

Groton Daily Independent

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Official Notices

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- Groton Area School (updated 8-29)**
- Westport Town (updated 8-21-17)**
- Other Notices (updated 8-21)**
- Frederick Town (Updated 8-15)**
- Groton Area School (updated 8-7)**
- 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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Senior Menu: Hearty vegetable beef soup, chicken salad sandwich, mandarin oranges, oatmeal raisin cookie.

School Breakfast: Mini pancakes, fruit, milk and juice.

School Lunch: Sub sandwiches, baked chips, fruit.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 7 p.m.

United Methodist: Coffee fellowship, 9 a.m.; Finance Meeting, 6 p.m.

Lions Bar Bingo: 6:30 p.m. at the Groton Legion.

Groton Christian & Missionary Alliance: 7 p.m.: Program for children up to sixth grade, youth group for 7th-12th grade, adult Bible Study.

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Senior Menu: Roast pork, baked potato with sour cream, squash, Molasses cookie, whole wheat bread.

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

School Lunch: Cheese sticks, sweet tots, romaine salad, fruit.

Cross Country: at Lee Park, Aberdeen, 4 p.m.

7th Football: at Aberdeen Central, 4 p.m.

Volleyball: hosts Hamlin, C and JV at 6 p.m. followed by varsity match.

St. John's Lutheran: Soup, Pie and Sandwich, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., at the church.

Olive Grove: Gun Club Golfing



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Allen McKiver, Owner ~ 605/397-4404

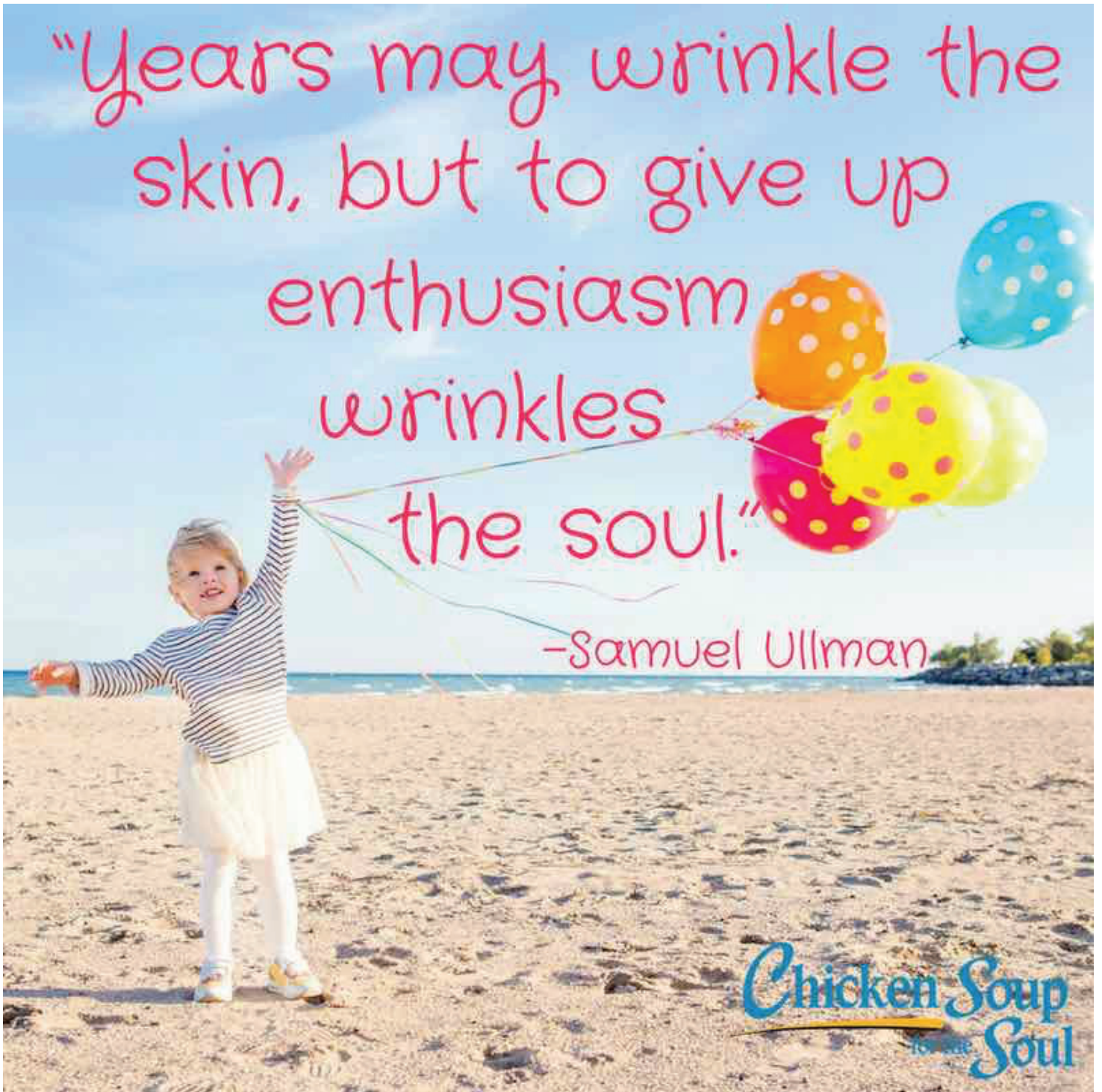
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"Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul."

-Samuel Ullman

Chicken Soup
for the Soul



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Sherry Koehler was one of the 30 volunteers who donated blood at the Groton Blood Drive on August 24.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

Blood drive nets 36 units

Blood drive coordinator Kathy Sundermeyer has coordinated a very successful blood drive. The drive held in Groton on August 24th saw 30 people volunteer to donate blood and 29 were able to give. Seven people gave blood on the automated 2RBC machine that collects two units of red blood cells which resulted in 36 total products.

According to Fern Elofson, Donor Recruitment Representative for United Blood Services, "Communities like Groton make a regional blood program work. People volunteer to donate when there has been a well-organized campaign, informing the public of the need for blood."

Rose Locke called and made appointments for donors. A special thank you goes to Ken's Fairway for donating juice and cookies. Space to hold the drive was provided at the American Legion.

On behalf of the patients who benefited, United Blood Services appreciates all the thoughtful people who volunteered to help others by giving of themselves. To sign up for your next life-saving blood donation appointment, please go to www.unitedblood-services.org.

Blood is for sharing; you have truly given the "Gift of Life."

2017 Groton Area Elementary

Preschool Developmental Screening for 3 year olds

September 20 and 21

Parents of children age 3 in the Groton Area School District are asked to contact Heidi Krueger at the Groton Area Elementary School during school hours at 397-2317 to either confirm their screening time or set up a time. Letters will be send out the week of September 10. If your child is already receiving services or enrolled at Groton Elementary School they will not need to be screened. If your child has already been screened but you have concerns please contact the elementary school. If you are new to the district and have a child under the age of 5, we also ask you to contact the elementary school.

The Developmental Screening will take place at the Groton Area High School Arena. Please park and use the east entrance to the arena.



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Groton Area Homecoming Candidates

Groton Area High School homecoming coronation will be held Monday, September 18 at 7:30 p.m.

Candidates are, back from left, Marshall Lane, Jackson Oliver, Luke Thorson, Seric Shabazz, and Brandon Keith.

Front from left, Alex Stange, Harleigh Stange, Jessica Bjerke, Hannah Lewandowski, and Gia Gengerke.

Groton Area Elementary Homecoming Dress-up Days

Week of Sept. 18, 2017

Monday: College day (support your local or favorite college)

Tuesday: Jersey day (wear your favorite jersey)

Wednesday: Wild, wacky hair day

Thursday: Class Color day

(K- Black; 1st- Orange; 2nd- Yellow; 3rd- Red; 4th- Blue; 5th Pink; Staff- Brown)

Friday: Spirit day- Show your Groton Tiger pride! Wear black and gold.

Please make sure all dress-up clothing is school and weather appropriate.

Updated

Two Grotonnites to receive Governor's Award

Two Grotonnites will receive a Governor's Award in October.

Groton Area's Meri Erickson and former Grotonnite Koni Sims, daughter of Chuck and LaVonne Raap, Groton, will be recognized by the Governor for their contributions to the rehabilitation and employment of South Dakotans with disabilities at the 2017 Governor's Awards ceremony on Oct. 3.

The event will be held the Ramkota Hotel ballroom located at 920 W. Sioux Ave. in Pierre starting at 12:30p.m. CDT.

Gov. Daugaard will present awards to the following 2017 recipients:

- Koni Sims of Sioux Falls - Outstanding Citizen with a Disability
- Tami Francis of Sioux Falls - Outstanding Employee with a Disability
- Pizza Ranch of Spearfish - Outstanding Private Employer (Small Employer)
- Country Fair Food Store of Mitchell - Outstanding Private Employer (Large Employer)
- Meri Erickson of Groton - Outstanding Transition Services Award
- Yankton Area Mental Wellness, Inc. of Yankton - Distinguished Service Award

The Governor's Awards ceremony is co-sponsored by the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, the Statewide Independent Living Council, and DHS.



Meri Erickson



Koni Raap Sims



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")**

Help Wanted

Full- or part-time for the following positions: Healthcare workers for Nurse's-RN or LPN, and Nursing Assistants. **New Wage Package!** (12 hour shifts/rotating weekends for nurses and C.N.A.s)

Contact Jessica Lindskov or Nellie Peterson at 605-397-2365 or apply in person.

EOE/AA/M/F/V/D-Drug Free Workplace



GROTON
CARE & REHABILITATION CENTER

**1106 N. 2nd Street, Groton
605-397-2365**

Groton Area wins battle of the Tigers

Groton Area's volleyball team went to 5-1 on the season with a 3-0 win over Mobridge-Pollock in a match played in Groton on Tuesday.

