol Scoundrels ". The article aimed to position ethanol as an evil plot, something being bootlegged into our gasoline.

The irony is "Epa's Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" aligned with self-serving petroleum to implement an evil plot to lock ethanol out of free enterprise octane markets: History shows EPA's technocrats at Ann Harbor, Michigan headquarters have always resisted ethanol. They undermined the intent of this Daschle/Dole 1990 Clean Air Act amendment by creating a fraudulent public perception that it is illegal to use ethanol's optimal 94 octane blend or E30 in standard autos: The amendment's intent still is to severely limit costly human genotoxic, carcinogenic benzene and related tailpipe emissions:

While phasing out lead congress feared petroleum interests would replace lead with petroleum's comparably hazardous benzene and related octane referred to as "aromatics": On combustion these aromatic octane enhancers

I am also considering buying space for the ad in paper produce substantial benzene and some of the most toxic components found in our air identical to those also found in cigarette smoke: The two carbon ethanol molecule does not contain or produce these toxics like benzene or related aromatic toxics.

The World Health Organization's and consensus other medical researches assert: "Like cigarette smoke there is no recommended safe level for benzene in our air." EPA deceptively lowered gasoline's benzene content from one to a half percent as a fake cure all but nefariously ignores Clean Air Act directives to reduce gasoline's substantial carcinogenic benzene and related polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon (pah) tailpipe emissions that also cause birth defects including infant brain damage.

Importantly we all can read Glacial Lakes Energy's revealing E30 research by visiting our home web site's premium E30 tab: You will also find that for over ten years consumer reports confirm high octane E30 is the optimal fuel for all autos delivering the same mileage and it can also replace benzene related aromatic octane to slash benzene and its related most poisonous emissions up to 80%. E30 saves consumers \$2-\$4 per tank while also delivering higher oxygen and octane's more complete combustion plus air charge cooling's more power along with fewer carbon deposits to lower maintenance costs.

I also can easily see what Epa's dirty rotten deal with petroleum costs today's agriculture. The Epa created blend wall has stymied growth of ethanol corn markets effectively extracting billions from especially rural communities to transfer that wealth to Russia and middle east dictators: The most tragic cost of Epa's dirty rotten deal with petroleum creates unwarranted poisonous benzene and related pah emissions that especially target the fetus and our smallest children: How many billions does it take to cover the medical costs caused by gasoline emission's resulting childhood cancers, birth defects, brain damage, family tragedies etc?



All auto owners!
Save \$2-\$4 /tank
& grow your local economy
by choosing low carbon
Super Premium E30's
94 octane, more power,
same mileage, fewer
carbon deposits, lower
maintenance costs,
slashed benzene & related
genotoxic, carcinogenic
tailpipe emissions;
*see sdfu.org's E30 tab for
info, E30 prices/locations.

*Farmers Union's
PSA: Courtesy Merle
Anderson (Merle is 94
year old founder of Ace
and legendary ethanol
supporter... "because it is
the right thing to do")

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Today in Weather History

August 3, 1984: During the morning hours, estimated four to six inches of rain fell from west of Garden City in Clark County to north of Henry in Codington County. Low lying areas were flooded and a potato field west of Garden City was washed out.

August 3, 1989: Strong thunderstorm winds gusted to 70 mph, driving golf ball size hail through most the windows on the west side of buildings in Amherst, Marshall County. Corn crops were stripped off their leaves with an estimated 1800 acres being severely damaged.

August 3, 1996: High winds up to 90 mph uprooted and damaged many trees in Mobridge. Several power lines and poles were downed from trees falling onto them. The roofs of two buildings were blown off while other roofs received some damage. Windows were broken out in eight vehicles at the South Dakota Winds up to 90 mph also caused damage in Herreid where doors on a concrete elevator were blown out.

August 3, 2008: Severe thunderstorms moved across north central South Dakota during the early morning hours bringing large hail and damaging thunderstorm winds to the area. Isabel, Timber Lake, and Selby were among the hardest hit locations. Isabel in Dewey County saw eighty mph winds which damaged or downed several trees, damaged carnival equipment, destroyed some sheds, and rolled some large hay bales. Winds up to 80 mph severely damaged a barn, downed some power poles along with many trees and branches in and around Timber Lake. Also, several vehicles and many acres of crops were damaged by the hail and high winds. The Little Moreau Elk Lodge roof was damaged, and some windows were broken. One-hundred mph winds downed six power poles and caused considerable damage to sunflowers, corn, wheat, and beans in and around Selby in Walworth County. Also, an empty grain bin was blown over and damaged. Numerous trees were snapped off. The coop seed building in Selby sustained considerable damage with many trees uprooted or damaged throughout town.

August 3, 2009: A cold front moving southeast across the area brought many severe thunderstorms to parts of central and northeast South Dakota. Large hail up to golf ball size along with wind gusts nearing 80 mph occurred across the area. Brown, Hyde, Lyman, and Gregory Counties were among the hardest hit locations. Many acres of soybeans and corn were significantly damaged by hail and sixty mph winds near Putney in Brown County. Seventy to 80 mph winds brought down several large trees along with many large tree branches in and around Highmore in Hyde County. The high winds also tipped over a semi, a gravity wagon, and a grain auger along with damaging several fences. There were also power outages in Highmore. Golf ball size hail combined with strong winds broke many windows in the house and dented several vehicles south of Kennebec in Lyman County. The house pet was also injured. Large hail, up to two inches in diameter, fell in a swath a few miles wide from northwestern to south central Gregory County. The hail broke numerous windows, severely damaged siding and roofs of homes and other buildings, and severely damaged vehicles, while covering the ground in several places. Property damage has been particularly severe in the town of Gregory. Crop damage was also severe along the swath, with corn crops in some areas destroyed to the point of only small stubble left.

1970: Hurricane Celia was the costliest tropical cyclone in Texas history until Hurricane Alicia in 1983. Hurricane Celia made landfall near Port Aransas as a major Hurricane, Category 3 on the Saffir-Simpson scale with sustained winds of 130 mph.

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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night
							
Chance Showers	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Sunny then Slight Chance T-storms	Slight Chance T-storms	Chance T-storms	Slight Chance T-storms
High: 70 °F	Low: 46 °F	High: 79 °F	Low: 54 °F	High: 74 °F	Low: 55 °F	High: 74 °F	Low: 53 °F



Today:
Scattered Showers
Highs in the 60s – 70s



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD



Updated: 8/3/2017 5:11 AM Central

Published on: 08/03/2017 at 5:16AM

An area of low pressure will push east of the region today with showers ending from west to east. Today will be much cooler, especially in eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota where highs in the mid-60s are expected. Mid 70s are expected in western South Dakota.

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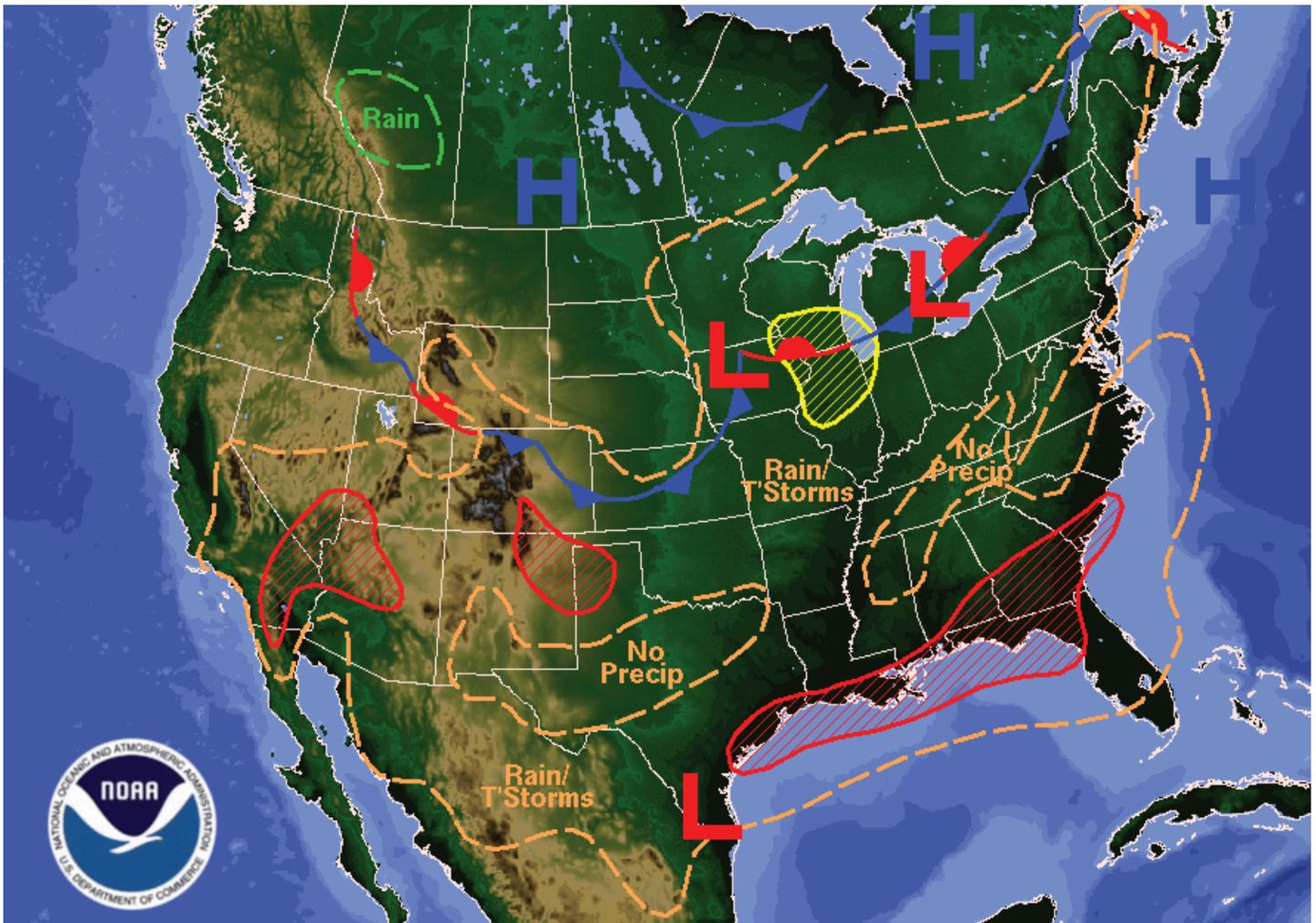
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 77.9 F at 1:20 PM
Low Outside Temp: 56.7 F at 11:56 PM
High Gust: 32.0 Mph at 8:36 PM
Precip: 0.78

Today's Info

Record High: 107° in 1947
Record Low: 39° in 1971
Average High: 84°F
Average Low: 59°F
Average Precip in Aug: 0.23
Precip to date in Aug: 0.78
Average Precip to date: 14.09
Precip Year to Date: 8.13
Sunset Tonight: 8:58 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:21 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Thu, Aug 03, 2017, issued 4:44 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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FORGETFULNESS

"Papa," he asked in the innocent voice of a four-year-old, "how long will it take you to forget something?"

Puzzled and intrigued, I responded, "Well, Keller, I'm not sure. Sometimes I forget right away and sometimes I think about things for a long, long time."

Just as puzzled and intrigued as I was, he then asked, "When you were a little boy did you ever break something and hide it? And when your Papa found it and got mad how long did it take him to forget that you broke something?"

"Oh my, Keller, I'm not sure I remember. Did something go wrong?" I asked.

"I broke Nonie's cup and hid it under the bed and I want her to forget about it and not be mad at me," came his answer.

David was aware that his sin had damaged his relationship with God. He sensed God's displeasure with him and his feelings of guilt overwhelmed him which added to his problem. He knew why God "hid His face" from him.

But those feelings changed. Why? He repented, cried for God's mercy and knew that he was forgiven. When he had God's mercy he said, "You turned my wailing into dancing...and I will give You thanks forever."

We all have experiences like Keller and David. We do something wrong, feel guilty, are filled with fear and want to know how long it will take to enjoy God's blessings once again. Like David, ask, pray, repent and receive His forgiveness.

Prayer: Lord, please give us the confidence to come to You for the forgiveness we need that will restore our joy. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 30:10 Hear LORD, and be merciful to me; LORD, be my help."

News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Dakota Cash
01-03-05-23-30
(one, three, five, twenty-three, thirty)
Estimated jackpot: \$407,000

Hot Lotto
08-17-23-35-40, Hot Ball: 10
(eight, seventeen, twenty-three, thirty-five, forty; Hot Ball: ten)
Estimated jackpot: \$8.89 million

Mega Millions
Estimated jackpot: \$323 million

Powerball
01-16-54-63-69, Powerball: 18, Power Play: 3
(one, sixteen, fifty-four, sixty-three, sixty-nine; Powerball: eighteen; Power Play: three)
Estimated jackpot: \$261 million

Keystone XL survived politics but economics could kill it

By GRANT SCHULTE, Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — The proposed Keystone XL pipeline survived nine years of protests, lawsuits and political wrangling that saw the Obama administration reject it and President Donald Trump revive it, but now the project faces the possibility of death by economics.

Low oil prices and the high cost of extracting Canadian crude from oil sands are casting new doubts on Keystone XL as executives with the Canadian company that wants to build it face the final regulatory hurdle next week in Nebraska.

The pipeline proposed in 2008 has faced dozens of state and federal delays, many of them prompted by environmental groups who ultimately persuaded President Barack Obama to deny federal approval in November 2015. President Donald Trump resuscitated the project in March, declaring that Calgary-based TransCanada would create "an incredible pipeline."

After all that, a TransCanada executive raised eyebrows in the energy industry last week when he suggested that the pipeline developer doesn't know whether it will move forward with the project. Paul Miller, an executive vice president who is overseeing the project, told an investor call that company officials won't decide until late November or early December whether to start construction.

"We'll make an assessment of the commercial support and the regulatory approvals at that time," Miller said in the conference call Friday with investors.

The company has invited customers to bid for long-term contracts to ship oil on the pipeline. The bidding will run through September.

An energy expert said the project has been delayed so long it may no longer make economic sense.

"Frankly, in the current price climate, it's probably not going to be a going venture unless there's a massive improvement in technology" for processing Canadian crude, said Charles Mason, a University of

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Wyoming professor of petroleum and gas economics. Crude oil was trading at around \$49.50 a barrel on Wednesday, down from highs of more than \$100 in 2014.