The varsity match was carried live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Olson Developmen, Allied Climate Professionals with Kevin Nehls, Grain Solutions with Jesse Zak, Blocker Construction, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency, Milbrandt Enterprises Inc., Hanlon Brothers of Groton and Verdon, James Valley Seed with Doug Jorgensen, Erickson Insurance Agency and Bahr Spray Foam and Construction. Make sure you tell these sponsors thank you and that you patronize them as well.

Game scores were 25-9, 25-12 and 25-17. Groton Area won the junior varsity match by game scores of 25-8 and 25-11. Mobridge-Pollock won the C match by game scores of 14-25, 25-19 and 15-7.

In the varsity match, Groton Area was 64 of 75 in serving with 16 ace serves. Jennie Doeden was 14 of 16 with five ace serves, Jessica Bjerke was 11 of 13 with four ace serves and Gia Gengerke was 10 of 13 with four ace serves. Mobridge-Pollock was 29 of 32 with two ace serves. Molly Lahren was five of six with two ace serves.

In sets, Groton Area was 71 of 74 with 35 assists. Miranda Hanson was 64 of 66 with 33 assists. Mobridge-Pollock was 40 of 41 with seven assists. Alex Steiger was 40 of 41 with seven assists.

Groton Area was 76 of 82 in attacks with 37 kills. Jessica Bjerke was 19 of 21 with nine kills and Nicole Marzahn was 15 of 15 with eight kills. Mobridge-Pollock was 33 of 43 in attacks with nine kills. Kaycee Redmond was three of seven with three kills and Molly Lahren was seven of nine with two kills.

Groton Area had 36 digs with Payton Maine and Jessica Bjerke each having eight. Mobridge-Pollock had 19 digs with Molly Lahren having seven.

Groton Area had four blocks with Nicole Marzahn having one solo and one assist, Gia Gengerke had three blocks and Taylor Holm had one. Mobridge-Pollock had two blocks by Megan Zahn.

Groton Area will host Hamlin on Thursday.

Redfield Golf Tourney

Four Groton Area golfers took part in the Redfield Golf Tourney held Tuesday. Cade Guthmiller shot a 99 with 49 in the front nine and 50 in the back nine. Tristan Traphagen shot a 49 in the front nine and a 51 in the back nine for a score of 100. Hunter Kassube shot a 51 in the front nine and a 50 in the back nine for a total score of 101. Lucas Simon shot a 51 in the front nine and a 51 in the back nine for a total score of 103.



The Homecoming 2017 royalty finalists are: (back row, from left) Laura Springer, Tom Waldo, Camille Sippel, David Schuler, Olivia Beier, Jon Freese, Taylor Boesiger, Derek Kane, Alex Janvrin and Francisco Garcia; (front row, from left) Shayne Arriola, Olivia Bond, Grant Uehling, Janae Aune, Matthew Server, Brianna Ridenour, Laurel Oetken, Alex Fernando, Said-Nuriddin Makhmudzoda and Evann Vrana. (Greg Nathan/University Communications)

Camille Sippel of Groton chosen as Homecoming royalty finalist at Nebraska

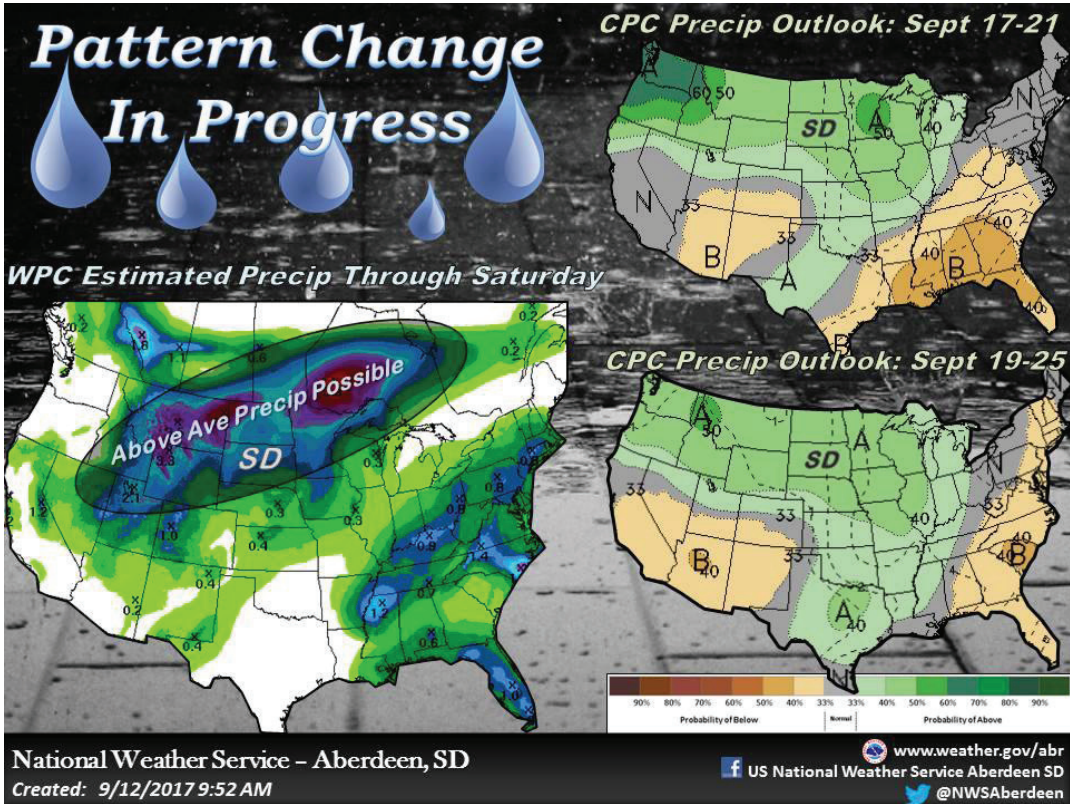
LINCOLN, NE (09/12/2017)-- Camille Sippel of Groton has been selected as a candidate for Homecoming queen at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Sippel, a senior economics major, is the daughter of Marc and Franne Sippel.

The Homecoming king and queen will be elected by the student body in an online vote Sept. 21. They will be crowned Sept. 23 at halftime of the Nebraska-Rutgers football game, which kicks off at 2:30 p.m. at Memorial Stadium.

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A large-scale pattern change currently developing will soon lead to generally wetter weather across much of the northern US, and could persist through much of September. This new pattern has the potential to bring some much needed relief to those impacted by drought, wildfires and smoke.



**Soup, Pie,
& Sandwich
\$2.00 per item**

St. John's Lutheran Church
Groton, SD
Thursday, September 14th

11:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.
Craft Items – Baked Goodies –
Garden Produce

Soups available:
Chili, Wild Rice,
Potato, Ham & Bean

**For take-out orders, please call
397-2386 at 10:30 a.m. or after.**

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Granary Rural Cultural Center - Groton, S.D.

LIVING HISTORY FALL FESTIVAL

See The Past Come Alive!



Saturday, September 23, 2017

11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

FREE ADMISSION

COME DRESSED IN FRONTIER COSTUME—GET A PRIZE!

Fun for All Ages! Reenactment, Demonstrations,
Hands On Activities, Spelling Bee at 2:30 p.m.,
Square Dance Lessons with Art Marmorstein
Pie Social from 1-4 p.m., Music & More!

NEW!

... As if you were there!

**PRESIDENT TEDDY
ROOSEVELT**

Played by Arch Ellwein of Flyin' Lion Productions



PERFORMANCES at 1 & 3 p.m.

Program made possible by: South Dakota Humanities Council
(An affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities)



Stop by for Lunch! Concessions by: **THE BRASS KETTLE**



THE GRANARY - Physical Address: 40161 128th St., Rural Groton
The Arts & Culture Campus of Dacotah Prairie Museum
Museum Website: www.dacotahpraiemuseum.com • Granary Website: granaryfinearts.org



THINKING ABOUT HEALTH

Hospitals May Get Accredited Even With Poor, Unsafe Care

By Trudy Lieberman, Rural Health News Service

Earlier this year an Illinois woman sent an email telling me of the poor care her husband received at a large Chicago hospital. After six weeks of fighting for his life, he died.

"I wish you could see his records and all the infections and surgeries he had," she told me. "I've been wanting to do something about the care he got and just didn't know who to go to."

I return to this topic from time to time because everyone is vulnerable to hospital mistakes. Most people think of hospitals as safe, loving places that advertise their miracle cures on TV and build new wings to house the latest technology. How can things go wrong? But they do, and readers of this column have been eager to share their experiences.

Increasingly, it's becoming clear there are few places patients and their families can turn for help in avoiding bad care and equally important there's almost no guidance from state or the federal regulators. When news outlets try to write about unsafe hospitals, they run into a "veil of secrecy that protects the industry" as one reporter in Michigan put it.

The Wall Street Journal has just published a fine story that begins to lift that veil.

Not many Americans know that the federal government has turned over the task of accrediting most of the nation's hospitals to a private organization called the Joint Commission, which is funded by hospitals and governed by a board of directors some of whom are executives in the health systems it accredits.

Medicare requires hospitals to comply with safety standards, and they can use state inspections or hire a government-approved accrediting body to show they are in compliance. Most have chosen the latter.

Hospitals have a lot of skin in this game paying the Commission an annual fee between \$1,500 and \$37,000 depending on how big they are, the Journal reported. They also pay for the inspections, which in 2015 cost on average \$18,000.

The Joint Commission awards a "Gold Seal of Approval" to those facilities that meet its standards. Maybe you've seen them when you've visited a hospital. It encourages hospitals to use those accreditations in their marketing activities, even providing them with a publicity kit. The Commission has also created a patient brochure with this reassuring message, "Whenever and wherever you receive health care, look for The Joint Commission Gold Seal of Approval."

However, the Journal found that those seals of approval can be misleading. Using information from inspection records, reporters found that in 2014 some 350 hospitals had Joint Commission accreditation even though they were in violation of Medicare safety requirements, and 60 percent of them had safety violations in the preceding three years.

It seems that most patients facing an operation or a hospital stay would want to know that. Dr. Mark Chassin, president and chief executive of the Joint Commission, told the Journal that his organization doesn't routinely withdraw accreditation of hospitals with safety problems because its focus is less on regulating or penalizing and more on preventing problems.

And this brings us back to that age-old problem: Should a government regulate business, including hospitals which have become very big businesses - or should it provide information so buyers, or in this case patients, can compare the offerings and make decent choices? Opponents of regulation argue that providing information is best.

In the case of hospitals, though, patients have neither regulation nor information. The Journal's reporting shows that the Joint Commission's inspection process often lets hospitals keep their accreditation even as they deliver poor care. At the same time, the Joint Commission has continually refused to make its hospital inspection reports public. So if patients are supposed to do their homework before undergoing health procedures, it's a fair question to ask: How should they do that?

Earlier this year the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services proposed a rule that would have required the Joint Commission to make its inspection records public. The agency cited serious concerns about the

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Commission's ability to identify safety problems. The Commission opposed the regulation, arguing it would make its work harder. Hospitals opposed it, too.

CMS heard their pleas and withdrew the proposal leaving patients in the same information vacuum they were in before.

Earlier this year Ashish Jha, a professor of health policy at the T. H. Chan School of Public Health at Harvard, told me he had no idea which hospital in New York City had the lowest risk of safety problems. At best he could only make a rough guess. He told the Journal its findings show "accreditation is basically meaningless – it doesn't mean a hospital is safe."

What kind of information would you like to see about safety and quality of care at your local hospital? Write to Trudy at trudy.lieberman@gmail.com.



Yard of the Week

The Groton Community Center was chosen as the Yard of the Week last week by the members of the Groton Garden Club. Pictured are Lee Schinkel and Ruby Donovan, care-takers of the flowers around the Groton Community Center. (Photo by Tina Kosel)

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Today in Weather History

September 13, 1928: An estimated F4 tornado traveled across Yankton and Turner County. An entire farm was swept away just as the family was about to enter the storm cellar. A man and his daughter were killed. A woman was killed in the town of Davis, in Turner County. Nine homes were destroyed, 52 were damaged, and 13 people were injured in Davis.

1922 - The temperature at El Azizia in Libya soared to 136 degrees to establish a world record. To make matters worse, a severe ghibi (dust storm) was in progress. (The Weather Channel)

1928 - Hurricane San Felipe crossed Puerto Rico resulting in the highest winds, the heaviest rains, and the greatest destruction in years. The hurricane produced much damage in the Virgin Islands, and later hit the Bahamas and Florida. (David Ludlum)

1944: The destroyer USS Warrington was sunk by the Great Atlantic Hurricane 300 miles east of Cape Canaveral, Florida. 247 men were lost in the tragedy.

1984 - Hurricane Diana, after making a complete loop off the Carolina coast, made landfall and moved across eastern North Carolina. Diana deluged Cape Fear with more than eighteen inches of rain, and caused 78 million dollars damage in North Carolina. (Storm Data)






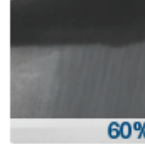

1987 - Showers and thunderstorms produced heavy rain in the northeastern U.S. Flooding was reported in Vermont, New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Greenwood NY received 6.37 inches of rain. A dike along a creek at Prattsburg NY gave way and a two million dollar onion crop left on the ground to dry was washed away. The prolonged rains in the eastern U.S. finally came to an end late in the day as a cold front began to push the warm and humid airmass out to sea. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988: Hurricane Gilbert smashed into the Cayman Islands, and as it headed for the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico strengthened into a monster hurricane, packing winds of 175 mph. The barometric pressure at the center of Gilbert reached 26.13 inches of mercury, a record for any hurricane in the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, or the Atlantic Ocean. Gilbert covered much of the Gulf of Mexico, producing rain as far away as the Florida Keys.

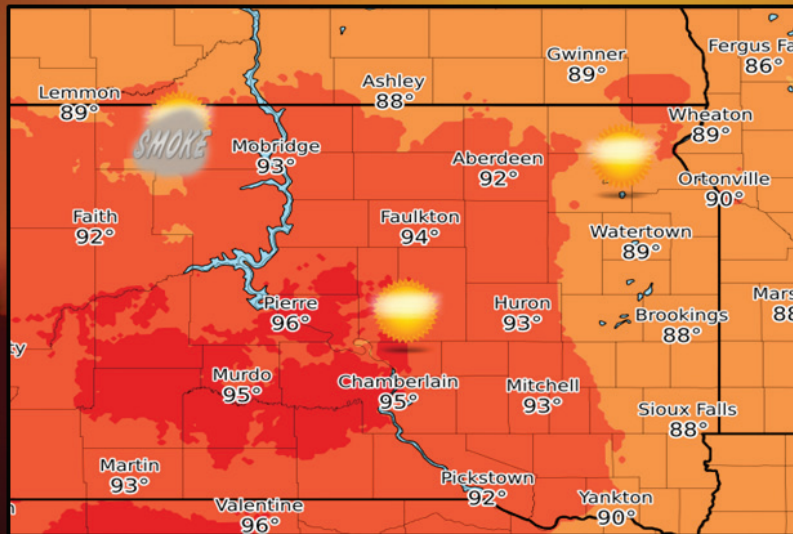
1989 - Unseasonably cool weather prevailed over the Central Plains Region, with a record low of 29 degrees at North Platte NE. Unseasonably warm weather prevailed across the Pacific Northwest, with a record high of 96 degrees at Eugene OR. Thunderstorms over south Texas produced wind gusts to 69 mph at Del Rio, and two inches of rain in two hours. (National Weather Summary)

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Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday
						
20%	30%	30%	20%	50% 50%	60%	30%
Isolated T-storms then Sunny	Partly Cloudy then Chance Showers	Chance Showers	Slight Chance T-storms	Chance Showers then Chance T-storms	Showers Likely	Mostly Cloudy then Chance Showers
High: 92 °F	Low: 63 °F	High: 84 °F	Low: 59 °F	High: 71 °F	Low: 53 °F	High: 65 °F

Hot Temperatures Again Today!



Smoke and haze in the sky today across north central South Dakota and perhaps moving farther south and east through the day



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD



Updated: 9/13/2017 5:46 AM Central

Published on: 09/13/2017 at 5:50AM

Temperatures will remain hot once again today, with highs ranging from the upper 80s east, to the mid and upper 90s over central South Dakota. Smoke from wildfires to our west may reduce visibility slightly today across north central South Dakota, possibly pushing as far south and east as Pierre and Aberdeen. At the very least, the sky may be a bit hazy.

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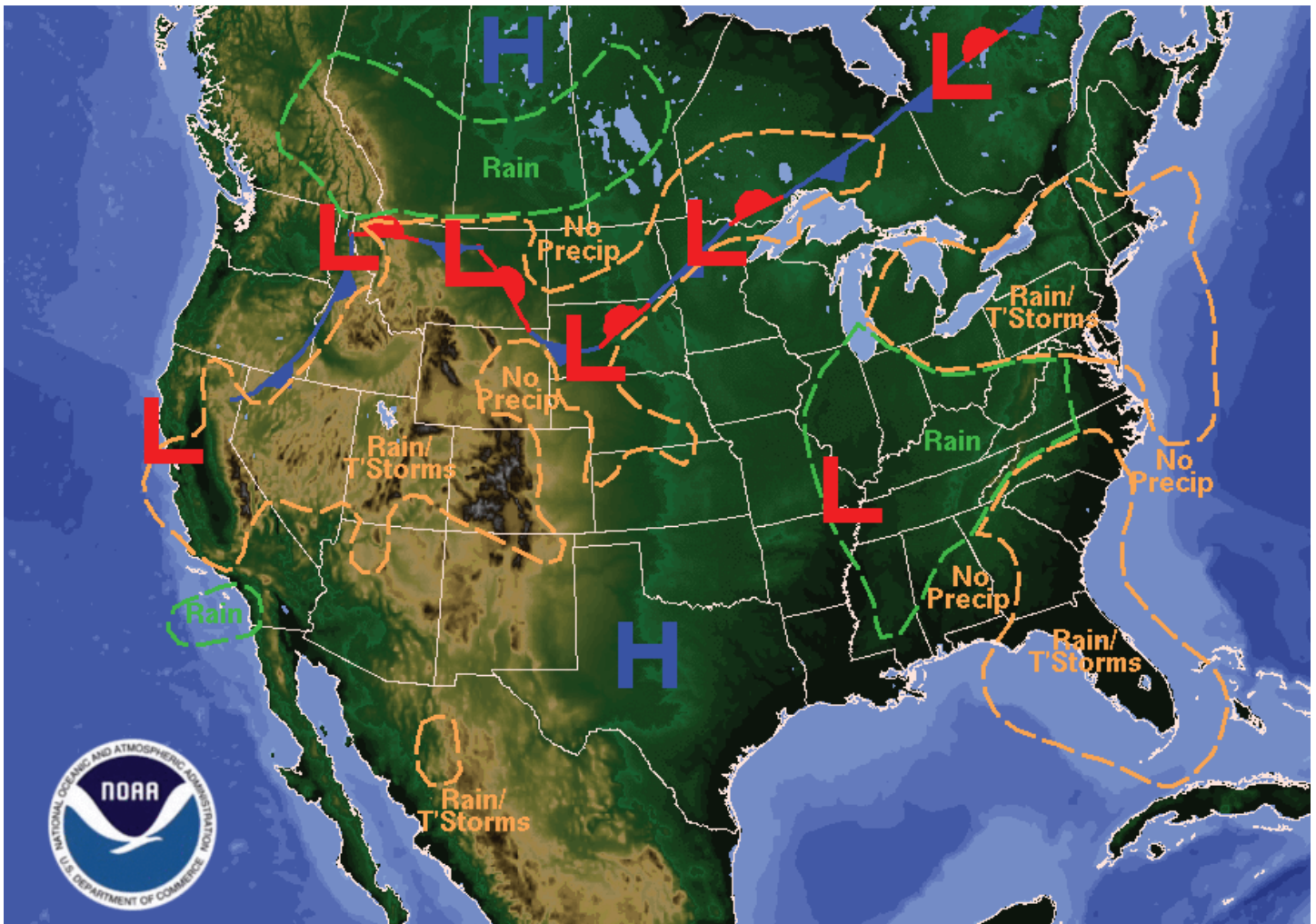
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 93.1 at 3:32 PM
Heat Index: 99.0 at 4:27 PM
Low Outside Temp: 60.3 at 7:55 AM
High Gust: 19 at 1:32 PM
Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 97° in 1927
Record Low: 26° in 1902
Average High: 73°F
Average Low: 47°F
Average Precip in Sept: 0.98
Precip to date in Sept: 0.11
Average Precip to date: 17.27
Precip Year to Date: 9.63
Sunset Tonight: 7:47 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:11 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Wed, Sep 13, 2017, issued 4:48 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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FACTS FROM OUR FATHERS

A family was seated together watching a science program on television describing the marvels of the rain forest. Shortly after the beginning of the program a biologist began a lecture on evolution. Mark, a bright freshman in high school, turned to his father and asked, "What do you think of that, Dad?"