The 1,179-mile pipeline would transport oil from tar sands deposits in Alberta, Canada, across Montana and South Dakota to Nebraska, where it would connect with existing pipelines that feed Texas Gulf Coast refineries.

South Dakota and Montana regulators have approved the project, although there are legal challenges pending in both states. Only Nebraska has yet to give regulatory approval. The rest of the route for the oil to the Gulf would travel an existing pipeline in the network.

Mason said the biggest economic problem is that synthetic crude from the Canadian deposits is considered a lower-value product because it tends to be heavier, and thus more expensive to refine into gasoline and jet fuel. It's also more expensive to extract than other oils.

Producers have also found other ways to ship oil, primarily by train, and many are reluctant to sign long-term contracts with a pipeline that wouldn't go into operation for several more years, said Jeff Share, editor of the Houston-based Pipeline & Gas Journal, a leading industry publication. Given the difficulties, Share said TransCanada has probably a "50-50" chance of completing the project.

The five-member Nebraska Public Service Commission is supposed to decide by Nov. 23 whether the project serves the public's interests, based on evidence presented by attorneys in a formal legal proceeding beginning Monday and a series of public hearings held over the last few months. The elected commission is comprised of four Republicans and one Democrat.

Environmental opposition to the project has persisted in Nebraska, where opponents say the pipeline would pass through the Sandhills, an ecologically fragile region of grass-covered sand dunes, and would cross the land of farmers and ranchers who don't want it.

Nebraska law enforcement authorities already have had discussions with their counterparts in North Dakota about how that state handled widespread protests during construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline near the Standing Rock Indian Reservation, said Cody Thomas, a Nebraska State Patrol spokesman.

Protesters led by Native American tribes and environmental groups flocked to North Dakota last summer to rally against the Dakota Access Pipeline, and some camped out in bitter cold through early this year, prompting the state to send a large law enforcement contingent that sometimes skirmished with protesters. The pipeline was ultimately completed but legal challenges remain.

Pipeline opponents in Nebraska said they are wary of TransCanada's recent statements and don't believe the company will surrender without a fight.

"We can't let our guard down," said Jim Carlson, a farmer near Silver Creek, Nebraska, who grows corn on the pipeline's proposed route. "We've got to continue to be vigilant and proactive. TransCanada could be doing things just to throw us off."

Carlson said TransCanada has offered him \$307,000 since the company first contacted him in 2013, but he refuses to sign an easement agreement to grant access to his land. To highlight his opposition, Carlson is installing solar panels on his land directly in the path of the proposed pipeline.

If the Nebraska commission approves the route, TransCanada can initiate legal proceedings under eminent domain to gain access to the land of holdout property owners. TransCanada has secured agreement with roughly 90 percent of Nebraska landowners along the route.

The company said that if it decides to go ahead with the project, it would need six to nine months to start doing some of the staging of the construction crews followed by two years of construction.

Follow Grant Schulte on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/GrantSchulte> .

Sign up for the AP's weekly newsletter showcasing our best reporting from the Midwest and Texas at <http://apne.ws/2u1RMfv> .

Many activities planned for this weekend at state parks

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks officials say there are many activities scheduled this weekend in South Dakota state parks.

The Sioux River Folk Festival will be held Friday through Sunday at Newton Hills State Park. Halloween at the Ranch is set for Saturday at Pierson Ranch Recreation Area.

Also on Saturday, there's a lantern tour at Fort Sisseton Historic State Park, kayaking at North Point Recreation Area and an evening with the owls at the Oahe Downstream Recreation Area.

Meet the man behind all those business murals in Sioux Falls

By SHANYA BURT, Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Downtown Sioux Falls may be known for its Sculpture Walk, but one man is changing the look of downtown businesses one wall at a time.

His name is Shaine Schroeder, a Sioux Falls artist who has been drawing since he was young, recreating his childhood favorites: Ninja Turtles and Ghostbusters, the Argus Leader reported. It wasn't until nine years ago that Schroeder made his art a full-time career and has since gained popularity in Sioux Falls and nationally, with celebrity attention.

It was only four years ago when he got a shot at doing his first mural. Bros Brasserie Americano and M.B. Haskett were among the first and now both feature his artwork on their back patios.

His most recent mural? TommyJack's Pub.

Spanning over three walls, the mural represents the crowds of people Schroeder has met over the years at the downtown pub. Faces with large teeth and even a horse can be seen, but the most interesting piece of the mural is the Pabst Blue Ribbon cans.

Having been funded by the beer company, Schroeder decided to incorporate their product throughout the mural, although he is unsure how many cans he actually painted.

Taking to Facebook, the muralist encouraged his followers to find as many Pabst Blue Ribbon cans as they could to figure out the exact number.

"They're like, 'why don't we take your brain and splatter it on the wall' and I was like yeah, I'm in," said Schroeder.

The mural is the most time-consuming project Schroeder has done extending over a month to finish and he "just took a line for a walk and just saw where it went."

Coming from a creative family, art has always had a presence in Schroeder's life.

Finding inspiration from a studio arts class in high school, Schroeder went on to obtain a Visual Communications degree from Collins College in Tempe, Arizona. Schroeder continued drawing and painting on canvases as more of a hobby until he sold his first painting nine years ago after displaying it at what was Black Sheep Coffee.

That was the initial step in Schroeder making art his main job.

After painting on canvases for several years, he was ecstatic to tackle the project of painting a mural on Bros Brasserie Americano's back patio wall. While the initial mural featured a woman's face accompanied by different forms of graffiti, Schroeder decided to recreate the mural to have more color and abstract features.

The artist has held several shows in the downtown restaurant and still has paintings hung in the front entrance including his mixed media artwork "Buffalo Soldier III" and acrylic painting "A Hundred and Tenth."

Guests can not only find the artist's name hung on the red walls, but can also see "Schroeder" listed within the menu.

Being good friends with Bros Brasserie Americano's owner Ryan Tracy, Schroeder has had an entree named after him since the restaurant first opened. Although the dish has changed slightly, it still remains a popular lunch item.

Marcus VanLiere, general manager of Bros, says Schroeder's paintings and mural brings in a lot of interest from customers and brings life to the place.

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"Of all the artists we display, Shaine is the foundation of it," he said. "It's in your face when customers walk in, and I think people kind of dig that."

Last summer, Schroeder took on another recreation of his past mural on the back wall of M.B. Haskett. The new mural features more vibrant colors, and spans over all four walls. Schroeder believes the woman's face on the west wall is "one of his best pieces on a wall."

M.B. Haskett General Manager Becky Squyer loves the mural and actually picked out the patio's furniture to reflect the painted artwork.

"Shaine's work: you can stare at it for hours and still find new things about it. That's what I love about it," she said.

Schroeder's work is not only capturing local interest, but is reaching celebrity attention.

Ron Perlman, well known for the playing the title role in the movie "Hellboy" and other movie and TV characters, has requested artwork from the artist and even described Schroeder on Facebook as his "fave artist."

Perlman was not the only celebrity to become a fan of Schroeder's work.

A certain '80's lead guitarist who adorns a top hat frequently requested Schroeder's assistance for a music video. Recreating his own image of Slash, the Sioux Falls artist was filmed painting a time-lapse mural.

Due to production issues, the project was never published, but Schroeder still sees it as an incredible opportunity.

What's up next for the talented artist?

Common Sense on 2nd Avenue.

The project will be the muralist's first chance to paint on the outside of a building. The transformation is set to start on July 28.

In the past, one store faced issues with a painted mural on the side of its building. Elegant Mommy, a local, retail store for expecting mothers, had a mural featuring four expecting mothers, the store's name and a description of their products that eventually led to city zoning officials ordering the removal of the mural.

While Schroeder has not had issues with this regulation in the past, it is an issue to be aware of in the art community.

Schroeder describes his art as "in your face" and "very vivid." He finds that people sometimes see his art as harsh or inappropriate.

"Once in awhile when you have something to say that people aren't ready to hear, it can kind of be misconstrued that way. But at the end of the day, it's just brutal honesty on a canvas."

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

Healing through horseback riding in South Dakota

By MIKE ANDERSON, Rapid City Journal

PINE RIDGE, S.D. (AP) — Percy White Plume sweeps his hand over a world of rolling green hills, ridges and grottos that spills from one horizon to the next.

"Where do you want to go?" he asks. "Wherever you want to go, we'll go that way."

The horses whinny and scuff their hooves. It is another hot day on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, a hemmed-in yet wide open space that White Plume wants to continue exploring on horseback with Native American youth and visitors from around the world, the Rapid City Journal reported .

A 58-year-old retired mental health worker, White Plume runs the Horse Spirit Society from his 2,200-acre property in Manderson and is looking for funding to keep the program going.

Since 2001, he has taken groups of kids from the reservation out on rides that can last days at a time, meandering through windswept fields into the rocky canyons and spires of the Badlands.

This kind of free-roaming horseback riding, White Plume says, is a uniquely powerful act of healing rooted in Lakota culture.

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"Horses are really in tune to everything," he says. "And we can learn by being a part of their life, learn different things about ourselves. You're healing yourself. The horse is just showing you the way."

White Plume keeps more than 40 horses on his land. He and his family sometimes take them riding bareback across the plains. All of them are trained and each of them has a name.

Sitting atop a chocolate colored stallion named War Bonnet, White Plume points out a cluster of glistening red buffalo berries as the horse canters through the tall grass. There are little birds singing in the breeze.

White Plume's son, Freedom, and his 11-year-old granddaughter, Johnnie, are also along for the ride. Both are expert riders like him. But on a horse you are alone, White Plume says, even when you are with a group of people.

White Plume's parents died when he was very young. He grew up poor, though he never thought of it that way. Raised by his uncle, he remembers using oil lamps and mirrors to light their home, which was the first in the valley to get electricity. That was in the early 1960s, he says.

Horses have always been an important part of his life. White Plume remembers riding quietly through the night under the light of U.S. Army flares on the way to deliver supplies near Wounded Knee to members of the American Indian Movement during the armed occupation in 1973. He was a teenager then.

"I remember drinking alcohol and the whole bit, and getting nothing out of it," he says. "But when I got on a horse I felt so free. I was essentially healing myself, but I didn't realize it. I was too busy riding and going here and there."

Riding helped him quit drinking. Sometimes he would cry and speak to his horse in Lakota. It was in these quiet moments that he taught himself how to grapple with feelings of loneliness, sadness and worthlessness.

"That's how our young people feel," he said. "And for me to have all these horses, to not do anything, it's like I would be pushing them away. It's important that I give back all that I know about horses and things I've learned in life to the children who are coming up."

For him, White Plume says, healing requires a connection between human and horse, a bond that he remembers forging with his very first horse, a black stallion named Rascal. It was 1976, he was a teenager, and a friend had let him borrow Rascal when a storm thundered to life during his ride home from Porcupine.

"There was lightning, and I was scared of getting struck so I went down into the ravine and spent the night with him," White Plume said.

He kept Rascal until he died in 1984. "He was a good horse," White Plume says. "He took me all over."

Today, White Plume has that kind of bond with each of his horses. They recognize his face and respond to the distinct sound of his voice.

"I never hit 'em, I never use spurs," he says. "If you have to use spurs, you're not doing something right."

White Plume works with kids of all ages and their parents are invited to ride along too. Getting a chance to build those bonds by living and working with horses even for a few hours has a noticeable effect on the youth, he says.

"What drives me is the change in the children, the laughter, the courage that they get to do things differently," he says. "They're enmeshed in negative behavior, but when they come out here it changes them. When they come out here, I always talk to them about their lives. What are you doing that's a positive thing in your life?"

It's not just kids from the reservation who find a moment of peace among White Plume's horses. A few weeks ago, he hosted a group of students from Chicago and in years past, he has had paying clients come from as far away as Germany and Switzerland.

Many are first time riders. Those who have experience with horses tell him they have never ridden as freely as they did during their visit to the reservation.

White Plume doesn't always feel like it, but he does still live in poverty, as many do in Pine Ridge. The rides cost money, so he hasn't been able to take as many groups of kids for rides this summer as he would like. He's in the process of applying for grant funding and hopes to begin going out again soon.

Standing on a hill, he points to Red Shirt, to Stronghold Table in the Badlands, to a group of hills where some of the old Oglala chieftains are buried, and to a snarl of trees and underbrush where wild horses run free.

"I tell people, 'You ever wonder what's over that hill?'" he says. "Let's go for a ride and find out."

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

Lawmakers rarely return to South Dakota Capitol as lobbyists

By DANA FERGUSON, Argus Leader

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The lawmaker-lobbyist revolving door doesn't turn often in Pierre.

An Argus Leader Media review identified 14 former legislators who made the jump to lobbyist since 2012 after serving in office between 2006 and 2017, the Argus Leader reported .

Only four registered less than two years after vacating their legislative seats.

Under state law that took effect this month the required cooling off period was extended from one year to two.

Supporters said the added buffer time was needed to prevent undue influence of lawmakers returning to lobby their peers. Meanwhile lawmakers who transitioned to lobbyists more quickly said 12 months is enough of a time cushion.

Doug Kronaizl, spokesman for a group that brought the ethics and campaign finance proposal Initiated Measure 22, said it is important to expand the cooling off time to insure former lawmakers don't have undue influence.

"While the numbers are small, the numbers are still there," Kronaizl said. "It's a lot better to put the provisions in place before there is widespread scandal."

Represent South Dakota campaigned to pass ethics and campaign finance reform proposal Initiated Measure 22 on the 2016 ballot. Voters narrowly approved the measure, which included the two-year lobbying ban.

Lawmakers repealed the law in Pierre but approved the provision in a separate bill.

Sen. Blake Curd, R-Sioux Falls, brought the bill replacing the two-year policy. He said it was important to replace pieces of Initiated Measure 22 and worried that under the previous one-year lobbying ban lawmakers could serve in Pierre, leave office and return to lobby with their peers in the Legislature.

Those who'd served in leadership roles could also see an unfair advantage in lobbying lawmakers they'd previously worked with, he said.

"I'm not aware that anyone has abused this system," Curd said, "but I think it's important to increase that gap. A year is pretty short."

Former state Sens. Tom Nelson and Bob Gray and Reps. Kim Vanneman and H. Paul Dennert left the Legislature in 2013 and registered as lobbyists in 2014.

Nelson, Vanneman and Dennert said they thought the 12-month cooling off period was appropriate, and that the expanded window seemed unneeded as few people make the jump so quickly.

"I know they needed to get some things out of Initiated Measure 22, but the two year gap, I don't think that was necessary," Nelson said. "I don't know that it's a great fit for South Dakota."

The Republican from Lead lobbied on behalf of Foggy Notion Properties LLC, a non-residential building operator based in Lead.

Vanneman, a Republican from Ideal, said she felt the one-year gap between her departure from the Legislature and part-time return to Pierre as a lobbyist for Farm Credit Services of America constituted a substantial enough buffer period.

Extending that revolving door period likely wouldn't have much impact, she said, as former legislators could continue to advocate for causes without formal lobbying designation.

"I just don't know that it's solving anything," Vanneman said. "I don't know what kind of a fix they were thinking that was going to make."

Gray didn't immediately respond to phone calls Monday morning.

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

Aberdeen pilot still flying high 3 years after world record

By OLIVIA JOHNSON, Aberdeen News

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — Aberdeen native Matt Guthmiller is still flying high three years after flying solo around the world.

That was when he was 19. He's spending much of this summer with family in Aberdeen, the Aberdeen News reported .

Though Guthmiller lost the record for being the youngest person to circumnavigate the globe in a single-engine plane to a 17-year-old from Tasmania, his accomplishment has pushed him toward speaking engagements, entrepreneurship and creating YouTube videos.

When classes resume, Guthmiller will be a senior at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Mass., studying electrical engineering and computer science. He'll graduate in December.

He launched a YouTube channel in January, creating 20-minute videos of his travels for his 11,000 subscribers.

Guthmiller said he's working on creating an iPhone app that would assist users in stock trading by creating algorithms that predict outcomes of certain trades on the market.

As if that isn't enough, Guthmiller said he's been filling his time speaking about leadership and business at conferences or for different organizations.

He flew out of Aberdeen Thursday, ultimately en route to EAA Air Venture Oshkosh, a popular air show in Wisconsin, where he did some speaking.

Guthmiller said his aviation knowledge closely affects his business goals. He said planning his solo trip in 2014 included logistics, teamwork, risk management and careful planning — all qualities needed to start or run a business.

"One of the biggest things is just deciding to take it on in the first place," he said of his business and flying ambitions.

Giving presentations is only made possible by leasing an airplane, a six-seat Beechcraft Bonanza, which allows him to fly around the country and then return all in one day. It's the same plane in which he flew around the world.

"If I was taking a commercial flight, it would be like a three-day trip," he said. "By myself, it's like a one-day trip."

Guthmiller said he's learned to chase his dreams now rather than pursuing them in future years — a mindset that pushed him to launch his YouTube channel.

Though he still considers aviation a hobby, creating videos of his flying contributes to Guthmiller's income, he said.

"I had no intention of making any money off of it," he said. "But you pursue the things that you're passionate about."

From simply flying around the world and posting updates about his trip, he said he had built a nice social media following even before he started to shoot videos.

Guthmiller said he discovered a popular type of video on YouTube called a 'vlog,' where people film parts of their day and share it on social media. He decided to create similar videos of his flying.

"I've always had an interest in filmmaking," he said. "I can actually just take a few GoPros and a couple cameras and make a little 20-minute video."

He said his videos cater to an audience interested in general aviation, flying or just traveling.

"The goal is to get people excited about aviation," Guthmiller said.

Former state's attorney faces more tax evasion accusations

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Authorities say a former South Dakota state's attorney convicted of tax evasion has once again failed to pay taxes.

Kenneth Orrock, 48, faces sentencing later this month after failing to pay \$17,000 in federal taxes he collected from his employees at the Black Hills Patrol security agency in 2015. Orrock pleaded guilty in February and agreed to pay the IRS about \$280,000, the Rapid City Journal reported .

The Rapid City resident was caught again July 21 on accusations that he hasn't paid business taxes this year, which would be a violation of his conditional release. U.S. Marshals Service officials said this is the first time Orrock was arrested for tax evasion because he made his initial court appearance following a summons.

Court records show that at a court hearing Monday, Orrock said he failed to pay the security agency's employment taxes in the first and second quarters of 2017.

His attorney, Stanton Anker, said those employment taxes have now been paid.

Federal prosecutors asked Magistrate Judge Daneta Wollmann to keep Orrock in jail until his sentencing because he was a flight risk, but Wollmann disagreed. The judge released Orrock from the Pennington County Jail on Monday as long as he provides the U.S. Attorney's Office with proof that he's making semi-monthly payments to the IRS.

Orrock's offense, willful failure to collect and pay over tax, is punishable by up to five years in prison and/or a \$250,000 fine.

The state Supreme Court released a statement last week saying that Orrock has been disbarred "from the practice of law in all of the Court of South Dakota." The judgment was effective July 19.

Orrock was a state's attorney for Bennett County from 2013 until last year, when he lost the Republican primary to the current state's attorney, Sarah Harris.

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

Blighted area of Sioux Falls to get \$43.5M makeover

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A development company is planning to turn a blighted area of Sioux Falls into a \$43.5 million area of apartments, office and retail space.

Lloyd Companies was awarded the 2.5-acre Uptown Sioux Falls project from among five applicants, the Argus Leader reported . The plan includes 200 residential units, 20,000 square feet of commercial and office space, and more than 250 underground parking spots.

"I think the heart of a city is a vibrant downtown," said Chris Thorkelson, president and CEO of Lloyd Companies. "We just wanted to be a part of that."

The project includes \$4.1 million in tax increment financing from the city, which community development director Daren Ketcham said will be used for removing contaminated soil and tearing down dilapidated buildings.

"Investments like this span multiple generations," Ketcham said.

The development will include an outdoor swimming pool, a courtyard for outdoor dining and recreation, and easy access to the Levitt Pavilion's entertainment across the street.

Mayor Mike Huether said the investment is one of the greatest downtown enhancements in the last decade.

The city plans to finalize a purchase agreement and project terms this month, and the City Council will consider the project in September. Work is expected to begin in October and finish in 2019.

"By Halloween, we'll have a hole in the ground," Huether said Tuesday. "These buildings will no longer exist."

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

Death of woman in Summerset considered possible homicide

SUMMERSET, S.D. (AP) — Meade County authorities are investigating a possible homicide after a woman was found dead at a Summerset home.

The Sheriff's Office says the Wednesday morning death happened at a mobile home park.

Another woman considered a person of interest in the case has been detained, though not arrested.

Authorities search for chase suspect who injured deputy

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Several law enforcement agencies are searching for a man accused of leading officers on a chase from Iowa to South Dakota and injuring a sheriff's deputy.

The search Wednesday is centered in Sioux Falls. Police spokesman Sam Clemens says the suspect struck the squad car of a sheriff's deputy from Iowa's Lyon County, sending the officer to the hospital.

Authorities say the man was driving a stolen pickup truck from Harrisburg that was found in a business parking lot in Sioux Falls. They also say there might have been a second man in the vehicle.

Officers from Sioux Falls, the Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office and South Dakota Highway Patrol are using a drone and an all-terrain vehicle in the search. Authorities say the suspect might have a stolen weapon.

Crash in Corson County kills 16-year-old boy

MCLAUGHLIN, S.D. (AP) — A teenager is dead after a one-vehicle crash in Corson County.

The Highway Patrol says the 16-year-old boy was a passenger in a sport utility vehicle that went off state Highway 63 and rolled in the ditch. The crash happened about 4:30 a.m. Tuesday, about 2 miles north of McLaughlin.

The boy died later at a hospital in Bismarck, North Dakota.

The 17-year-old boy driving the SUV suffered what authorities say are serious but not life-threatening injuries. He also was taken to a Bismarck hospital.

The patrol didn't immediately release the boys' names.

Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press

Rapid City Journal, Rapid City, July 30

City needs to shop for a supermarket

Some call it an opportunity, while others see it as a problem — particularly for low-income residents who don't have transportation.

As soon as October, Rapid City could lose three grocery stores, including two in the downtown area as well as one on the west side of town. The decision by SpartanNash to close the stores and consolidate its operations in two other stores has raised concerns from people like Mary Corbine, the food security manager of Feeding South Dakota who told the Journal the decision "will impact a lot of people and not just the people who are food insecure."

The response from the city has been to put a more positive spin on the announced closures of FTC Express on Sturgis Road, the Family Thrift Center on Omaha Street and Prairie Market on York Street.

Mayor Steve Allender called it an "opportunity" and "that there are many reasons, in my mind, to be positive about it as there are negatives." Ben Snow, the president of the Rapid City Economic Development Partnership, expressed similar sentiments.

Both Allender and Snow said they could see a day when a grocery store comes to either Main or St. Joseph Street that would help fill that void and meet the needs of the growing number of young people who live in downtown Rapid City.

Unfortunately, that won't help those who could soon find themselves no longer within walking distance

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— all stores are well over one mile from a supermarket — of a grocery store as winter approaches.

If the city wants to view closures or vacant retail space as opportunities, it is safe to say that Rapid City is becoming the land of opportunity. Retail space is available downtown, in the strip mall at Baken Park and on the west and north sides of Rapid City — in some cases for months.

If the city sees the closure of the grocery stores as something potentially positive, it needs to do something positive to make that happen. It should not simply wait for a suitor to come courting.

Economic development — and in this case meeting a clear need, as well — requires a pro-active approach. The city needs to consider recruiting a supermarket for downtown Rapid City or create an environment where food markets owned by local merchants can have a chance to flourish.

It is not unprecedented for the city to incentivize businesses to come to Rapid City or encourage developers to build in the community. While it didn't work out, the most recent example is President's Plaza where Vision Funds and tax-increment financing were approved to take advantage of the opportunity at the intersection of St. Joseph and 5th streets. The city has used these economic-development tools in the past with varying degrees of success, including offering incentives to bring Cabela's to Rapid City.

If as city Planning Manager Vicki Fisher says "this could very well be a positive for the community as a whole," the city needs to make a concerted effort to bring a grocery store to downtown Rapid City as the "whole" also includes those who depend on those stores.

The Daily Republic, Mitchell, July 31

Hisses and cheers

HISSES to the federal funding cuts that caused LifeQuest to lose its free lunch program.

LifeQuest provides an immeasurable service to our community, but U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) cuts left the agency that supports people with developmental disabilities without the ability to provide lunch to 80 clients.

It's always disappointing when a federal budget cut has a negative impact on an agency like LifeQuest, which may have been an unintended victim of the USDA cuts. But we're hoping local organizations, or possibly the city of Mitchell, realize how essential LifeQuest is in our community and send a bit more financial support their way.

CHEERS to the approval of a contract that will support a large waterslide at Mitchell's indoor aquatic center.

As Mitchell City Councilman Mel Olson put it, not adding the waterslide that was included in drawings of the proposed facility would have been "a bait and switch."

And we agree. When Mitchell voters took to the polls, they thought they were voting for an indoor aquatic center with a large waterslide, but that didn't turn out to be the case.

We commend the Mitchell Parks and Recreation Department for finding funding for the slide through an exclusive beverage agreement with Pepsi distributor WP Beverages LLC.

Hopefully folks attending Mitchell sporting events enjoy Pepsi products, because in a few years, it will be their only option.

HISSES to the crash that claimed the lives of a grandfather and grandson in Wessington Springs last week.

Fatal crashes are always devastating news, and the impact on a family only worsens when multiple relatives are lost.

We hope this serves as a reminder to remain cautious on the roads over the summer. And with traffic about rise due to the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in the Black Hills, we know we'll be using extra caution, too.

Argus Leader, Sioux Falls, July 28

Where are the lessons from Gear Up debacle?

Can anything positive come from the interminable Gear Up scandal, a bureaucratic shell game in which federal funds were shuffled and stolen amid countless conflicts of interest, culminating in unthinkable tragedy and the erosion of public trust?

Perhaps. But only if South Dakotans keep a watchful eye on our state government's ongoing failure to enact meaningful ethics reform despite ample call to action.

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Tepid oversight steps taken after legislative repeal of IM 22's sweeping reforms last session wouldn't have provided much of a firewall against the scandal surrounding Mid-Central Education Cooperative in Platte.

Answers are still being sought, in courtrooms and elsewhere, after \$1.4 million intended to brighten the future of Native American students was stolen under the nose of the state Department of Education — a lingering black mark to Dennis Daugaard's tenure as governor.

Moves toward ethics reform have failed to match the intensity of public outrage. Even if small steps toward government accountability had been taken earlier, it may have sparked more scrutiny of executive branch officials whose job was to provide administrative oversight and protect the state's interests.

In the case of Gear Up, which crossed into human tragedy with the heinous actions of Mid-Central business manager Scott Westerhuis, it's interesting and disturbing to see Education Secretary Melody Schopp continue to deflect blame from herself and her department.

Schopp was inexplicably slow to grasp and act upon the fraudulent practices of the educational cooperative. When she finally moved to pull the plug on the contract due to sloppy bookkeeping and poor results, she requested a meeting with Mid-Central director Dan Guericke, a longtime acquaintance who now faces felony charges.

When Guericke asked about reason for the meeting, Schopp told him over the phone that the state was canceling the Gear Up contract. Because of that phone call, Guericke was able to inform Westerhuis of the state's decision, paving the way for the destruction of evidence.

No one could have anticipated the horror of what occurred at the Westerhuis estate, where the business manager killed himself and his family and set fire to their home. But there were major missteps amid a shocking inability to comprehend the magnitude of financial malfeasance.

Schopp herself testified before the Government Operations and Audit Committee this week as legislators assessed the extent of their power to investigate the scandal, with some calling for a greater legislative watchdog role over the executive branch.

They've identified the right problem. But going back to the type of independent accountability board proposed by IM 22 is the best way to deliver significant ethics reform.

The watered-down accountability board only oversees the executive branch and statewide office holders instead of covering all state workers and contractors, and citizen representatives have been replaced with retired judges appointed by the governor.

For South Dakotans repulsed by the lack of transparency in the EB-5 scandal under former governor Mike Rounds and then the Gear Up debacle under Daugaard, the executive branch naming its own overseers is an unacceptable response.

Guericke and two others stand accused of various felonies including grand theft and falsification of evidence stemming from the scandal. Regardless of how those prosecutions conclude, Daugaard and Attorney General Marty Jackley will undoubtedly seek to claim that the Gear Up mess has been adjudicated and meaningfully addressed.

They might even cite the new accountability board as evidence that state leaders have learned their lesson and are actively seeking to rebuild the public trust.