"It's not what I think, Mark," he replied. "It's what I know. It's really quite simple. Something cannot come from nothing. So there had to be Someone somewhere who brought life into existence. It had to be Someone with wisdom and a plan. It had to be Someone with the power to create and control everything. It had to be God who designed what we see and know."

Without any doubt the home was chosen by God to be the greatest center for teaching and learning on the planet. The most formative years of a child's life are those early years of dependency when they look to a parent for the essentials of life. In the wisdom of God, He planned for the child to be open and filled with trust as their needs for the basics of life unfold.

One of those needs is to come to know the goodness and grace of God. Children are blessed when parents know the book of Books, its message and meaning, its plan and purpose and share it with their gifts from God.

The writer of Psalm 44 in verse one makes this clear: "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us what you did..." How blest children are when they can say with the children of the writer of this Psalm those wonderful words.

Today most children are left to discover the important lessons of life from teachers who do not believe in our God, the Creator God, the Saving and Redeeming God. Unfortunately, if children are not taught the truth, they will not learn the truth.

Prayer: Father, we pray for children who have no one to teach them Your truth. May someone reach out to them today. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 44:1 We have heard it with our ears, O God; our ancestors have told us what you did in their days, in days long ago.

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News from the Associated Press

Second teen indicted in Sioux Falls park shooting

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A second teen has been charged in a fatal shooting at a Sioux Falls park. Sixteen-year-old Jaden Carmel was indicted by a grand jury in Lincoln County for aiding and abetting the charges of first-degree murder, robbery and aggravated assault. The Argus Leader reports Carmel is in custody on \$500,000 cash bond.

Eighteen-year-old Dylan Holler was arrested the night the 17-year-old was killed at Bakker Park on Aug. 28. Police say the shooting followed an argument over drugs.

Holler is charged with first-degree murder, first-degree robbery and aggravated assault. Authorities have not identified the victim.

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

Tuesday's Scores By The Associated Press

Volleyball

Andes Central/Dakota Christian def. Scotland, 26-24, 25-22, 25-18
Arlington def. Milbank Area, 25-18, 25-8, 25-13
Belle Fourche def. Broadus, Mont., 25-17, 25-15, 25-18
Beresford def. Tri-Valley, 26-24, 25-18, 25-23
Bison def. Newell, 25-21, 25-13, 25-20
Brookings def. Sioux Falls Roosevelt, 18-25, 25-15, 25-17, 26-24
Chester def. Elkton-Lake Benton, 25-9, 25-21, 25-22
Clark/Willow Lake def. Florence/Henry, 25-23, 25-18, 25-21
Custer def. Douglas, 25-20, 25-18, 25-22
Dakota Valley def. Alcester-Hudson, 25-6, 25-15, 25-14
Dell Rapids def. Canton, 20-25, 25-12, 25-14, 25-11
Dell Rapids St. Mary def. Flandreau Indian, 25-7, 25-14, 25-7
Deubrook def. Waubay/Summit, 25-10, 25-13, 25-16
Elk Point-Jefferson def. Lennox, 17-25, 25-11, 25-23, 25-18
Faulkton def. Leola/Frederick, 25-18, 25-22, 25-15
Flandreau def. Garretson, 25-19, 25-17, 25-21
Freeman def. Bridgewater-Emery, 25-18, 22-25, 23-25, 25-18, 17-15
Freeman Academy/Marion def. Irene-Wakonda, 25-22, 25-23, 16-25, 25-16
Gayville-Volin def. Viborg-Hurley, 25-23, 25-19, 25-12
Great Plains Lutheran def. Estelline, 25-14, 25-22, 25-20
Groton Area def. Mobridge-Pollock, 25-9, 25-12, 25-17
Hanson def. Canistota, 25-23, 25-11, 25-12
Harding County def. Hettinger/Scranton, N.D., 27-25, 25-19, 26-24
Harrisburg def. Huron, 24-26, 26-24, 25-22, 27-25
Hendricks, Minn. def. Colman-Egan, 25-21, 25-16, 25-23
Herreid/Selby Area def. Faith, 25-16, 25-10, 25-7
Jones County def. White River, 25-10, 25-8, 15-25, 18-25, 25-10
Kimball/White Lake def. Mt. Vernon/Plankinton, 25-16, 22-25, 24-26, 25-22, 15-10
Langford def. Aberdeen Christian, 25-10, 25-18, 25-14
Lemmon def. Mott-Regent, N.D., 25-7, 25-17, 25-14

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Madison def. Vermillion, 25-20, 25-15, 25-17
Mitchell def. Pierre, 25-13, 25-16, 25-23
North Border def. McIntosh, 25-20, 23-25, 19-25, 25-13, 16-14
Northwestern def. Miller, 25-17, 25-18, 25-17
Oelrichs def. Crazy Horse, 26-24, 25-7, 25-18
Oldham-Ramona/Rutland def. Iroquois, 17-25, 25-13, 25-20, 25-9
Parkston def. Corsica/Stickney, 25-19, 25-23, 25-19
Platte-Geddes def. Colome, 25-18, 26-28, 25-18, 27-25
Potter County def. Highmore-Harrold, 25-9, 25-23, 25-21
Rapid City Christian def. Dupree, 25-5, 25-22, 25-14
Rapid City Stevens def. Sturgis Brown, 25-6, 25-8, 25-4
Sioux Falls Christian def. McCook Central/Montrose, 25-12, 25-16, 25-10
Sioux Falls O'Gorman def. Yankton, 25-16, 25-20, 25-23
Sioux Falls Washington def. Sioux Falls Lincoln, 25-12, 26-24, 25-23
Sioux Valley def. DeSmet, 25-18, 25-10, 25-4
Sully Buttes def. Edmunds Central, 25-8, 25-11, 25-14
Sunshine Bible Academy def. Crow Creek, 25-16, 25-22, 19-25, 25-20
Tea Area def. Parker, 25-16, 11-25, 25-16, 19-25, 15-13
Tiospa Zina Tribal def. Deuel, 16-25, 25-15, 25-16, 25-19
Tripp-Delmont/Armour def. Bon Homme, 23-25, 25-23, 25-12, 25-16
Wagner def. Avon, 19-25, 25-17, 25-16, 25-20
Warner def. Ipswich, 25-7, 25-13, 25-9
Watertown def. Aberdeen Central, 25-22, 25-22, 26-24
Wheaton/Herman-Norcross, Minn. def. Sisseton, 15-25, 25-9, 25-20, 25-11
Wilmot def. Webster, 25-18, 25-23, 25-14
Winner def. Lyman, 25-7, 25-13, 25-12
Wolsey-Wessington def. Mitchell Christian, 25-23, 25-16, 25-18
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte vs. Faith, ppd.

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Mega Millions

26-37-41-54-65, Mega Ball: 3, Megaplier: 4

(twenty-six, thirty-seven, forty-one, fifty-four, sixty-five; Mega Ball: three; Megaplier: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$76 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$115 million

Report: South Dakota corn, soybean crop to decline this year

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's corn and soybeans crops this year are expected to fall short of last year's harvests.

Based on Sept. 1 conditions, the U.S. Department of Agriculture says South Dakota's 2017 corn crop is forecast at 696 million bushels. That's down 16 percent from last year's production.

The average yield for corn is forecast at 145 bushels per acre, down 16 bushels from last year.

Soybean production is forecast at 241 million bushels, down 6 percent from last year. Soybean yield is

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forecast at 45 bushels per acre, down 4.5 bushels from last year.

Sorghum for grain production in South Dakota also is forecast to decline from last year's harvest. But dry edible pea production is expected to be up 11 percent from last year, although yield will be down.

Ex-South Dakota teacher pleads guilty in student sex case

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A former South Dakota teacher is awaiting sentencing after pleading guilty to having sexual contact with a male student.

Kari Boll pleaded guilty late last month to fourth-degree rape and sexual contact with a child under 16.

The Argus Leader reports a sentencing date has not been set.

A Minnehaha County grand jury had indicted Boll on 21 felony counts.

Boll worked as a special education teacher for the West Central District in Hartford. Authorities alleged that she had a sexual relationship with a then-15-year-old student.

Boll resigned last year. A phone message left for her attorneys by The Associated Press was not immediately returned Tuesday.

AG: Judge upholds his explanation of drug price cap measure

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley says a judge has upheld his explanation of a proposed ballot measure that would cap the amount state agencies could pay for prescription drugs.

Jackley said Tuesday that Circuit Court Judge Mark Barnett denied a request to have his office rewrite the explanation.

Drug companies challenged the explanation.

In a statement, Jackley says he has "worked to provide a fair, clear, and simple summary" of the measure to assist voters. Jackley says his role is not to advocate for or against a ballot measure.