Voters are smarter than that. They see the damage to our state when something as disturbing and preventable as Gear Up takes place and want to see a degree of accountability. Maybe it's as simple as someone saying, "This happened under my watch and I take responsibility. Let's find out where we stumbled and fix it."

Instead, Schopp seemed to suggest this week that her department's role was overblown and there was no direct indication of anything amiss as more than \$1 million was siphoned from federal education grants instead of reaching Native American students.

"We made our determinations on fact, not hearsay," she told lawmakers.

Citizens can say the same. It's a fact that greater checks and balances are needed to serve as deterrent for ethical abuses in Pierre, which is why IM 22 passed against all odds last November.

It's a fact that trust was not restored when legislators chose to strike down that law and replace it with

more tepid measures that help them protect their own.

And it's a fact that when something as egregious as Gear Up rocks a state in scandal, people in power should be willing to accept blame rather than pass the buck, a necessary step in the ongoing march to restore public faith.

Daugaard: Buffer strip property tax incentives available

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota residents have until October to apply for tax incentives meant to encourage people to install buffer strips between agricultural land and waterways, Gov. Dennis Daugaard's office said Wednesday.

Lawmakers this year approved a law that offers property tax breaks for land turned into buffer strips of vegetation to help keep fertilizer, pesticides and sediment from reaching rivers, streams and lakes.

The law allows for tax incentives on 50- to 120-foot buffers along waterways, including 575 lakes and roughly 11,000 miles of streams in South Dakota. Eligible buffer strips would be assessed at 60 percent of the land's agricultural income value.

Daugaard's administration created an online map to help property owners figure out which bodies of water qualify.

"South Dakotans place a very high value on the water quality of our lakes and streams," Daugaard said in a statement. "I expect many South Dakotans will choose to participate in this program to help improve water quality in our state, and this new map makes it easy to understand who qualifies."

Under the law, buffer strip vegetation can be harvested or mowed after July 10, but a minimum of 4 inches of cover is required at all times. Grazing is prohibited from May through September to help keep livestock waste out of lakes and streams.

Landowners have until Oct. 15 to submit an application for the 2018 tax year to the director of equalization in the county where their property is located.

Aberdeen businessman pleads guilty to federal wire fraud

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — An Aberdeen businessman facing 18 felony wire fraud charges has pleaded guilty to one count in a deal with prosecutors.

The American News reports that 54-year-old Marwin Hofer is accused of using money from a Quantum Properties bank account to make a payment on a personal loan.

Hofer is to be sentenced Oct. 30. The plea agreement doesn't stipulate a recommended sentence.

Federal wire fraud carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. Hofer has agreed to make restitution covering all 18 transactions.

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

Pierre plumber accused of child rape sentenced to prison

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A Pierre man accused of sexually assaulting a teenage girl in a home where he had done plumbing work has been sentenced to serve 4 ½ years in prison.

Thirty-two-year-old David Timmons in June pleaded no contest to an attempted rape charge stemming from the December 2015 incident, and prosecutors dropped other charges.

The Capital Journal reports that Timmons was recently sentenced to 7 ½ years behind bars, with three years suspended. He must also register as a sex offender.

Information from: Pierre Capital Journal, <http://www.capjournal.com>

Venezuela president disputes vote tampering allegation

By **FABIOLA SANCHEZ** and **CHRISTINE ARMARIO**, Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Venezuela's president defiantly dismissed allegations that official turnout figures for the election of an all-powerful constituent assembly were manipulated, accusing the international software firm behind the claim of bowing to U.S. pressure to cast doubt over a body that he hopes will entrench an even more staunchly socialist state.

In his first meeting with assembly delegates Wednesday night, President Nicolas Maduro not only stood by the official count of 8 million-plus votes cast in Sunday's divisive election, but proclaimed that an additional 2 million people would have voted if they hadn't been blocked by anti-government protesters.

Maduro also announced a one-day delay in the assembly's installation, saying it would convene on Friday instead of Thursday as planned, in order to "organize it well in peace and tranquility."

The body is empowered to rewrite Venezuela's constitution and Maduro vows he will use it to target his opponents and solidify the socialist system installed by the late President Hugo Chavez. Maduro called the vote in May after weeks of protests fueled by widespread anger over food shortages, triple-digit inflation and high crime — unrest that continues and has caused at least 125 deaths.

The head of voting technology company Smartmatic said earlier Wednesday that the National Electoral Council's voter turnout number was off by at least 1 million, further darkening uncertainty over the veracity over the results. Independent analysts and opposition leaders have contended that the actual participation level was much lower.

With the opposition boycotting the election, virtually all the candidates were supporters of Maduro's ruling socialist party, so turnout was watched as one of the only indicators of how much popular support there is for the constituent assembly.

"That stupid guy, the president of Smartmatic, pressured to the neck by the gringos and the Brits, said there were 7.5 million," Maduro said in televised remarks. "I think there were 10 million Venezuelans who went out."

Maduro provided no evidence to support his claim, but his remarks were received with resounding applause from about 500 people elected to the assembly.

Antonio Mugica, CEO of Smartmatic, told reporters in London that results recorded by the company's systems and those reported by the National Electoral Council show "without any doubt" that the official turnout figure was tampered with. But he did not specify whether his company's figures showed 1 million fewer, or 1 million more, voters.

The international software company has provided voting technology in Venezuela since 2004.

"Even in moments of deep political conflict and division we have been satisfied with the voting process and the count has been completely accurate" previously in Venezuela, Mugica said. "It is, therefore, with the deepest regret that we have to report that the turnout figures on Sunday, 30 July, for the constituent assembly in Venezuela were tampered with."

Tibisay Lucena, the head of the National Electoral Council, also dismissed Smartmatic's claim. She called it an "opinion" of a company that played only a secondary role in the election and had no access to complete data.

"A company located outside the country does not guarantee the transparency and credibility of the Venezuelan electoral system," Lucena said.

Even before Smartmatic's statement, there were growing questions about the official turnout count. Leaders of the opposition, which is supported by a sizeable portion of the population, argued that the turnout number was inflated. And an independent exit poll concluded that less than half the government's figure actually cast ballots.

The opposition-controlled National Assembly voted Wednesday to urge the nation's chief prosecutor to investigate election commission members for potential crimes.

"They are going to install a fraudulent constitutional assembly and no one can say with certitude that these people ... were those who won or if they were the product of a scheme," said congressional leader

Julio Borges said.

Luisa Ortega Diaz, the nation's top law enforcement figure and former government loyalist who has fallen out with Maduro, told CNN late Wednesday that her office would investigate.

Mugica said his company's automated election system is designed to show when results are manipulated but requires that a large number of auditors participate, from both the ruling and opposition parties, which he said did not happen during Sunday's vote.

"This would not have occurred if the auditors of all political parties had been present at every stage of the election," he said.

Smartmatic, which supplies services worldwide, was founded by Venezuelans in Caracas and began providing voting technology during Chavez's presidency. In the past, opposition members have questioned the validity of results, but the firm has maintained its impartiality.

Luis Vicente Leon, president of Datanalisis, a Caracas-based polling agency, said Smartmatic's finding was, "without a doubt, the most devastating pronouncement yet for the credibility" of the nation's electoral council.

Despite the unrest and plummeting popularity ratings, Maduro appears to have maintained the full support of the country's most important institutions, notably the armed forces. Top military figures have been given special status and are scattered throughout the government. They also are in charge of strategic areas such as food distribution in which Venezuelans say bribery is widespread.

Associated Press writer Fabiola Sanchez reported this story in Caracas and AP writer Christine Armario reported from Bogota, Colombia.

Christine Armario on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/cearmario>

Fabiola Sanchez on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/fisanchez>

Trump attorney brings 'street fighter' spirit to his work

By ERIC TUCKER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — One of the key lawyers in President Donald Trump's corner navigated a popular United States senator through crisis, produced a damning investigative report that drove a baseball star from the game and, early in his career, took on organized crime as a Justice Department prosecutor.

John Dowd, a retired Marine Corps captain and longtime legal adviser to prominent people facing government investigations, has played a role in some of the defining legal quagmires of the last four decades — among them, the Iran-Contra affair, the Keating Five, the Enron collapse and a scandal over the firing of U.S. attorneys.

It's no surprise that such battle-tested experience would be attractive to a White House needing legal talent to grapple with investigations into potential Russia ties by congressional committees and Special Counsel Robert Mueller. And his scorched-earth, aggressive professional style and a bombastic streak — he once cursed at a journalist who approached him for comment and is currently being sued for defamation by Pete Rose — is in some ways keeping with the president's own pugnaciousness.

"He's a fighter, he's a street fighter," said veteran Washington lawyer Brendan Sullivan, who has known Dowd for decades. "And he tempers it all with good judgment. He finds solutions to problems — which is what lawyers should be doing."

Dowd assumed a more prominent place on the legal team after another lawyer, Marc Kasowitz, took a reduced role. The lawyers have been evaluating potential conflicts of interest among Mueller's team, including the political affiliation of investigators and past work history, people familiar with the effort have said. The White House has also acquired a new special in-house counsel, respected attorney Ty Cobb, as it confronts legal probes that have shadowed the administration and stunted its agenda.

It's a challenging assignment given Trump's tendencies, on Twitter and in interviews, to act as his own adviser and to undercut conventional legal wisdom through hasty proclamations and actions.

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But in an interview with The Associated Press, Dowd contended that "all clients have personalities that they bring to the table" and rejected the public perception of the president as a difficult client. Despite his own aggressive lawyering, including a history of occasionally combative language about investigations involving his own clients, Dowd said he knew how to adapt his own style to the circumstances of a case.

"It's true that there are circumstances where you have to fight like hell, and I do," Dowd said. And "there are circumstances where a jar of honey works very well."

For Dowd, who grew up inspired by tales of legendary lawyer Clarence Darrow, the Trump case is the most high-profile assignment in a career that's had many.

He was retained by Major League Baseball to investigate Rose on gambling allegations and concluded in a comprehensive and thorough report that the player had indeed bet on the sport. The 1989 document known as the Dowd Report, which relied on telephone and bank records and extensive interviews, led to Rose being banned from the game.

Around the same time, he was by the side of Sen. John McCain during the Keating Five banking scandal in which a group of lawmakers, including the Arizona Republican, accepted contributions from a wealthy banker ultimately accused of swindling investors. Though McCain expressed contrition as he ran for president in 2008, Dowd struck a more defiant tone, telling reporters on a conference call before the election that the senator was the "victim of a classic political smear job."

He's been similarly protective of other high-profile clients, representing a witness who secured an immunity deal in the Iran-Contra affair and a Justice Department official who exercised her Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination in refusing to answer questions from Congress. Earlier in his career, he served on a Justice Department organized crime task force and says he tried the first prosecution of the federal racketeering conspiracy, or RICO, statute.

Lawyers who have worked with Dowd describe him as savvy and experienced, fiercely protective of his clients, proud of his military background and eager to confront the government in court.

Most recently, he was the trial attorney for Raj Rajaratnam, a hedge fund founder convicted in 2011 of insider trading. Lawyers involved in the case say Dowd ran a disciplined defense team that fought for years, filing dozens of motions, accusing investigators of knowingly making false statements and misrepresenting evidence, and working strenuously but ultimately unsuccessfully to keep damaging wiretap evidence out of the trial.

He's made occasional headlines for conduct outside of court, too.

He was recorded on camera cursing and extending a middle finger at a journalist who approached him for comment outside the courthouse during the Rajaratnam case. After Dowd was identified in June as part of Trump's legal team, Preet Bharara — the former U.S. attorney in Manhattan whose office tried the Rajaratnam case and who was fired by Trump — tweeted to his followers a video of the exchange.

Dowd was sued by Rose in federal court last year after intimating in a radio interview that Rose had underage girls sent to him during baseball spring training. Dowd sought to have the case dismissed, but a judge has allowed elements of the suit to move forward. An unidentified woman submitted a court filing Monday saying that she had a sexual relationship with Rose in the 1970s starting when she was 14 or 15. Rose has acknowledged having a relationship with the woman beginning when she was 16, the age of consent in Ohio, and his lawyer said the woman's claims are unverified.

Dowd's supporters say the ex-military man with the blunt speaking style and fighting spirit might be a comfort to Trump during a legal fight that threatens the heart of his administration.

"He's an old Marine, and in a difficult hour, he's who you want in your corner, I'll say that," said Washington lawyer Jim Sharp.

No lie, says Sanders: Trump got praise from Mexico, Scouts

By LAURIE KELLMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Fake news or fib?

Two phone calls described by President Donald Trump that didn't actually happen represent the latest chapter in a long-running series of disputes revolving around the president's rocky relationship with facts.

White House press secretary Sarah Sanders on Wednesday found herself explaining that compliments Trump had described receiving in phone calls from the Mexican president and the Boy Scouts did happen — just not on the phone.

"I wouldn't say it was a lie. That's a pretty bold accusation," she told reporters. "The conversations took place, they just simply didn't take place over a phone call. ... He had them in person."

The noncalls weren't earth-shattering news. But they fit a pattern that also involves weightier issues and that has raised larger questions about Trump's credibility six months into his presidency.

After Donald Trump Jr. put out a statement, later shown to be misleading, about his meeting with a Russian lawyer in 2016, the president's outside lawyer was categorical that the president had no role in drafting the statement. But when The Washington Post later reported that the president had dictated the statement for his son, Sanders acknowledged that Trump had "weighed in" on his son's statement "as any father would based on the limited information that he had."

Polls, history and other research leave open the question of how impressions of Trump's truthfulness affect his job approval, which hovers around a third of Americans.

Trump won the presidential election despite having promoted false claims such as the notion that President Barack Obama was born outside the U.S. (he was born in Hawaii) and that Hillary Clinton had started the rumor (she didn't).

The campaign featured another instance when Trump said someone told him something that the person then denied. Candidate Trump last summer claimed the NFL had complained to him that the presidential debate schedule competed with football games. The NFL denied that.

A Quinnipiac poll released Wednesday found that for all of the economic and other progress Trump claims, just 33 percent of Americans approve of the job he's doing, similar to the results of a survey conducted in June by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Only 34 percent of the Quinnipiac poll respondents say that Trump is "honest."

"We've been through so much of this," said Ethan Porter, an assistant professor of media and public affairs at George Washington University, who co-authored a study released last month into whether false information and corrections change people's attitudes toward candidates. In Trump's case, he said, "People probably learned to discount additional instances" of falsehoods, adding: "It's already baked in the cake where you sort of know what you're getting with Donald Trump at this point."

Sanders was responding to questions about a statement from the Mexican government denying what Trump described as a recent phone call with Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto. Trump said earlier this week that Peña Nieto had called him to praise his immigration policies.

"Even the president of Mexico called me. They said their southern border, very few people are coming because they know they're not going to get through our border, which is the ultimate compliment," Trump said Monday.

Sanders said Trump had been "referencing a conversation that they had had at the G-20 summit where they specifically talked about the issues that he referenced."

Mexico's Foreign Relations Department said Peña Nieto remarked to Trump during a July 7 meeting at the G-20 summit in Germany that deportations of Mexicans from the United States had fallen 31 percent between January and June, as compared with 2016. Peña Nieto said 47 percent fewer Central American migrants had entered Mexico in that period.

Meanwhile, the Boy Scouts denied Wednesday that the head of the youth organization called Trump to shower praise on his politically aggressive speech to its national jamboree in West Virginia. President Randall Stephenson and Chief Scout Executive Mike Surbaugh later apologized to members of the scouting

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community who were offended by Trump's political rhetoric.

Trump told The Wall Street Journal in an interview last week, "I got a call from the head of the Boy Scouts saying it was the greatest speech that was ever made to them, and they were very thankful." Politico published the transcript of the interview Tuesday.

Sanders said the president was making reference to "multiple members of the Boy Scout leadership" who "congratulated him, praised him and offered quite powerful compliments following his speech."

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10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

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

1. TRUMP'S CREDIBILITY TAKING MORE HITS

The White House says the president did receive compliments from Boy Scout leaders and Mexico's president — but in person, not on the phone, as he contended.

2. HOW VENEZUELA'S PRESIDENT REACTED TO VOTE MANIPULATION REPORT

Nicolas Maduro accuses the software firm behind the claim of helping the U.S. attempt to sully a constituent assembly meant to strengthen socialism.

3. '(ISLAMIC STATE) SHARED ONLY GOOD THINGS ON INTERNET'

An Indonesian family chasing the dream of a new Islamic society advertised by IS propaganda saw their hopes of a better life shattered before they made their escape from the militants in Syria's Raqqa.

4. WHO IS AIDING TRUMP'S LEGAL TEAM

John Dowd, a retired Marine Corps captain who has played a role in some of the defining legal quagmires of the last four decades, brings a street-fighter spirit to the group.

5. WHAT'S NEXT IN BRAZILIAN PRESIDENT SAGA

Michel Temer survives a congressional vote over a bribery charge that fueled anger across the country, but there are more legal woes ahead and clear chinks in his governing coalition.

6. NORTH KOREA'S NEIGHBORS SPOOKED, RESIGNED TO FLURRY OF LAUNCHES

Pyongyang's missile launches — 20 of them just in the past year — are a new and alarming fact of life for Japanese, South Koreans and Chinese.

7. TRUMP ONCE QUESTIONED WISDOM OF TAKING VACATIONS

But with a 17-day getaway to his private golf club in New Jersey, the president is readying to join the annual August exodus from the town he calls "the swamp."

8. WOMAN TO BE SENTENCED IN TEEN TEXTING SUICIDE CASE

A Massachusetts woman who encouraged her boyfriend to kill himself in dozens of texts faces up to 20 years in prison when sentenced for involuntary manslaughter.

9. MIXED REACTION TO DIANA DOCUMENTARY

Friends of the late princess slam a new film that includes private recordings of her talking about her unhappy marriage to Prince Charles, but an ex-bodyguard says she would "love" that they are being broadcast.

10. BOXING GREAT HANGS UP GLOVES

Former heavyweight world champion Wladimir Klitschko, 41, who dominated the division for a decade, was 64-5 in a career that began in 1996 after he won the Olympic gold in Atlanta.

Trump set to embark on 1st vacation since inauguration

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump once questioned the wisdom of taking vacations. "What's the point?" he asked.

But now the president is getting ready to join the annual August exodus from this town he calls "the swamp." Trump is due to set out Friday on his first extended vacation from Washington since the inaugu-

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ration — a 17-day getaway to his private golf club in central New Jersey.

The president's vacation could be driven, in part, by necessity. Everyone who works in the White House West Wing, including the Oval Office occupant himself, will be forced to clear out by week's end so that the government can replace the balky, 27-year-old heating and cooling system.

But the White House hasn't been entertaining questions about the president's August plans.

Asked whether Trump would be leaving Washington this month, given his recent warning that Congress should stick around until they vote on health care legislation, White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Tuesday: "We'll continue to keep you guys updated on his August schedule as those details are finalized."

Trump and his supporters like to tout his disdain for taking vacations, when the truth is he takes them constantly.

"Don't take vacations. What's the point? If you're not enjoying your work, you're in the wrong job," Trump wrote in his 2004 book, "Trump: Think Like a Billionaire."

He told Larry King in an interview that year that "most of the people I know that are successful really don't take vacations. Their business is their vacation. I rarely leave. You know that," Trump said. "You and I are friends. How often do you see me going away?"

Actually, Trump gets out of town quite often. So far, he has spent 13 of his 28 weekends in office away from the White House, mostly at his properties in Palm Beach, Florida, or in Bedminster, New Jersey, according to an Associated Press count. The figures include a weekend during official travel overseas, and Father's Day weekend at Camp David, the government-owned presidential retreat in Maryland.

Contrast Trump's own frequent getaways with his criticism, before and during last year's presidential campaign, of former President Barack Obama's vacations and frequent golf outings.

"@BarackObama played golf yesterday. Now he heads to a 10 day vacation in Martha's Vineyard. Nice work ethic," Trump tweeted in August 2011.

Trump said last year that he wouldn't have time for golf if he became president. "I'm going to be working for you, I'm not going to have time to go play golf," he told supporters in Virginia. But he plays golf whenever he's at his clubs; sometimes it's the full 18 holes, other times less than that. His staff rarely acknowledges that he plays, even when photos of him on the course pop up on social media.

Presidents have been escaping Washington's summer heat and humidity ever since Thomas Jefferson looked out of the White House windows and watched as a white fog that was believed to be toxic rolled in. Harry Truman played poker on the porch in Key West, Florida. Ronald Reagan rode horses at his mountain ranch in California.

Bill Clinton and Barack Obama both spent August vacations on Martha's Vineyard, the tiny Massachusetts island that serves as a summer playground for the rich and famous. George W. Bush retreated to his secluded Crawford, Texas, ranch to clear brush and ride his mountain bike.

Besides the replacement of the West Wing's heating and cooling system, repairs are also to be made to the steps on the South Portico, the side of the White House facing the National Mall. Cosmetic upgrades, including interior painting, replacing carpeting and curtains and fixing water leaks in the press office ceiling, are also on the maintenance list. Repairmen and others are expected to work around the clock during the coming weeks to complete all the upgrades by Aug. 21.

Presidents travel with the equivalent of a mini-White House made up of advisers, other aides and security, and they must be prepared to deal with a crisis at all hours and from wherever they are. But chronic stress affects the body's ability to resist infection, maintain vital functions and avoid injuries, Susan Krauss Whitbourne, then a professor of psychological and brain sciences at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, wrote in a 2010 paper on the website of Psychology Today subtitled "why presidents (and all of us) need vacations."

Stressed out people are more likely to get sick, have accidents, sleep poorly, be more irritable and less fun to be around. Whitbourne wrote that vacations break the "stress cycle."

"Perhaps it's good that someone as important as our president is showing that he believes it's beneficial to take a break from the office, get out and enjoy the outdoors in a little bit of a break in mindset and, we

would hope, be able to go back to work refreshed and renewed and do a better job," Whitbourne, who currently teaches at the university's Boston campus, told the AP in a telephone interview. "I think that's the theory of vacations."

Associated Press writer Nancy Benac contributed to this report.

Follow Darlene Superville on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/dsupervilleap>

US says 4 wounded in Afghan attack that killed 2 US troops

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — The U.S. military in Afghanistan says that four American troops were wounded in the same suicide bombing near the city of Kandahar the previous day that killed two U.S. service members.

The statement released in Kabul on Thursday says their injuries are not life threatening.

It followed an unprecedented delay in releasing the American casualty tolls in the attack in southern Afghanistan — reflecting an emerging disagreement on how the military should handle information about American casualties.

In Wednesday's attack, a suicide bomber rammed his explosive laden car into a NATO convoy outside Kandahar. The Taliban quickly took responsibility for the attack.

Gen. John Nicholson, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, has ordered the new procedure in releasing casualty tolls, prompting criticism of giving the public less information and transparency.

Brazil's president dodges bribery charge, but risks remain

By PETER PRENGAMAN and MAURICIO SAVARESE, Associated Press

BRASILIA, Brazil (AP) — With his job on the line, President Michel Temer eked out a victory in a congressional vote over a bribery charge against him that has fueled angst and anger across Latin America's largest nation.

But there are more legal woes ahead and clear chinks in his governing coalition, so Temer will have little time to celebrate.

Members of Congress' lower house, the Chamber of Deputies, voted 263-227 Wednesday night against suspending the president and sending him for trial before Brazil's highest court.

The result effectively suspended the bribery charge, which was filed by Attorney General Ricardo Janot in June. However, Janot is expected to charge Temer with obstruction of justice by the end of this month, which would prompt another vote that even Temer's most stalwart supporters would rather not have to go through as elections loom next year.

In a troubling sign for Temer, the 263 votes cast in support of him fell far short of the crucial 342, or two-thirds of the 513-member body, that he needs to pass an overhaul of the pension system. It is an unpopular proposal supported by the business class, which has helped keep an otherwise deeply unpopular leader in power.

"This is far from over," said Rafael Salies, a risk consultant with the Rio de Janeiro-based Southern Pulse. "August may still have many surprises in store for him."

The vote on the bribery charge came after a full day of procedural wrangling by the opposition, maneuvers intended to stall and force legislators to vote in the evening, when many Brazilians were home and able to watch the proceedings being broadcast live. The moves may have worked.

While Temer's opponents made impassioned speeches about the need for him to go, many supporters said nothing beyond the minimum to procedurally cast their vote. The measure was before the chamber because by Brazilian law a sitting president cannot be tried without the approval of the lower house, which is considered the conduit for the voice of the people.

Throughout the day, there was shouting and even periodic pushing between lawmakers.

"Temer is a crook and he needs to sort out his situation with the Justice Department," said Elvino Bohn

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Gass, a member of the Workers' Party, one of the main opposition parties. "Brazil should not be governed by a gang of thugs."

"Brazil can't change presidents three times in one year," said Sergio Moraes, making a common argument among Temer supporters that it was worth keeping him for the sake of stability. "He will be investigated later."

A year ago, Temer, then vice president, took office after Dilma Rousseff was impeached and removed as president for improperly handling government finances.

Since becoming president, his administration has been rocked by repeated scandals while still managing to move unpopular legislation forward, such as a loosening of labor rules and the proposals to trim pension benefits.

All the while, his popularity has plunged. The latest national poll said just 5 percent of Brazilians approve of Temer while the vast majority said he should be tried for the bribery allegation.

The bribery allegation stunned even Brazilians inured to graft cases, and represented the latest in a bevy of scandals flowing out of a mammoth investigation into kickbacks that has led to the jailing of many of the country's elite the last three years.

A recording purportedly made in March emerged in which Temer apparently supported the continued payment of hush money to Eduardo Cunha, the powerful former speaker believed to have dirt on many politicians. Cunha is serving a 15-year sentence for corruption.

As part of the probe, it came to light that Temer allegedly orchestrated a scheme in which he would get payouts totaling millions of dollars for helping resolve a business issue for JBS, a giant meat-packing company. A former aide was arrested while carrying a suitcase with \$150,000, much of which was allegedly destined for Temer. Temer denies the allegations and says there is no proof he received any money.

Early in Wednesday's proceedings, Temer's lawyer, Antonio Claudio Mariz de Oliveira, tore into the charge against the president. He said the recording was illegally made and the suitcase of money was a red herring.

"The suitcase of money was returned" by the police to the Temer aide, the attorney said. "Why was it returned? Because the president is a good man, an innocent man."

Few deputies spoke in Temer's favor, but those who did praised Temer's stewardship of Latin America's biggest economy, which is struggling to emerge from its worst recession in decades.

"Brazil is improving," said Mauro Pereira, a member of Temer's party. "Inflation is going down, our national reserves are going up. We now have international credibility."

Many economists, however, note that while inflation has slowed, unemployment has sky-rocketed and several states and municipalities are broke and unable to pay public workers.

"To be a great nation Brazil needs a president that is honest, Christian and patriotic," said Jair Bolsonaro, a presidential hopeful.

Associated Press writer Peter Prengaman reported this story in Brasilia and AP writer Mauricio Savarese reported from Sao Paulo.

Peter Prengaman on Twitter: www.twitter.com/peterprengaman

Mauricio Savarese on Twitter: www.twitter.com/MSavarese

Woman to be sentenced in teen texting suicide case

By DENISE LAVOIE, AP Legal Affairs Writer

TAUNTON, Mass. (AP) — A Massachusetts woman who encouraged her boyfriend to kill himself in dozens of text messages and told him to "get back in" a truck filled with toxic gas faces up to 20 years in prison when a judge sentences her on a charge of involuntary manslaughter.

Michelle Carter was convicted in June by a judge who said her final instruction to Conrad Roy III caused his death. Juvenile Court Judge Lawrence Moniz will sentence Carter Thursday.

Carter was 17 when the 18-year-old Roy was found dead of carbon monoxide poisoning in July 2014. In dozens of text messages, Carter urged Roy to follow through on his talk of taking his own life. "The time is right and you are ready ... just do it babe," Carter wrote in a text the day he killed himself.

The sensational trial was closely watched on social media, in part because of the insistent tone of Carter's text messages.

"You can't think about it. You just have to do it. You said you were gonna do it. Like I don't get why you aren't," Carter wrote in one text.

Carter's lawyer, Joseph Cataldo, argued that Roy was determined to kill himself and nothing Carter did could change that. He said Carter initially tried to talk Roy out of it and urged him to get professional help, but eventually went along with his plan. Cataldo also argued that Carter's words amounted to free speech protected by the First Amendment.

In convicting Carter, the judge focused his ruling on Carter telling Roy to "get back in" after he climbed out of his truck as it was filling with carbon monoxide and told her he was afraid.

The judge said those words constituted "wanton and reckless conduct" under the manslaughter statute.