Supporters of the measure hope to put the initiative before voters in 2018. The proposal would impose a price limit on state drug purchases at the lowest price paid for the same drug by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Winter wheat moving again to Gulf Coast export facilities

By ROXANA HEGEMAN, Associated Press

WICHITA, Kan. (AP) — Hard red winter wheat exports are flowing again from the Plains states to the battered Gulf Coast for shipment overseas.

Grain export facilities along the Gulf coast suffered little damage from Hurricane Harvey, but the railroad tracks that move wheat to them were more damaged by the storm, said Jay O'Neil, agricultural economist for the International Grains Program at Kansas State University.

Most rail lines have since been inspected and repaired, he said. The storm caused about a four-day stoppage, depending on the port. Some terminals had wheat on hand ready to load onto ships, while others had to wait for rail cars to come in.

Harvey struck Texas on Aug. 25 and heavy rain and flooding followed for days. The Agriculture Department reported Monday that for the week ending Sept. 7 zero wheat was inspected in southern Texas ports, while 82,474 metric tons were inspected at Mississippi River locations.

"Harvey was a considerable disruption to grain exports, Irma not so much because we load grain out of Texas and New Orleans," O'Neil said.

The hurricane did not affect New Orleans ports, where grain mostly comes down the Mississippi River from Missouri and points east. But the Texas facilities where international exports are loaded onto ships receive their grain by rail from the major wheat producing states of Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas. Other states such as South Dakota and Colorado are also significant producers.

This time of year is also particularly busy for hard red winter wheat exports because it is after that the U.S. harvest.

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"We've gotten some orders recently ... for some wheat to go overseas and it is just unfortunate timing because wheat is so cheap. It is very competitive right now across the world — and if the customers learn there will be a significant delay they may choose another option," said Aaron Harries, marketing director for the industry group Kansas Wheat.

Hard red winter wheat prices for export out of the Gulf coast are down about \$100 a metric ton since 2012 to \$180 a metric ton now, said Justin Gilpin, chief executive officer for Kansas Wheat. Cash prices for farmers are about \$3.40 per bushel, down \$3 per bushel from 2012.

Trains loaded with grain in the Midwest had to be held on track and couldn't be moved to Texas until the railroads lifted their embargos, O'Neil said. The railroads — primarily the BNSF, Union Pacific and Kansas City Southern — had to access damage and make repairs to its bridges and tracks damaged by Harvey.

Limited rail service resumed last week, and service is now "pretty much full speed," he said.

"There was a lot of concern in our industry that both because of the considerable track damage and because of the employee situation it could have been longer potentially ... everybody was pretty surprised at the resiliency of both elevators and employees," O'Neil said.

South Dakota corn, soybean maturity continue to lag

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Corn and soybean maturity continues to lag in South Dakota.

The weekly crop report from the federal government says South Dakota's corn and soybeans are maturing at a pace behind last year's and the five-year average.

Corn denting was 60 percent, well behind 80 percent at this time last year and the average of 78 percent. Corn maturity was 4 percent, compared with 17 percent last year and a 21-percent average.

Soybeans dropping leaves was 26 percent, behind 42 percent last year and the average of 44 percent.

Silage cutting and late-season haying continued under mostly dry conditions. Farmers began seeding winter wheat in parts of South Dakota.

Temperatures were seasonally cool early in the week, with light frost reported in low-lying areas of the southwestern part of the state.

\$1 million bond in assault and kidnapping case

CUSTER, S.D. (AP) — Bond is set at \$1 million for a man accused of kidnapping, assaulting and burglarizing a woman in Custer County.

Authorities say Harry Evans was armed with a gun and a knife when he broke into the house of an acquaintance Wednesday night, sexually assaulted her and kidnapped her.

The 59-year-old Pringle man appeared in court Monday. The Rapid City Journal says he's charged with first-degree kidnapping, second-degree rape, first-degree burglary, aggravated assault, stalking and violating a protection order.

Officials say Evans bound the woman with tape, wrapped her in a blanket and drove away with her. A complaint says Evans later brought the woman home and left.

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

Arrest scuffle at South Dakota State University investigated

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota State University and a state agency say they're investigating an allegation of excessive force used by a campus police officer making an arrest.

Melissa Mentele says her two daughters were stopped by an officer while walking through campus with friends late Saturday. Mentele says the officer dislocated the wrist of her younger daughter as he wrestled her to the ground.

The Argus Leader says she was arrested on a charge of resisting arrest. The older daughter tried to intervene and was charged with obstruction.

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Police or the university won't say why the girls were stopped by the officer. University spokesman Mike Lockrem says the school began looking into the complaint immediately. South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation is also reviewing the case.

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

Survey shows corporations souring on Delaware legal climate

By RANDALL CHASE, Associated Press

DOVER, Del. (AP) — Delaware appears to be losing its favored legal climate status among corporate attorneys and executives.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Institute for Legal Reform says that after ranking first in all 10 previous surveys, Delaware's overall legal climate ranks 11th in this year's survey, released Tuesday.

South Dakota is number one, followed by Vermont, Idaho, Minnesota and New Hampshire. Vermont edged Delaware for the top spot for trial judge competence.

Institute President Lisa Rickard says Delaware is losing ground as states compete to enact legal reforms.

Corporations seem particularly upset about a Delaware law passed in 2015 that prohibits companies from forcing investors who bring and lose certain lawsuits to pay a company's legal costs.

Companies are also unhappy with the aggressive way Delaware has enforced its unclaimed property laws.

Top Dems say Flynn left Mideast trip off security clearance

By CHAD DAY and STEPHEN BRAUN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former business associates of Michael Flynn have told lawmakers that he traveled to the Middle East in 2015 as part of a private proposal to build nuclear power plants across the region, a trip that the former Trump administration national security adviser never disclosed during his security clearance process.

In a letter released Wednesday, two top House Democrats reveal that companies involved in the proposal provided details of Flynn's trip in June 2015 that suggest he also failed to report contacts with Israeli and Egyptian government officials. The lawmakers — Rep. Elijah Cummings of Maryland and Rep. Eliot Engel of New York — are now asking the companies and Flynn to provide the names and nationalities of any officials he met with during the trip abroad.

The information released by the lawmakers is the latest evidence that Flynn didn't fully account for his foreign contacts and business entanglements even though he was liable for possible federal criminal penalties for lying or omitting such information. Security clearance questionnaires specifically ask applicants to report any meetings abroad or contacts with foreign government officials that occurred in the previous seven years. As a former director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Flynn maintained a security clearance. His last renewal was in early 2016.

Flynn has been dogged by questions about his lack of disclosure of a Turkish lobbying operation and of foreign payments he accepted after leaving the military in 2014. Flynn also was forced to resign his Trump administration post in February after White House officials determined that he had misled them about the nature of diplomatic conversations with Russia's ambassador to the U.S.

Special counsel Robert Mueller is scrutinizing Flynn's foreign interactions as part of his probe into Russia's meddling in the 2016 election and any possible coordination with Trump associates. Earlier this year, that investigation incorporated an ongoing federal probe into Flynn's lobbying for a Turkish businessman during the final months of the presidential campaign.

Flynn's attorney, Robert Kelner, declined to comment on the letter. Flynn's legal team has previously said that he'd like to cooperate with Congress but only intended to respond to subpoenas that compel him to do so. As members of the minority party, Cummings, the ranking member on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, and Engel, the ranking member of the House Foreign Affairs committee, do not have subpoena power.

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Cummings and Engel first raised concerns in June about Flynn's 2015 Mideast trip after Newsweek reported that Flynn had worked with companies angling to persuade foreign governments and companies to join in a plan to build a cluster of 40 nuclear plants in the Mideast for civilian power needs. The lawmakers also seized on a comment Flynn made in congressional testimony in the summer of 2015, in which he said that he had just returned from the Middle East.

In their latest letter, Cummings and Engel write that "it appears that General Flynn violated federal law by omitting this trip and these foreign contacts from his security clearance renewal application in 2016 and concealing them from security clearance investigators who interviewed him as part of the background check process."

Because of the potential for a criminal violation, the two lawmakers say they are providing Mueller with the responses from the companies.

According to the letter and documents released by Cummings and Engel, Flynn's Mideast trip was backed by ACU Strategic Partners, a U.S. firm that sent him to persuade officials to support a plan involving companies from the U.S., Russia, France, the Netherlands, Britain, Ukraine, Israel and several Persian Gulf nations.

Dr. Thomas Cochran, an adviser to ACU Strategic Partners, told the lawmakers that Flynn was expected to press Egyptian and other officials to hold off on accepting a rival offer from Russia to finance and construct a smaller system of four reactors in Egypt and two in Jordan.

Flynn's Egypt visit "was to convince the government at least to postpone accepting the Russian offer to finance and build four reactors in order to carefully consider the ACU alternative," Cochran said in his response. Flynn also traveled to Israel where, Cochran said, he sought to assure Israel that the project would be in its interest.

The proposal has never gotten beyond the planning stage. But in his response, Cochran indicated that there could be support from the Trump administration, particularly in its effort to involve both U.S. and Russian interests. "The ACU project gives President Trump and Secretary (Rex) Tillerson a valuable private sector mechanism for helping stabilize and improve relations with Russia as well as helping accelerate U.S.-Russia cooperation in the Middle East," Cochran said.

In a separate response to the congressmen, ACU Managing Director Alex Copson confirmed that ACU paid Flynn's travel expenses and wrote him a \$25,000 check for "loss of income and business opportunities resulting from this trip." But Copson told the lawmakers that banks records show Flynn never cashed the check.

Flynn had previously not disclosed his compensation on his government financial disclosure filed earlier this year, but in August, he filed an amended disclosure that listed he had received more than \$5,000 from ACU. Flynn also listed that he was a consultant to another company, IronBridge Group, which was connected to the project.

An attorney for retired Rear Adm. Michael Hewitt, the chairman of IronBridge, confirmed to lawmakers that Flynn took the trip, but did not provide details of his foreign contacts.