Carter and Roy met in Florida in 2012 while both were on vacation with their families. After that, they only met in person a handful of times. Their relationship consisted mainly of texting.

Both teens struggled with depression. Carter had been treated for anorexia, and Roy had made earlier suicide attempts.

Roy's aunt has asked the judge to sentence Carter to the 20-year maximum. Carter's father said his daughter made "a tragic mistake," and is asking for probation and continued counseling.

Carter was tried as a youthful offender, so the judge has several options for sentencing. He can commit her to a Department of Youth Services facility until she turns 21 on Aug. 11. He could also combine a DYS commitment with an adult sentence, or can give her an adult sentence of anything from probation to the maximum 20-year term.

2 dead after explosion at Minneapolis school

By **AMY FORLITI** and **JEFF BAENEN**, Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A second body was found in the rubble of a collapsed school building in Minneapolis after an explosion killed a school employee and injured several others, fire officials said Wednesday night.

City Fire Chief John Fruetel said the body was recovered around 8 p.m. Wednesday at the Minnehaha Academy. Fruetel said the medical examiner's office is working to notify relatives.

The blast occurred in a utility as students were playing soccer and basketball at the private Christian school, which serves students from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade, according to fire and school officials.

Contractors were working on one of the campus' buildings at the time of the blast, which investigators believe was caused by a natural gas explosion, said Assistant Minneapolis Fire Chief Bryan Tyner.

The explosion killed Ruth Berg, a receptionist for 17 years at the school who "welcomed everyone with a smile," the school said in a statement.

John Carlson, a part-time janitor known for giving Dilly Bars to students, was reported missing. The 81-year-old attended the school as a child, sent his own children there, and was like a grandfather figure to students, school officials said.

At a news conference Wednesday night, Fruetel did not specify whether Carlson's body was the one located.

Four people remained hospitalized late Wednesday, including one in critical condition, at Hennepin County Medical Center in Minneapolis, according to the hospital. Their names haven't been released.

Dr. Jim Miner, the hospital's chief of emergency medicine, said victims treated from the blast suffered injuries ranging from head injuries and broken bones to cuts from debris.

Aerial video footage of the school's campus showed part of a building was ripped apart, with wood splintered and bricks scattered about. Windows in other areas were blown out and shattered. Three people

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were rescued from the building's roof shortly after the explosion and fire, Tyner said.

Paul Meskan, who lives across the street, said he was pulling weeds when the blast happened, and he quickly ran over to the school. Meskan said he and other people who rushed to help found a man pinned under the rubble.

"We just started digging," Meskan said. He said that after police and firefighters arrived, "we kept digging, and gas, gas was going. Fire was going. And it's like, 'we're not going back until we get this guy out of here.' And we got him out, and they got him on a stretcher."

The Star Tribune reported that city records show Master Mechanical Inc. was issued a permit on June 7 for "gas piping and hooking up meter" at the school's address. Ryan Larsen, a company official, released a statement saying the company was monitoring the situation and referred questions to the Minneapolis Fire Department.

Larsen wouldn't confirm to The Associated Press that company workers were on site, saying: "We are trying to figure it out."

Master Mechanical has twice been cited for workplace violations in recent years, according to the newspaper. Jenny O'Brien, a spokeswoman for the Minnesota Occupational Safety and Health Administration, said in 2010 there was a violation related to protecting an employee from falling. In 2014, the company had paperwork violations.

At the time of Wednesday's blast, as many as 10 students were playing basketball inside a gym at Minnehaha Academy but weren't near the explosion, said Sara Jacobson, the school's executive director of institutional advancement. Jacobson also was in the building during the explosion.

"There was a very loud explosion, and ceiling tiles and windows and materials rained down on our heads," she said. "And then soon as it was over, we made our way down a dark hallway to the exit as quickly as we could."

Gov. Mark Dayton released a statement saying his office was in contact with city officials and the state "will provide any and all resources necessary" to help first responders and ensure everyone is safe.

Associated Press writer Gretchen Ehke contributed to this report from Milwaukee.

1980s rapper Kidd Creole arrested in fatal stabbing

NEW YORK (AP) — One of the founding members of the 1980s hip hop group Grandmaster Flash and The Furious Five was arrested in New York in connection with the fatal stabbing of a homeless man, police said.

Nathaniel Glover, 57, also known as The Kidd Creole, was arrested Wednesday night on murder charges. Information on his lawyer wasn't immediately available.

The stabbing happened in midtown Manhattan shortly before midnight on Monday. Police said the 55-year-old victim was found with multiple stab wounds to his torso. It's not clear what sparked the stabbing.

Police described the victim, who lived in a shelter, as a level 2 sex offender. His identity has not yet been released.

Video shows a handcuffed Glover, his gray hair pulled back into a tightly-wound pony tail, being escorted out of a police precinct Wednesday night.

Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five is best known for their 1982 rap song, "The Message." The group was formed in the late 1970s in the Bronx.

The group was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2007, the first rap act to be inducted into the hall.

Thousands show up for jobs at Amazon warehouses in US cities

By MATT O'BRIEN, AP Technology Writer

FALL RIVER, Mass. (AP) — Thousands of people showed up Wednesday for a chance to pack and ship products to Amazon customers, as the e-commerce company held a giant job fair at nearly a dozen U.S. warehouses.

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Although the wages offered will make it hard for some to make ends meet, many of the candidates were excited by the prospect of health insurance and other benefits, as well as advancement opportunities.

It's common for Amazon to ramp up its shipping center staff in August to prepare for holiday shopping. But the magnitude of its current hiring spree underscores Amazon's growth when traditional retailers are closing stores — and blaming Amazon for a shift to buying goods online.

Amazon said it received "a record-breaking 20,000 applications" and hired thousands of people on the spot, and will hire more in the coming days. That number represented fewer than half of the 50,000 people it had said it planned to hire.

Most of the jobs are full-time positions in packing, sorting and shipping and will count toward Amazon's previously announced goal of adding 100,000 full-time workers by the middle of next year.

The bad news is that more people are likely to lose jobs in stores than get jobs in warehouses, said Anthony Carnevale, director of Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce.

On the flip side, Amazon's warehouse jobs provide "decent and competitive" wages and could help build skills.

"Interpersonal team work, problem solving, critical thinking, all that stuff goes on in these warehouses," Carnevale said. "They're serious entry-level jobs for a lot of young people, even those who are still making their way through school."

The company is advertising starting wages that range from \$11.50 an hour in Chattanooga, Tennessee, to \$13.75 an hour in Kent, Washington, near Amazon's Seattle headquarters. The \$11.50 rate amounts to about \$23,920 a year. In Washington state, the current minimum wage is \$11.50 but by 2020 will increase to \$13.50. By comparison, the warehouse store operator Costco raised its minimum wage for entry-level workers last year from \$13 to \$13.50 an hour.

Some job candidates Wednesday were looking to supplement other income.

Rodney Huffman, a 27-year-old personal trainer, said the \$13-an-hour job in Baltimore would pay enough to help cover bills while he starts his own company.

"I'm looking to do the night shifts and then run my own company during the day," he said.

At one warehouse — Amazon calls them "fulfillment centers" — in Fall River, Massachusetts, Amazon was looking to hire more than 200 people Wednesday, adding to a workforce of about 1,500. Employees there focus on sorting, labeling and shipping what the company calls "non-sortable" items — big products such as shovels, kayaks, surfboards, grills, car seats — and lots of giant diaper boxes. Other warehouses are focused on smaller products.

While Amazon has attracted attention for deploying robots at some of its warehouses, experts said it could take a while before automation begins to seriously bite into its growing labor force.

"When it comes to dexterity, machines aren't really great at it," said Jason Roberts, head of technology and analytics for mass recruiter Randstad Sourceright, which is not working with Amazon on its jobs fair. "The picker-packer role is something humans do way better than machines right now."

Steve King, 47, a job candidate in Fall River with experience running his own business, agreed: "I don't think robots are up to snuff yet. I think they will be. Hopefully I can get in before the robots get that good and get above the robots in administration or something."

In recent years, reports have emerged about difficult working conditions at Amazon's warehouses, including deaths at two Amazon warehouses in 2014. The company also came under fire in 2011 for extreme heat at its warehouses that caused "heat-related injuries" among workers. Amazon said at the time that it took emergency actions during heat waves and subsequently installed cooling systems in its warehouses.

But many of those who showed up Wednesday were excited by the prospects of health insurance and other benefits, as well as advancement opportunities.

"I like to be busy, so I know Amazon is busy and they want hard workers," retired police officer Brian Trice said.

Trice was among those who stood in line in Baltimore on a hot day as Amazon contractors passed out bottles of water. In Fall River, a line snaked out of the warehouse and under an air-conditioned tent. In

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Kent, Washington, a vendor offered free cups of shaved ice from a truck playing steel-drum music.

Among those lining up in Kent were 18-year-old Javier Costa and his 49-year-old uncle, Manuel Alvarenga. Costa said the warehouse work wasn't necessarily what he was looking for, but his uncle, a recent immigrant from El Salvador, was looking for whatever he could get.

"He was making \$6 an hour in El Salvador; you can imagine what the people below him were making," Costa said. "It's a harder life down there. At this point he just needs a job."

Ron Joslin, 55, said he's long worked at call centers, most recently making medical appointments for veterans. But he lost that job in April, and since then hasn't been able to find work — despite the Seattle area's hot labor market.

"I don't believe the numbers reflect what's really happening," he said, waiting in a line hundreds of people long. "You want to see what's really happening, go to the unemployment office and see how many people are there and how long they've been unemployed."

His wife, a regular Amazon shopper, told him about the job fair, he said.

"She heard about it on the news and was like, 'You need to go there.' I said, 'It's going to be 100 degrees.' She said, 'You need to go there.' She's tired of me being around the house."

Some left disappointed. Maureen Schell gave up after several hours at the Fall River site, describing it as a publicity stunt and a "drive to get bodies in the door so they can cherry-pick the warehouse staff they want."

"It looks like they're looking for young, healthy warehouse staff only," said Schell, a 57-year-old searching for work that will put more money into her retirement.

Amazon was also holding events at shipping sites in Ohio, Kentucky, Wisconsin, New Jersey, Illinois and Indiana.

AP writers Brian Witte in Baltimore and Gene Johnson in Kent, Washington, and AP Technology Writer Barbara Ortutay in New York contributed to this story.

Nebraska patrol accused of requiring vaginal exams for women

By MARGERY A. BECK, Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The Nebraska State Patrol has for years forced female recruits to submit to invasive, medically unnecessary pelvic exams performed by a male doctor before they can be hired, according to a new federal lawsuit that has prompted a criminal investigation.

State Trooper Brienne Splittgerber filed the lawsuit Tuesday against the patrol, the state of Nebraska, two former patrol heads and various other people, accusing them of creating a hostile work environment for women.

"Immediately upon learning of these allegations in June, the Governor instructed his Chief Human Resources Officer to review this matter, which has subsequently resulted in a criminal investigation by the State Patrol," Taylor Gage, a spokesman for Gov. Pete Ricketts, said in a written statement Wednesday.

State Patrol spokesman Cody Thomas said no NSP recruits have undergone the pelvic exams since December 2016. Thomas did not comment on who was under investigation.

The lawsuit seeks unspecified damages, saying women recruits for years have been required to undress from the waist down for a vaginal and rectal examination. The lawsuit says Splittgerber was told the exam was required to check for hernias, but male recruits were generally not required to undress or undergo such invasive exams.

"Subjecting the plaintiff and other female trooper candidates to a medically unnecessary and sexually invasive procedure is outrageous conduct which goes beyond all possible bounds of decency and is utterly intolerable in a civilized community," according to the lawsuit, filed by Omaha attorney Tom White.

Splittgerber submitted to the exam in 2014 before she was hired by the patrol in 2015, saying in her lawsuit that she was required by a Lincoln doctor hired by the patrol to remove her pants and lie on her back, then her stomach, to be examined.

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Spittgerber complained to her superiors after being told by her family doctor that there was no legitimate medical purpose for the exam. She was told an investigation was underway, the lawsuit says, but was disturbed that female patrol candidates from subsequent recruitment classes continued to be sent to the same doctor to submit to the exams.

Dr. Karen Carlson, an OB-GYN with Nebraska Medicine in Omaha, said it would be highly unusual to conduct a pelvic exam for a possible hernia. Pressing the abdomen with a hand would be standard for such a check, she said.

"There would be no reason to look in the genital or anal area," Carlson said. "We might have them loosen their pants, but I wouldn't think there would be any need to disrobe."

An attorney for the State Patrol declined to comment Wednesday, citing the pending litigation, and referred questions to the Nebraska Attorney General's office, which will defend the patrol and state against the lawsuit. A spokeswoman for the Attorney General's office would say only that her office is currently reviewing the lawsuit.

The lawsuit is the latest of several controversies that have hounded the patrol in recent years.

Earlier this year, Ricketts fired Col. Brad Rice, who was the head of the Nebraska State Patrol during most of Spittgerber's tenure with the patrol. His firing came amid an internal review launched after officers were accused of changing their story about a crash that killed a South Dakota driver who was fleeing from a trooper.

Rice's firing followed a union survey of state troopers that found widespread dissatisfaction among rank-and-file employees with the agency's management.

Ricketts appointed Rice as head of the agency in 2015 despite concerns that Rice was complicit in gender discrimination while he was a captain in the patrol. Rice served on an interview panel that denied several promotions to a female sergeant, who successfully sued for gender discrimination. Rice was also accused of saying that women shouldn't be in law enforcement — a comment Rice said was taken out of context.

Temperate Northwest gets blasted with furnace-like heat

By STEVEN DUBOIS, Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Forecasts for triple-digit heat have caused a minor panic across the Pacific Northwest, a region famous for cool weather where many people do not have air conditioning to help them endure the rare furnace-like blast.

In normally temperate Oregon and Washington, families generally get by on warm days by simply drawing shades and running fans. But a searing high-pressure system is expected to make Portland and Seattle hotter than Phoenix, at least for a couple of days.

Many concerned communities have opened cooling centers and warned residents to stay hydrated, avoid strenuous activity and keep their dogs out of parked vehicles.

The National Weather Service slightly dialed back its forecast for Portland to match or break its record high of 107 degrees (41.7 Celsius). Meteorologist David Bishop said the city is now looking at 104 (40 degrees Celsius) or 105 degrees (40.5 Celsius) on Wednesday and Thursday.