Thomas Egan, an attorney for ACU, said Tuesday that he had received the lawmakers' letter, but the company had not yet decided whether it would respond. Michael Summersgill, an attorney for IronBridge, did not respond to a telephone message Tuesday seeking comment.

Since the late 1990s, Copson has promoted a series of international nuclear-related projects that have not come to fruition. The House letter cites an April 2016 email forwarded from Copson to Hewitt and several others showing that Copson initially envisioned the U.S. and Russia as developing the reactor project. But turbulence in Syria and the Iran nuclear deal led Copson to propose bringing in other partners, including China.

Associated Press writer Eric Tucker contributed to this report.

Governor: 'Work to do' for Florida to recover after Irma

By JASON DEAREN and JENNIFER KAY, Associated Press

LOWER MATECUMBE KEY, Fla. (AP) — Parts of Florida inched back toward normal with workers restoring power, clearing roads and replenishing gas supplies, even as teams scoured the state's southernmost islands and authorities warned of mass devastation.

Residents drifted back from shelters and far-away havens Tuesday to see Hurricane Irma's scattershot destruction. Flooded streets remained, and the count of damaged and totaled homes ticked upward even as some curfews were lifted, flights resumed and amusement park rides again twirled.

"Everything's gone," said Jen Gilreath, a 33-year-old bartender whose Jacksonville home filled with knee-high floodwaters.

As crews labored to repair the lone highway connecting the Keys, residents of some of the islands closest to Florida's mainland were allowed to return and get their first look at the devastation two days after Irma roared in with 130 mph (209 kph) winds.

Federal Emergency Management Agency administrator Brock Long said preliminary estimates suggested that 25 percent of the homes in the Keys were destroyed and 65 percent sustained major damage.

"Basically, every house in the Keys was impacted," he said.

The number of deaths blamed on Irma in Florida climbed to 12, in addition to four in South Carolina and two in Georgia. At least 37 people were killed in the Caribbean. The Florida deaths include four people who died of carbon monoxide poisoning from electric generators in two separate incidents.

"We've got a lot of work to do, but everybody's going to come together," Florida Gov. Rick Scott said. "We're going to get this state rebuilt."

Glimpses of Irma's economic toll were emerging, with Florida saying 31 state agencies had already amassed nearly \$250 million in preparation and recovery expenses. In the meantime, officials warily eyed storm damage to its citrus crops, an issue Sens. Bill Nelson and Marco Rubio planned to address at a joint news conference Wednesday morning with growers.

The number of people without electricity in the steamy late-summer heat dropped to 9.5 million — just under half of Florida's population. Utility officials warned it could take 10 days or more for power to be fully restored. About 110,000 people remained in shelters across the state.

In hard-hit Naples, on Florida's southwest coast, more than 300 people stood outside a Publix grocery store in the morning, waiting for it to open.

One man complained loudly that the line had too many gaps. Others shook their heads in frustration at word of another delay.

At the front of the line after a more than two-hour wait, Phill Chirchirillo, 57, said days without electricity and other basics were beginning to wear on people.

"At first it's like, 'We're safe, thank God.' Now they're testy," he said. "The order of the day is to keep people calm."

While nearly all of Florida was engulfed by the 400-mile-wide (645-kilometer) storm, the Keys — home to about 70,000 people — appeared to be the hardest hit. Drinking water and power were cut off, all three of the islands' hospitals were closed, and the supply of gasoline was extremely limited.

Search-and-rescue teams made their way into the more distant reaches of the Keys, and an aircraft carrier was positioned off Key West to help. Officials said it was not known how many people ignored evacuation orders and stayed behind in the Keys.

Crews also worked to repair two washed-out, 300-foot (90-meter) sections of U.S. 1, the highway that runs through the Keys, and check the safety of the 42 bridges linking the islands.

In Islamorada, a trailer park was devastated, the homes ripped apart as if by a giant claw. A sewage-like stench hung over the place.

Debris was scattered everywhere, including refrigerators, washers and dryers, a 25-foot (8-meter) fishing boat and a Jacuzzi. Homes were torn open to give a glimpse of their contents, including a bedroom with a small Christmas tree decorated with starfish.

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One man and his family came to check on a weekend home and found it destroyed. The sight was too much to bear. The man told his family to get back in the car, and they drove off toward Miami.

The Lower Keys — including the chain's most distant and most populous island, Key West, with 27,000 people — were still off-limits, with a roadblock in place where the highway was washed out.

Although the Keys are studded with mansions and beachfront resorts, about 13 percent of the people live in poverty and could face big obstacles as the cleanup begins.

"People who bag your groceries when you're on vacation — the bus drivers, hotel cleaners, cooks and dishwashers — they're already living beyond paycheck to paycheck," said Stephanie Kaple, who runs an organization that helps the homeless in the Keys.

Corey Smith, a UPS driver who rode out the hurricane in Key Largo, said it was a relief that many buildings on the island escaped major damage. But he said conditions were still not good, with branches blocking roads and supermarkets closed.

"They're shoving people back to a place with no resources," he said by telephone. "It's just going to get crazy pretty quick."

Kay reported from Miami. Associated Press writers Terry Spencer in Palm Beach County; Gary Fineout and Joe Reedy in Tallahassee; Jay Reeves in Immokalee; Terrance Harris in Orlando; Claire Galofaro in Jacksonville; and Freida Frisaro, Curt Anderson and David Fischer in Miami contributed to this report.

HURRICANE NEWSLETTER — Get the best of the AP's all-formats reporting on Irma and Harvey in your inbox: <http://apne.ws/ahYQGtb>

French president vows help for Irma's damage in Caribbean

By **DANICA COTO, NICOLAS GARRIGA and SYLVIE CORBET, Associated Press**

MARIGOT, St. Martin (AP) — Nearing the end of a sweeping visit to assess the devastation wrought by Hurricane Irma, French President Emmanuel Macron has promised to rebuild the wrecked island of St. Martin and diversify its economy away from tourism.

In further responses to complaints that his government didn't do enough to handle Irma's wrath, Macron also promised to evacuate residents of his country's Caribbean territories and provide services and shelter for those who choose to stay.

Macron stayed overnight on St. Martin, reportedly sleeping on a camp cot, and was heading Wednesday to the heavily-damaged island of St. Barts with the French health minister, who has warned about diseases spreading on the islands after water supplies, electricity and communication were knocked out for days.

"What we have seen today are people determined to rebuild and return to a normal life," Macron said Tuesday in a news conference. "They are impatient for answers and some are very, very angry. The anger is legitimate because it is a result of the fear they have faced and of being very fatigued. It is certain that some want to leave, and we will help them in that effort."

He said France was bringing in air-conditioned tents so children can start classes again soon, and that a center would be established by Monday to begin processing requests for financial help.

Macron pledged to rebuild St. Martin as a "model island" that would be a "showcase of French excellence" in terms of its ability to withstand storms.

"I don't want to rebuild St. Martin as it was," he said. "We have seen there are many homes that were built too precariously, with fragile infrastructure. The geography of the homes was not adapted to the risks."

Macron said the Category 5 hurricane killed 11 people in St. Martin, while another four people died on the Dutch side of the island, bringing the death toll in the Caribbean to at least 37.

The president was joined in the region by British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, whose itinerary focused on the badly damaged British Virgin Islands and Anguilla. Johnson also defended Britain's performance from criticism the government had failed to provide enough help to British Overseas Territories devastated by the storm.

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He said 1,000 British troops are in place to help residents and more are on the way.

The visits came as residents tried to revive a sense of normalcy with small gestures like sharing radios and rescuing dogs.

The Dutch Red Cross said more than 200 people were still listed as missing on St. Maarten, but with communications extremely spotty a week after the storm hit, it wasn't clear how many were simply without cell service and power and unable to let friends and family know they survived. The organization said 90 percent of buildings on the Dutch territory were damaged and a third destroyed as Irma roared across the island it shares with French St. Martin.

Yogesh Bodha, a jewelry store employee, said there was no response from European officials for two days and he hasn't seen many changes since Dutch authorities arrived on St. Maarten.

"They should've been more organized than they were," he said. "We have not received any food or water. They say it's on its way. Let's see."

For Liseth Echevarría, who works as a bartender in St. Maarten, offering whatever she could to family, strangers and abandoned pets was helping her cope — and those around her were doing the same.

The manager of a marina next door threw over a hose so Echevarría and her husband could have a semblance of an outdoor shower. He also offered them a temporary power connection from his generator so they could charge phones and listen to the sole radio station still broadcasting.

"This is the only communication that St. Maarten has with the world right now," she said.

It was thanks to that radio station that she found out about a flight for all Latin Americans stuck in St. Maarten. She rushed to the airport with her brother, who was evacuating back to Colombia. As she dropped him off, Echevarría saw a Yorkshire terrier tied to a metal barricade, abandoned by a passenger fleeing the island and told they couldn't bring pets on the plane.

Echevarría scooped up the dog named Oliver and took him home to meet her three other dogs, including one rescued from a neighbor's property. The neighbor fled with her son after the hurricane destroyed their home. There was nothing left of it other than jagged pieces of wood and a shower curtain covered in colorful butterflies tangled in a toppled tree.

Echevarría's husband, Lex Kools, a civil engineer, jumps over the fence every day to feed the other two dogs on the property.

"They were attacking each other, they were so hungry," he said.

At Echevarría's and Kools' home, the couple fed relatives and the girlfriend and two children of Echevarría's cousin, all of whom were staying with them.

Near the front door, a large plastic table sagged under the weight of boxes of spaghetti and cookies, soup cans, chips, bags of almonds and macadamia nuts and rice. Underneath were dozens of bottles of water.

The couple said they took the goods from a grocery store blown open during the storm.

They said they had planned on buying the items, but no one was working at the store and they were running out of food and water. They looked at each other as they observed looting.

"Do we do this as well?" Kools recalled thinking. "Everybody was just running inside. It was chaos."

Associated Press journalists Danica Coto reported this story in Philipsburg and AP writer Sylvie Corbet reported from Paris. AP writers Mike Corder in The Hague, The Netherlands, and Gregory Katz in London contributed to this report.

HURRICANE NEWSLETTER — Get the best of the AP's all-formats reporting on Irma and Harvey in your inbox: <http://apne.ws/ahYQGtb>

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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. 'WORK TO DO' AFTER IRMA

Parts of Florida creep back to normal with workers slowly restoring power, clearing roads and replenishing gas supplies, even as teams scour the Keys and authorities warn of mass devastation.

2. WHAT FRENCH PRESIDENT VOWS TO DO

After touring the destroyed island of St. Martin, Emmanuel Macron outlines a plan to distribute drinking water, food and medical help.

3. SANDERS, GOP PUSH BANNER HEALTH CARE BILLS

The Vermont senator is ready to unveil his bill for creating a "Medicare for all" system, while Republican senators renew efforts to repeal and replace "Obamacare."

4. SUU KYI WON'T ATTEND UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The move by Myanmar's leader comes as the country draws international criticism over violence that has driven at least 370,000 ethnic Rohingya Muslims to nearby Bangladesh in recent weeks.

5. HOW MATTIS IS COUNTERING PYONGYANG

As North Korea flaunts its new nuclear muscle, the U.S. defense secretary is spotlighting the overwhelming numerical superiority of America's doomsday arsenal.

6. WHY HISTORY OF SYRIA'S WAR IS AT RISK

Activists fear all that has been chronicled about the conflict could be erased as YouTube implements new policies to remove graphic material.

7. DETAINED UNIVERSITY JANITOR, IN US 11 YEARS, AWAITS HIS FATE

An MIT custodian from El Salvador who became a rallying cry for local opponents of Trump's immigration crackdown is fighting his deportation while jailed.

8. IPHONE X PUTS EXCLAMATION POINT ON PRICING STRATEGY

It's a calculated gamble that Apple can make marginal improvements to mature products like its iPhone better than anyone else while charging accordingly.

9. SELF-DRIVING BOATS GAINING WIDER ACCEPTANCE

Maritime companies are designing autonomous tugboats, ferries and cargo vessels that won't need captains or crews — at least not on board.

10. TRIBE ON HISTORIC RUN

The Cleveland Indians equal the American League record with their 20th straight win, matching the 2002 "Moneyball" Athletics.

Sanders, GOP push banner health care bills

By ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Liberal Sen. Bernie Sanders is ready to unveil his bill for starkly reshaping the country's current hodge-podge health care system into one where the government provides medical insurance for everybody.

Republican senators are preparing to roll out details of a last-ditch effort to repeal and replace President Barack Obama's health care law.

The rival packages have little in common, other than the likelihood that neither is going anywhere.

Seven weeks after the GOP drive to uproot Obama's 2010 health care law crashed in the Senate, two Republican senators, Lindsey Graham of South Carolina and Louisiana's Bill Cassidy, on Wednesday were releasing their plan for trying again.

They've struggled for weeks to round up sufficient support for the package. It would cut and reshape Medicaid, disperse money spent under Obama's law directly to states and erase Obama's penalties on people who don't purchase coverage.

No. 3 Senate GOP leader John Thune of South Dakota said Graham and Cassidy would need "a double-

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double bank shot" to prevail, a joking reference to an impossible basketball shot.

Like the failed Senate GOP repeal effort in July, the Graham-Cassidy push will get zero Democratic support. That means Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., will need 50 of the 52 Republican senators, a margin he couldn't reach in July and is struggling to reach now.

Despite badgering by President Donald Trump that he keep trying, McConnell has expressed no interest in staging yet another vote that produces an embarrassing rejection by the GOP-controlled Senate. Conservatives are wary because the bill falls short in erasing Obama's wide-ranging coverage requirements.

"I don't think this bill will go anywhere," said Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky.

Meanwhile, Sanders is introducing his bill for essentially expanding the Medicare health insurance program for the elderly to all Americans.

The progressive wing of the Democratic Party backs his bill, which would make health care less expensive and less complicated for many people and businesses. It would cover the 28 million Americans remaining uninsured despite Obama's law.

People would simply flash a card and be entitled to coverage, without out-of-pocket expenses like deductibles, according to Sanders aides. They would pay income-adjusted premiums, with the poorest paying nothing but the rich and profitable corporations seeing higher taxes, and people and businesses would no longer owe premiums to insurers.

Some Democrats fear the Vermont independent is exposing them to a lose-lose choice.

Don't support Sanders' plan and risk alienating the party's liberal, activist voters, volunteers and contributors. Back it and be accused by Republicans of backing a huge tax increase and government-run health care, and taking away employer-provided coverage for half the country that many people like.

Sanders rejects that.

"Because the people in this country want to move toward a Medicare-for-all system, that is divisive?" he said in an interview Tuesday, citing polls showing growing support.

At least 12 other Senate Democrats signed onto Sanders' bill by late Tuesday, including four potential presidential contenders: Kamala Harris of California, Massachusetts' Elizabeth Warren, New York's Kirsten Gillibrand and Cory Booker of New Jersey.

"It may be a good strategy toward getting the nomination" to be the Democratic presidential nominee, said Ron Pollack, chair emeritus of the liberal Families USA, who backs universal coverage but thinks Sanders' plan is politically unrealistic. "I don't think it's a good strategy for the general election."

To cover themselves, several Democrats are introducing their own bills that expand coverage without going as far as Sanders, including possible presidential aspirants Sens. Chris Murphy of Connecticut and Ohio's Sherrod Brown. Several Democrats facing tough re-election battles next year in GOP-leaning states say they want to focus on strengthening Obama's existing law, including Montana's Jon Tester and Missouri's Claire McCaskill.

Republicans say they're ready.

"We welcome the Democrats' strategy of moving even further left," said Katie Martin, spokeswoman for the Senate GOP's campaign organization.

A third effort, a bipartisan attempt to shore up individual insurance markets around the country, is showing early signs that the sides are having problems reaching agreement.

Sens. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., and Patty Murray, D-Wash., hope to reach a deal on continuing for at least a year the federal payments to insurers that Trump has threatened to halt. Republicans are also insisting on easing the Obama law's coverage requirements, which Democrats don't want to do.

Alexander said Tuesday that Republicans want "real state flexibility" to let insurers offer "a larger variety of benefits and payment rules."

Murray said she worried the GOP wants to "wind up increasing out-of-pocket costs for patients and families." That's something Democrats oppose.

McConnell said the Alexander-Murray talks "are underway and we'll see where they go."

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As Rohingya flee violence, Myanmar's Suu Kyi skips UN meet

BANGKOK (AP) — With Myanmar drawing condemnation for violence that has driven at least 370,000 Rohingya to flee the country, the government said Wednesday its leader Aung San Suu Kyi would skip this week's U.N. General Assembly.

Suu Kyi was missing the assembly, which opened Tuesday and runs through Sept. 25, in order to address domestic security issues, according to presidential office spokesman Zaw Htay. Suu Kyi is not Myanmar's president — her official titles are state counselor and foreign minister — but she effectively serves as leader of the Southeast Asian nation.

Zaw Htay said that, with President Htin Kyaw hospitalized, the second vice president would attend the U.N. meeting.

"The first reason (Suu Kyi cannot attend) is because of the Rakhine terrorist attacks," Zaw Htay said. "The state counselor is focusing to calm the situation in Rakhine state. There are circumstances. The second reason is, there are people inciting riots in some areas. We are trying to take care of the security issue in many other places. The third is that we are hearing that there will be terrorist attacks and we are trying to address this issue."

The crisis erupted on Aug. 25, when an insurgent Rohingya group attacked on police outposts in Myanmar's Rakhine state. That prompted Myanmar's military to launch "clearance operations" against the rebels, setting off a wave of violence that have left hundreds dead and thousands of homes burned — mostly Rohingya in both cases.

The government blames Rohingya for the attacks, but journalists who visited the region found evidence that raises doubts about its claims that Rohingya set fire to their own homes.

Many of the Rohingya who flooded into refugee camps in Bangladesh told of Myanmar soldiers shooting indiscriminately, burning their homes and warning them to leave or die. Others said they were attacked by Buddhist mobs.

Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate who lived under house arrest for many years under a military junta that ultimately gave way to an elected government, has faced a torrent of international criticism and pressure since the crisis erupted.

On Tuesday, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei called the killing of Muslims a political disaster and called Suu Kyi a "brutal woman." U.N. human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein said the Rohingya were victims of what "seems a textbook example of ethnic cleansing."

Bangladesh has been overwhelmed with the massive influx of Rohingya, many of whom arrived hungry and traumatized after walking for days through jungles or being packed into rickety wooden boats.

Before Aug. 25, Bangladesh had already been housing some 500,000 Rohingya refugees who fled earlier flashes of violence including anti-Muslim riots in 2012.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has pledged to help the new arrivals, but demanded that Myanmar "take their nationals back."

With two pre-existing camps packed beyond capacity, the government said it would provide 2,000 acres (810 hectares) for a new camp in the border district of Cox's Bazar. Many of the new arrivals were staying in schools, or were huddling under tarps in makeshift settlements along roads and in open fields.

Basic resources were scarce, including food, clean water and medical aid.

Dozens of foreign diplomats and aid agency officials were set to meet Rohingya refugees Wednesday near the Kutupalong refugee camp, according to Kazi Abdur Rahman, additional deputy commissioner in Cox's Bazar district.

"A humanitarian crisis is going on here," he said. The diplomats "will visit camps, talk to them, see their condition. We need to work together during such a serious crisis."

Two human rights groups have accused the U.N. Security Council of ignoring the crisis.

"This is an international peace and security crisis" and there is no excuse for the Security Council "sitting on its hands," Louis Charbonneau of Human Rights Watch said Tuesday alongside representatives from Amnesty International at the U.N. headquarters

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the world's largest Muslim body, urged Myanmar to allow in U.N. monitors so they can investigate what it alleged was systematic brutality against the Rohingya. The U.N. Human Rights Council approved an investigative mission earlier this year, but Myanmar in June refused to allow it to enter. An envoy's visit in July was met with protests.