"With little to no cloud cover at night, the higher temperatures kind of hang around a little bit," Bishop said. That creates a cycle in which "the next day is going to be a little bit warmer because we're already starting off warmer than the previous day."

The latest forecast for Seattle also showed predicted highs easing a bit from earlier predictions. The weather service said the high for Wednesday would be 91 degrees (32.8 Celsius) and 94 (34.4 Celsius) on Thursday.

The Northwest is better known for its fall, winter and spring rainy seasons. Even July and August are relatively mild months. But the powerful high-pressure system arrived just at the height of summer.

Portland's light-rail trains are operating at slower speeds amid concern that the heat will cause tracks to expand and risk a derailment. In exchange for the slow service, fare inspectors are not checking riders for tickets.

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Hun Taing uses the train to get to her job in downtown Portland, but she switched to an air-conditioned car because of the delays. She and a co-worker, Heather Heater, had a casual work meeting Wednesday at Director Park, dipping their toes in the fountain as children splashed in the water.

They both have air conditioning at home — something they once lacked — and expressed more concern for the homeless and elderly than for their personal comfort.

"I was in an apartment without AC when I just had my twins, and it was really difficult," Taing said. "We had to pack ourselves in the car and just go somewhere, drive somewhere, because that apartment on the second floor was too hot for the infants."

Heater, who endures jokes about her last name, said having air conditioning was a requirement when she moved to the fourth floor in a recently constructed apartment building.

Anna Miller, 27, lives in an older brick building — a situation faced by many young renters in Portland.

"It's going to be pretty warm, but I'll probably just go to a bar before going home," said Miller, who wore a scarf and long sleeves outdoors Wednesday because the morning was chilly and she works in an air-conditioned office as an administrative assistant.

Forecasters had warned that Seattle could see its highest temperatures since the 1890s. The city has recorded only three days at 100 degrees (38 degrees Celsius) or higher in the more than a century, according to the weather service.

The Pacific Northwest's largest city opened about 30 cooling centers in air-conditioned libraries and senior centers. Seattle officials also encouraged people to use more than two dozen wading pools and spray parks.

Outside an Amazon warehouse in Kent, Washington, hundreds of people lined up in a hot parking lot for a job fair, waiting to enter an air conditioned tent to check in. One potential applicant left after being told he couldn't leave his dog in his car, even with the windows open.

Ron Joslin, 55, of Tacoma, broiled in a lavender shirt and striped tie as he waited. He's been out of work since April, but the forecast almost kept him from the job fair, he said. His wife insisted he go.

"She heard about it on the news and was like, 'You need to go there.' I said, 'It's going to be 100 degrees.' She said, 'You need to go there.' She's tired of me being around the house."

Amazon took lengths to keep the potential employees comfortable, handing out iced bottles of water. Some temporary workers hired for the day ferried trays of cups overflowing with blue, red and yellow shaved ice to the sweltering applicants from a truck playing steel-drum music.

In the state capital of Olympia, 66-year-old Dave Thysell was two-thirds of the way through a 13-mile walk, a trek he said he made earlier than he usually does.

"I never exercise early, but today I did," he said Wednesday. "I don't like the extreme heat." In Olympia, "anything above 75 or 80 is too much."

Temperatures in the capital were supposed to be in the upper 90s Wednesday and surpassing the 100-degree mark on Thursday.

In spite of the scorching conditions, Thysell said he's not rushing out to buy an air conditioner. Even if he wanted to, most stores are sold out.

Associated Press writers Gene Johnson in Seattle and Rachel La Corte in Olympia, Washington, contributed to this report.

Vote tampering claims jolt Venezuela on eve of new assembly

By **FABIOLA SANCHEZ** and **CHRISTINE ARMARIO**, Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Revelations on Wednesday that turnout figures were apparently manipulated in a crucial vote for an all-powerful constituent assembly in Venezuela cast a deeper shadow over the controversial body shortly before it was to convene.

The official count of voters in Sunday's election was off by at least 1 million, according to the head of the voting technology firm Smartmatic — a finding certain to sow further discord over a body that has

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been granted vast authority to rewrite Venezuela's constitution and override every branch of government.

Results recorded by Smartmatic's systems and those reported by Venezuela's National Electoral Council show "without any doubt" that the official turnout figure of more than 8 million voters was tampered with, company CEO Antonio Mugica told reporters in London. The international software company has provided voting technology in Venezuela since 2004.

Mugica said there was a 1 million vote discrepancy, but he did not specify whether his company's figures showed 1 million fewer, or 1 million more, voters participated in the election.

"Even in moments of deep political conflict and division we have been satisfied with the voting process and the count has been completely accurate" previously in Venezuela, Mugica said. "It is, therefore, with the deepest regret that we have to report that the turnout figures on Sunday, 30 July, for the constituent assembly in Venezuela were tampered with."

Tibisay Lucena, the head of the National Electoral Council, dismissed Smartmatic's claim, calling it an "opinion" of a company that played only a secondary role in the election and had no access to complete data. "A company located outside the country does not guarantee the transparency and credibility of the Venezuelan electoral system," she said.

Hours later, President Nicolas Maduro accused Smartmatic of bowing to U.S. pressure to "stain" the election results. Standing behind the electoral council's voter count, he proclaimed that an additional 2 million Venezuelans would have cast ballots if they hadn't been stopped by roadblocks erected by the socialist government's opponents.

"Nothing and no one can stop the victory of the people!" Maduro said to applause from 500 members of the new assembly.

The president also announced that the assembly's installation was being delayed by a day, convening on Friday instead of Thursday in order to "organize it well in peace and tranquility." The electoral council also must still provide 35 members with their credentials, he said.

Smartmatic's claim drew an immediate reaction from opposition leaders who have contended since Sunday's results were announced that the National Electoral Council inflated the turnout count. Julio Borges, president of the opposition-controlled National Assembly, said lawmakers were asking the nation's chief prosecutor to investigate election commission members for potential crimes.

"They are going to install a fraudulent constitutional assembly and no one can say with certitude that these people ... were those who won or if they were the product of a scheme," Borges said.

Even before Smartmatic's allegations, there were growing doubts over the official turnout count. The opposition — a sizeable portion of the population — boycotted the vote, and an independent exit poll concluded that less than half the government's figure cast ballots. Opposition leaders said counts from observers stationed in each municipality also suggested the government's numbers were inflated.

In an election in which virtually all the candidates were supporters of Maduro's ruling socialist party, turnout was one of the only indicators of how much popular support the constituent assembly might have.

Luis Emilio Rondon, one of five members on the electoral commission and the only who has sided with the opposition, said Tuesday that he had grave doubts about the accuracy of the count, in part because the commission had ordered fewer audits than in previous elections. He also said it did not use permanent ink to mark voters' fingers to ensure no one voted twice.

The electoral council has provided a total vote count and lists of individual winners but no details on how many votes each person received, or how many votes were cast in each region, as it has in previous elections.

"The controls that make our electoral system robust were, by and large, relaxed, and in some cases, eliminated," Rondon said.

Mugica said his company's automated election system is designed to show when results are manipulated but requires that a large number of auditors participate, from both the ruling and opposition parties, which he said did not happen during Sunday's vote.

"This would not have occurred if the auditors of all political parties had been present at every stage of

the election," he said.

Smartmatic, which supplies services worldwide, was founded by Venezuelans in Caracas and began providing voting technology during the presidency of the late Hugo Chavez, who installed the nation's current socialist government. In the past, opposition members have questioned the validity of results, but the firm has maintained its impartiality.

Luis Vicente Leon, president of Datanalysis, a Caracas-based polling agency, said Smartmatic's finding was, "without a doubt, the most devastating pronouncement yet for the credibility" of the nation's electoral council.

Maduro called the vote in May after weeks of protests fed by anger at his government over food shortages, triple-digit inflation and high crime. He has argued that the body will help end the violence and protests that have left at least 125 dead, while also vowing the use the system to target enemies and solidify Venezuela as a socialist state.

Despite the unrest and plummeting popularity ratings, Maduro appears to have maintained the full support of the country's most important institutions, notably the armed forces. Top military figures have been given special status and are scattered throughout the government. They also are in charge of strategic areas such as food distribution in which Venezuelans say bribery is widespread.

Associated Press writer Fabiola Sanchez reported this story in Caracas and AP writer Leonore Schick reported from London.

Christine Armario on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/cearmario>

Fabiola Sanchez on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/fisanchez>

Japan's Cabinet gets makeover as support for Abe dips

By MARI YAMAGUCHI and ELAINE KURTENBACH, Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe reshuffled his Cabinet on Thursday, seeking to repair his tattered approval ratings by installing well-known moderates in key roles.

Abe said he would focus on bread-and-butter issues such as jobs, a pledge he's made in the past only to prioritize conservative issues such as amending the constitution.

"We will put the economy first," Abe told reporters after the newly installed Cabinet posed for a customary inaugural photo in morning coats and formal gowns. "There's much left to do."

Abe said the appointments were made after deep reflection, based on the ministers' strengths and experience.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga, a key power broker who retained his post, announced the new lineup. It's Abe's fourth since he took office in late 2012. The last Cabinet was appointed about a year ago.

Public approval ratings for Abe and his Liberal Democratic Party have suffered after a spate of scandals over alleged cronyism and other abuses.

While the party enjoys wide support and is seen as the only realistic option given the lack of a united, popular opposition, many Japanese object to the Liberal Democrats' tendency to force unpopular legislation through parliament.

Koichi Nakano, an international politics professor at Sophia University in Tokyo who is often critical of the ruling party, said the lineup was "dull" and defensive in nature.

"Abe's cornered and one of the main goals of the reshuffle was to remove problematic ministers, although Mr. Abe himself is the root of many problems," Nakano said.

Experts said they expect work on Abe's pet conservative causes, such as strengthening the role of the military, will continue behind the scenes.

The shakeup reflects Abe's recognition that despite the Liberal Democrats' overwhelming majority in parliament, his own once seemingly invincible position after more than four years in office may be imperiled.

Sweeping reforms meant to rejuvenate the sluggish economy and cope with Japan's slow birthrate and

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aging, shrinking population have made little headway as Abe instead focused on other issues such as revising the pacifist constitution.

In Japan, choice Cabinet positions tend to be distributed among factions that operate almost like political fiefdoms within the ruling party, and this time is no different.

Of 19 Cabinet members, 14 were newly named. But many are party or Cabinet veterans, including Itsunori Onodera, a former defense minister who again was named to that post.

Last week, Abe protege Tomomi Inada stepped down as defense minister after the ministry was found to have covered up information about risks faced by Japanese peacekeeping troops in South Sudan.

Onodera's expertise is viewed as an asset at a time of growing tensions over North Korea and its launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Abe also chose several popular lawmakers known to differ from him on key issues such as nuclear power.

The new foreign minister, Taro Kono, is mildly liberal-leaning and has opposed nuclear energy, though he toned down his stance while serving as reform minister in an earlier Abe Cabinet.

A politics graduate of Georgetown University, Kono is fluent in English. He is probably best known for being the son of Yohei Kono, a former speaker of the lower house who also served as foreign minister.

Kono's predecessor, Fumio Kishida, who had also taken on the defense minister post after Inada stepped down, opted out of this Cabinet and is widely thought to be aiming for a shot at becoming prime minister.

So is Seiko Noda, who was named minister for internal affairs and communications and has served in several past Cabinets.

Noda challenged Abe for leadership of the ruling party in 2015. Although a conservative, she's a strong advocate of economic and other reforms to counter Japan's falling birthrate and promote gender equality, qualities Abe said he appreciates.

He said that he and Noda had survived "difficult times together."

"Between us we can talk about anything. She tells me the kind of things that are rather painful to my ears," he said.

Yoshimasa Hayashi, another fluent English speaker and former agriculture minister, was appointed to head the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. He has headed several government agencies, including defense, farm and economic and fiscal policy.

Former Justice Minister Yoko Kamikawa took the job once again after a hiatus.

Both Hayashi and Kamikawa hold master's degrees in public administration from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

AP Exclusive: Inside a nerve-rattling trip to pay pot taxes

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD, Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Jerred Kiloh's eyes narrowed as he checked his mirror again. The black Chevy SUV with tinted windows was still behind him.

It had been hanging off Kiloh's bumper ever since he nosed out of the parking lot behind his medical-marijuana dispensary with \$40,131.88 in cash in the trunk of his hatchback.

Kiloh was unarmed, on his way to City Hall to make a monthly tax payment, and managing only stop-and-start progress in the midday traffic. He was afraid of one thing above all else: getting robbed.

That fear is a constant part of doing business in California's flourishing medical cannabis industry, in which transactions are conducted mostly in cash, sometimes in stunningly large amounts.

"The thing I need the least right now is to have to go through any sort of money disappearing," Kiloh said.

On Jan. 1, recreational pot will become legal in California, creating what could be the world's largest legitimate marijuana economy. It comes more than two decades after the state gave its blessing to medicinal cannabis.

But the emerging marketplace with a projected \$7 billion value has a potentially crippling flaw: Many people who work in it can't use a bank. Banks don't want the risks of doing business with companies whose product remains illegal under federal law.

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So while the sneaker shop next door to Kiloh's storefront on Ventura Boulevard can send a check to City Hall to cover its taxes, or wire the money from a laptop, Kiloh has to make a stress-filled, 15-mile (24-kilometer) freeway drive each month to downtown Los Angeles.

California is to marijuana what Iowa is to corn, and what Kentucky is to bourbon — the nation's bud basket, its heartland for production. The transformation of such a vast illegal economy into a legal one hasn't been witnessed since the end of Prohibition in 1933.

The state expects to collect \$1 billion in new tax revenue annually from pot within a few years. In L.A. — which is already estimated to have anywhere from 1,000 to 1,700 medical marijuana dispensaries, only about 200 of which paid city taxes in 2016 — the take is projected at \$50 million next year alone.

However, governments will almost certainly miss out on money without an easy, secure way for businesses to pay. With no bank records, it will be harder for regulators to track funds and identify shady operators. And those who operate by the book will be undercut by those who don't.

Without banks, "everyone loses," said Nicole Howell Neubert, a marijuana industry lawyer.

Kiloh, a 40-year-old with a graying mohawk and a degree in economics, counts 15 years in the pot industry as a seller and cultivator and is a partner and business manager at a San Francisco dispensary and the owner of the one in Los Angeles.

In the absence of a bank, Kiloh has become his own.

Twist and turn through a warren of rooms inside his shop, go through a door with a keypad lock, and you will come to a closet-like space that contains twin steel vaults, standing head-high. The walls around them are reinforced with steel.

Overhead, more than 50 cameras scan his offices and hallways and keep watch outside the building as well. An armed guard stands at the door to the sales floor.

On a typical day, \$15,000 can change hands in his dispensary, where a steady stream of customers pick from shelves stocked with 700 products, from fragrant buds and perfectly rolled joints to cannabis-infused lip balm and potent concentrates known as "shatter" that look like thin sheets of amber glass.

For Kiloh, the cash is a daily hassle. It needs to be counted repeatedly to safeguard against loss. State and local taxes must be set aside and stored, sometimes for a month or more. When vendors show up, they get paid in cash, too.

"When now everyone makes payments through their cellphone, it's tough to see that I'm left to the archaic version of counting money," he said.

With all the cash on hand — he grossed \$4 million last year — crime is a gnawing fear. His dispensary on a bustling commercial strip has been robbed twice — once by thieves breaking in through the roof.

The Los Angeles Police Department did not immediately respond to a request for statistics on crimes against marijuana dispensaries, and many cases are believed to go unreported anyway, since many businesses are loath to go to the police.

Last year, though, a dispensary owner shot and wounded two armed men during a holdup in the Los Angeles suburbs. And a security guard at a dispensary was killed in an attempted robbery in Aurora, Colorado, another one of the nine states to legalize recreational pot.

To keep criminals guessing, Kiloh avoids arriving at the same time each day and staggers the times he leaves. He goes in and out different doors. He keeps an eye on cars parked around his shop.

Once a month, Kiloh telephones to make arrangements to drop off his tax payment at the city Finance Department, which gets 6 percent of his gross revenue. They want to know he's coming — it's dangerous for them, too. The agency has seen bags of cash from pot businesses as large as \$300,000 come through the door.

His journey to the tax office starts at a windowless back room at his shop, where stacks of \$20 bills flip through the counting machine at his desk with the whir-slap-whir-slap of a weed-whacker.

He and his staff then wrap the bills into neat \$2,000 bundles and wedge them into a long cardboard box, which is then covered in plain paper and stuffed into a shoulder bag that goes into the trunk.

From the moment he pulls out of his parking lot, he is watching, assessing.

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"I find myself looking in my rear-view mirror hundreds of more times than I usually would in just normal traffic, making sure that I'm not being followed," Kiloh said.

"That's what a lot of this industry has been about: Just stay under the radar, and that's your best defense. That's your best kind of safety."

It was on Kiloh's drive to City Hall in late June that he noticed the ominous-looking Chevy. He watched it intently, taking note of the man behind the wheel — glasses, mid-40s to 50s — as he leaned into the accelerator.

Eventually, the Chevy disappeared, but Kiloh wasn't home free yet.

Exiting the freeway, he tried to enter a parking lot near City Hall but was turned away, forcing him farther down the block.

Once inside a garage, he looped around until he found a spot near a stairwell. Lifting his satchel from his trunk, he scurried toward the door.

"I try to not stay in confined places like an elevator, so I'd rather take the standard stairs, plus the standard stairs have video cameras," he said.

The steps opened to a sun-soaked plaza teeming with people. With the cash over his shoulder, he made his way briskly toward City Hall, his head swiveling.

"It's tough when people make eye contact with you," he said. "There is always the fear of what do they know?"

Kiloh spotted a police officer walking across the plaza — an instant source of comfort.

Finally at the granite-faced tower, Kiloh darted up the steps and slipped behind a pair of glass-and-wood doors. He emerged about 20 minutes later, his tax bill paid, and drew in a slow, deep breath.

"You just feel the relief," he said, "to know that I don't have to look over my shoulder."

Malaysia central bank urged to reopen probe on indebted fund

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Malaysian opposition lawmakers urged the central bank Thursday to reopen its investigation into indebted state investment fund 1MDB that is being probed in several countries for money laundering and implicating Prime Minister Najib Razak.

Some 30 lawmakers staged a protest march from Parliament to the central bank, holding up a banner that read "Love Malaysia, hate kleptocracy." Opposition leader Wan Azizah Wan Ismail said the central bank must reopen its probe based on evidence in the U.S. court filing.

The 1MDB fund has been at the center of investigations in the U.S. and several countries amid allegations of a global embezzlement and money-laundering scheme. Najib started the fund shortly after taking office in 2009 to promote economic development projects but the fund accumulated billions in debts over the years.

The U.S. Justice Department says at least \$3.5 billion has been stolen from 1MDB by people close to Najib and has initiated action to seize \$1.3 billion it says was taken from the fund to buy assets in the U.S. The government complaints also say that more than \$700 million has landed in the accounts of "Malaysian Official 1." They did not name the official, but appear to be referring to Najib.

The central bank "must be neutral and cannot protect any parties," Wan Azizah Wan Ismail said.

The Justice Department's court filing shows much of the wealth in question was moved through offshore dealings and bank accounts in Singapore, Switzerland, Luxembourg and the U.S. The evidence cited includes details of wire transfers of hundreds of millions of dollars.

It also says the wife of "Malaysian Official 1" received a 22-carat pink diamond necklace worth \$27.3 million in 2014 purchased with from funds stolen from 1MDB.

During Thursday's protest march, lawmakers held paper cutouts in the shape of a pink diamond with the wordings: "The biggest robbery in the world."

Najib has resisted calls for him to resign and remains firmly in control by clamping down on critics and because of unwavering support of most ruling party members.

His real test will come in general elections due in mid-2018. Najib's ruling coalition won the last elections

in 2013 but lost the popular vote to an opposition coalition.

Germany blasts Vietnam over 'kidnap' of former oil executive

By GEIR MOULSON, Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — The German government accused Vietnamese intelligence services of involvement in what it called the kidnapping in Berlin of a former Vietnamese oil executive, and gave the country's intelligence attache 48 hours to leave Germany.

Trinh Xuan Thanh, 51, disappeared in July last year after he was accused of mismanagement at a subsidiary of national oil and gas giant PetroVietnam, resulting in losses of some \$150 million. Vietnamese police issued an arrest warrant in September.

This week, Vietnamese authorities said he turned himself in to police in his homeland on Monday.

German authorities, however, believe that he was kidnapped in Berlin on July 23. They say that he had sought asylum in Germany — an application that hadn't yet been processed — and that Vietnamese authorities had sought his extradition.

"There is no longer any serious doubt about the participation of the Vietnamese intelligence services and the embassy ... in the kidnapping of a Vietnamese citizen in Berlin," German Foreign Ministry spokesman Martin Schaefer told reporters Wednesday.

The kidnapping, he added, "is an unprecedented and flagrant violation of German and international law" and "has the potential to negatively influence relations in a massive way."

Vietnam's ambassador was summoned to the foreign ministry on Tuesday and was told that Germany demanded that Thanh be returned so that the asylum and extradition proceedings could be conducted properly.

Schaefer said that German and Vietnamese officials had met on the sidelines of the Group of 20 summit on July 7-8 to discuss Hanoi's wish to have Thanh extradited.

Germany is declaring the intelligence attache at Vietnam's embassy persona non grata and demanding that he leave within 48 hours, Schaefer said.

"We reserve the right to draw further consequences if necessary at a political, economic and development policy level," he added.

Berlin prosecutors said they couldn't comment on the case beyond confirming that there is an investigation. Calls to the Vietnamese embassy in Berlin were not answered.

Thanh was chairman of PetroVietnam Construction Joint Stock Corporation until 2013 when he was appointed to several senior government positions, including vice chairman of Hau Giang province in the southern Mekong Delta.

He was elected to the National Assembly in May 2016, but was dismissed from the communist-dominated legislature before its first session the following month.

The ruling Communist Party and government have stepped up their anti-corruption drive over the past few years.

Asia shares fall as Apple's glossy earnings effect fades

By YURI KAGEYAMA, AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Asian markets mostly fell Thursday as the rally from news of Apple's strong earnings that spurred record highs for the Dow Jones industrial average faded. Myriad worries over China's rising debt, weaker commodity prices and possible rising tensions between Beijing and Washington overshadowed regional markets.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 edged down 0.4 percent to 20,004.00 in morning trading. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 slipped 0.2 percent to 5,730.20. South Korea's Kospi sank 1.6 percent to 2,389.04. Hong Kong's Hang Seng was down 0.1 percent at 27,570.83, while the Shanghai Composite was little changed, falling less than 0.1 percent to 3,283.32.

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WALL STREET: The Dow average rose 0.2 percent to a record 22,016.24. The Standard & Poor's 500 index, a much broader market measure used by most professional investors, added less than 0.1 percent to 2,477.57. The Nasdaq composite was flat at 6,362.65. The Russell 2000 index of smaller-company stocks shed 1.1 percent to 1,412.90.

THE QUOTE: "A moderation in the momentum of gains for U.S. indices could provide little to inspire Asian markets today," Jingyi Pan, market strategist at IG in Singapore, said in a commentary. "Asian markets had, as a whole, shown strong momentum since the start of the week built on data surprises. Having had an early rally following Apple Inc.'s surge yesterday, the regional IT sector may find limited room for gains despite the US lead."

ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. crude fell 9 cents to \$49.50 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It added 43 cents to \$49.59 overnight. Brent crude, the international standard, fell 15 cents to \$52.21 a barrel in London.

CURRENCIES: The dollar fell to 110.66 yen from 110.69 yen late Wednesday in Asia. The euro fell to \$1.1845 from \$1.1856.

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Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Aug. 3, the 215th day of 2017. There are 150 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On August 3, 1492, Christopher Columbus set sail from Palos, Spain, on a voyage that took him to the present-day Americas.

On this date:

In 1807, former Vice President Aaron Burr went on trial before a federal court in Richmond, Virginia, charged with treason. (He was acquitted less than a month later.)

In 1916, Irish-born British diplomat Roger Casement, a strong advocate of independence for Ireland, was hanged for treason.

In 1921, baseball commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis refused to reinstate the former Chicago White Sox players implicated in the "Black Sox" scandal, despite their acquittals in a jury trial.

In 1936, Jesse Owens of the United States won the first of his four gold medals at the Berlin Olympics as he took the 100-meter sprint.

In 1943, U.S. Army Lt. Gen. George S. Patton slapped a private at an army hospital in Sicily, accusing him of cowardice. (Patton was later ordered by Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower to apologize for this and a second, similar episode.)

In 1949, the National Basketball Association was formed as a merger of the Basketball Association of America and the National Basketball League.

In 1958, the nuclear-powered submarine USS Nautilus became the first vessel to cross the North Pole underwater.

In 1966, comedian Lenny Bruce, whose raunchy brand of satire and dark humor landed him in trouble with the law, was found dead in his Los Angeles home; he was 40.

In 1972, the U.S. Senate ratified the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union. (The U.S. unilaterally withdrew from the treaty in 2002.)

In 1981, U.S. air traffic controllers went on strike, despite a warning from President Ronald Reagan they would be fired, which they were.

In 1987, the Iran-Contra congressional hearings ended, with none of the 29 witnesses tying President Ronald Reagan directly to the diversion of arms-sales profits to Nicaraguan rebels.

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In 1994, Arkansas carried out the nation's first triple execution in 32 years. Stephen G. Breyer was sworn in as the Supreme Court's newest justice in a private ceremony at Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist's Vermont summer home.

Ten years ago: Toyota said its April-June 2007 profit had jumped 32.3 percent to a then-record high for a quarter, lifted by strong overseas sales and a weaker yen. Iraqis welcomed home their soccer team, which had won the Asian Cup.

Five years ago: The U.N. General Assembly overwhelmingly denounced Syria's crackdown on dissent in a symbolic effort meant to push the deadlocked Security Council and the world at large into action on stopping the country's civil war. Michael Phelps rallied to win the 100-meter butterfly for his third gold of the London Games and No. 17 of his career. Missy Franklin set a world record in the 200 backstroke for the 17-year-old's third gold in London. Falling at speeds of up to 220 mph, 138 skydivers shattered the vertical skydiving world record as they flew heads-down in a massive snowflake formation in northern Illinois. (This record was in turn eclipsed in 2015 by 164 skydivers plunging over central Illinois.)

One year ago: President Barack Obama cut short the sentences of 214 federal inmates, including 67 life sentences, in what the White House called the largest batch of commutations on a single day in more than a century. An Emirates Boeing 777 crash-landed in Dubai and caught fire; all 300 people on board survived, but one firefighter was killed.

Today's Birthdays: Football Hall of Fame coach Marv Levy is 92. Singer Tony Bennett is 91. Actor Martin Sheen is 77. College and Pro Football Hall of Famer Lance Alworth is 77. Lifestyle guru Martha Stewart is 76. Singer Beverly Lee (The Shirelles) is 76. Rock musician B.B. Dickerson is 68. Movie director John Landis is 67. Actress JoMarie Payton is 67. Actor Jay North (TV: "Dennis the Menace") is 66. Hockey Hall-of-Famer Marcel Dionne is 66. Country musician Randy Scruggs is 64. Actor Philip Casnoff is 63. Actor John C. McGinley is 58. Rock singer-musician Lee Rocker (The Stray Cats) is 56. Actress Lisa Ann Walter is 56. Rock singer James Hetfield (Metallica) is 54. Rock singer-musician Ed Roland (Collective Soul) is 54. Actor Isaiah Washington is 54. Country musician Dean Sams (Lonestar) is 51. Rock musician Stephen Carpenter (Deftones) is 47. Hip-hop artist Spinderella (Salt-N-Pepa) is 46. Actress Brigid Brannagh is 45. Actor Michael Ealy is 44. Country musician Jimmy De Martini (Zac Brown Band) is 41. NFL quarterback Tom Brady is 40. Actress Evangeline (ee-VAN'-gel-eeen) Lilly is 38. Actress Mamie Gummer is 34. Olympic gold medal swimmer Ryan Lochte is 33. Country singer Whitney Duncan is 33. Actor Jon Foster is 33. Actress Georgina Haig is 32. Singer Holly Arnstein (Dream) is 32. Actress Tanya Fischer is 32. Pop-rock musician Brent Kutzle (OneRepublic) is 32. Rapper D.R.A.M. is 29.

Thought for Today: "The man who insists on seeing with perfect clearness before he decides, never decides." — Henri Frederic Amiel (ahn-REE' fred-deh-REEK' ah-mee-EL'), Swiss critic (1821-1881).