The ethnic Rohingya Muslim minority has faced decades of discrimination persecution in Buddhist-majority Myanmar, where they are denied citizenship despite centuries-old roots in the country.

On Tuesday, the president's office said Myanmar's government had established a new committee to address security and economic development in Rohingya areas. It said the 15-member committee would work on implementing recommendations made last month by a commission led by former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Associated Press writer Julhas Alam in Dhaka, Bangladesh, contributed to this report.

From India to Malaysia, Rohingya face hardship, uncertainty

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Recent violence in Myanmar has driven hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims to seek refuge across the border in Bangladesh. But Rohingya have been fleeing persecution in Buddhist-majority Myanmar for decades, and many who have made it to safety in other countries still face a precarious existence.

Some are barred from working or feel unwelcome in unfamiliar lands. Still, many say they are relieved to be safe.

Here are four countries where Rohingya have established settlements in recent years:

MALAYSIA

There are some 56,000 Rohingya refugees registered with the U.N. refugee agency in Malaysia, with an estimated 40,000 more whose status has yet to be assessed. Obtaining a U.N. refugee card generally protects people from arrest.

They live on the fringe, unable to legally work because the country — like Thailand and Indonesia — doesn't recognize asylum seekers or refugees.

Most scrape by on dirty or dangerous jobs that are shunned by most Malaysians. Most live in squalid shantytown settlements, cramped low-cost flats or isolated houses where they work on construction sites, restaurants, factories and plantations.

They have no access to free health care and state-run schools.

But for many, even living on the margins of Malaysian society is an improvement from what they faced in Myanmar.

"Only my younger brother and one older brother are still alive" in Myanmar, said Muhammad Ayub. "The rest have been killed." He has lived for four years in a small shanty settlement on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur that includes a small mosque and a school teaching children the Quran. He works odd jobs when he can get them, and said that if Myanmar ensures the safety of Rohingya, "I will surely go back."

Another Rohingya who has been in the Southeast Asian country for six years, Ibrahim Mohamad Hussein, said he worried about the fate of his relatives who are among some 200 people still living in his village in Myanmar.

"They have increased the military presence. No one is allowed in or out," he said. They have "no food, no work. It's hard for them."

Earlier this year, Malaysia started a pilot project to let Rohingya refugees with UNHCR cards work to prevent them from being exploited as cheap labor. But officials said the response was poor, as most Rohingya did not want to leave their communities to work in plantations or factories far away.

Malaysia has been cautious of being swamped by an influx of migrants. In 2015, boats carrying Rohingya and Bangladeshi refugees were pushed back into international waters by the Malaysian and Thai navies. But Malaysia and Indonesia later took more than 1,600 of the refugees in.

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On Monday, Malaysian officials said they were bracing for a possible new influx of Rohingya amid the renewed violence in Myanmar and pledged that anyone arriving by boat would be treated humanely.

New arrivals would be given water, food and medical aid, before being handed over to the Immigration Department, said Malaysia Maritime Enforcement Agency Director-General Zulkifli Abu Bakar.

NEPAL

Only about 250 Rohingya live in Nepal since anti-Muslim riots erupted in Myanmar in 2012, according to the U.N. refugee agency, which offers them education and medical support.

The refugees live in a ramshackle camp carved out on a slope on the outskirts of the capital, Kathmandu. Their huts of tin, bamboo and plastic sheets are connected by narrow stone steps.

There is also a large communal hut, where children study the Quran each day before school and men gather to discuss the latest news from Myanmar received in phone calls from family.

"Just five days back, I heard my uncle was hacked to death in the village," one refugee, Rofique Aalam, said Sunday. He has been in Nepal for two years. "Fortunately, I also heard that my father, mother, brother and sister safely made it across to Bangladesh."

Most Rohingya in Nepal work as day laborers, masons or plumbers. They don't get paid regularly, and also have trouble with language barriers, they said. But they live in peace, and local businesses and social workers have donated tin sheets and bamboo for them to build their makeshift homes.

"We have not had any problems with the local people or the authorities. They are helpful," Aalam said.

Still, many dream of going back to Myanmar.

"Nobody wants to live in a foreign land far from everything we know," said Mohammad Iyer, who fled four years ago with his five children and wife after he was attacked.

INDIA

Rohingya in India face an uncertain future, with the Hindu-nationalist government threatening to deport them back to Myanmar.

There are some 40,000 Rohingya living in clusters around the country, including in the northern Jammu region in Kashmir, the capital of New Delhi and the southern city of Hyderabad. But only 16,500 have been registered with the U.N. refugee agency.

Analysts say Prime Minister Narendra Modi is walking a tightrope between Bangladesh, an ally now besieged by hundreds of thousands of new Rohingya arrivals, and his Hindu-nationalist power base at home. Modi made no mention of the Rohingya crisis during a visit last week to Myanmar, but later said through the Foreign Affairs Ministry that India was concerned about the violence and wanted Myanmar to show restraint.

That delayed response followed pointed appeals from Bangladesh for help.

The Indian government is also facing a backlash over its order last month for states to prepare to deport illegal immigrants, including Rohingya. The Supreme Court is expected to hear the government's arguments for the order at a court hearing on Monday.

Even if Rohingya are allowed to stay in India, their lives are far from secure.

In Hindu-dominated northern city of Jammu, where more than 6,000 Rohingya live in squalid temporary shelters of burlap and plastic sheets, the city's business community recently announced a campaign to "identify and kill" Rohingya, but then called it off after the government announced its deportation plans.

"They have no right to be in the region," said Rakesh Gupta, president of the Jammu Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

More than 2,100 kilometers (1,300 miles) to the south in the city of Hyderabad, another 4,000 Rohingya live in constant fear of being evicted from their makeshift shelters of tarp stretched across bamboo poles and sent back to Myanmar.

"The talk of government sending us back is very frightening," said Rohingya refugee Hameed Ul Haque. "I want to tell the government: Instead of sending us back to Myanmar to die, please kill us. At least we

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will get a proper burial here.”

Hyderabad’s Muslim population and some of its leaders have rallied to their cause and demanded they be allowed to stay. Aid groups are helping the new arrivals to secure identity cards from the UNHCR, a process which takes about three months.

“There is no question of sending the refugees back without ensuring their safety,” Telangana state’s Deputy Chief Minister Mohammed Mahmood Ali told a rally Sunday in Hyderabad. “This is not an issue of Muslims alone. This is a humanitarian problem.”

UNITED STATES

The Rohingya who have made it as refugees to the United States find a warmer welcome and a more stable life. Only 54 arrived in 2010 and were resettled. By 2016, that number reached 2,276, according to the State Department, though so far this year it was just 1,027.

Hitay Lwin Oo, a Rohingya man who arrived in 2004, helps others as they come in to Utica, New York, where he owns the Golden Burma grocery store. While Rohingya can be ostracized by other groups in their home country, Lwin Oo said people from the many different tribes of Myanmar get along once they immigrate to the U.S.

“They are happy here, they have no danger in their lives, no more trouble,” Lwin Oo said. His own son is a Marine, his eldest daughter is studying to be a nurse, and his other two daughters are still in school.

Starting from scratch can be hard, but nonprofit agencies help families get apartments to rent. They usually can find minimum-wage jobs cleaning offices, cutting grass at golf courses, manufacturing windows or doing other work. Their kids start school, and quickly learn English.

“Arrivals in the United States have a much, much better situation than any other part of the world,” Penn State professor Wakar Uddin, a Rohingya advocate who arrived decades ago as a student.

“These people have suffered so much in their life ... they have never dreamed of this kind of life,” he said, noting that those resettled in Springfield, Colorado, are happy to work physically challenging 12-hour shifts in meat factories, earning low wages. “They worked much harder in their country and didn’t even have one meal a day.”

In total, the U.S. has resettled 7,362 Rohingya since 2010, with the largest group of about 1,000 in Chicago and others are in California, Indiana, Georgia and other states.

Simon Billenness at the nonprofit International Campaign for the Rohingya said he wished the U.S. would take in more.

“You’re talking about a group of people who are being ethnically cleansed, pushed out of their homes and villages and put into what can only be called concentration camps” in Myanmar, Billenness said.

Even if the new arrivals struggle and need help, “they’re glad to be in a safe place,” said human rights advocate Adem Carroll at the Burma Task Force USA.

“Their kids become Americanized so quickly,” he said. “The parents try to spare their children and not tell them a lot about what they went through.”

Associated Press writers Martha Mendoza in San Jose, California, Eileen Ng in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Binaj Gurubacharya in Kathmandu, Nepal, Nirmala George in New Delhi, Omer Farooq in Hyderabad, India, and Aijaz Hussain in Srinagar, India contributed to this report.

Rights group blasts Israeli banks for settlement expansion

By TIA GOLDENBERG, Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli banks are contributing to the proliferation of West Bank settlements by providing loans and mortgages for construction there, violating their human rights obligations, Human Rights Watch said in a report Wednesday.

The report said that Israeli law does not require banks to provide such services to the settlements, and urged them to distance themselves from such activities. It also urged the banks’ shareholders to “ensure

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that their business relationships do not contribute to or benefit from" human rights violations.

Human Rights Watch says the banks have helped the expansion of the West Bank settlements, which are now home to some 400,000 Israelis.

Sari Bashi, the group's Israel and Palestine advocacy director, said the banks should abide by the U.N. guiding principles on business and human rights, a set of non-binding guidelines meant to address and remedy abuses committed in business activity, or else face action by shareholders.

"There are many, many steps banks can and should take to at the very least reduce their involvement in settlements, if not stop it entirely," she said. "If they choose not to take steps, institutional investors who care about their own human rights activity should take action."

Israel captured the West Bank, along with the Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem, in the 1967 Mideast war. Israel has since annexed east Jerusalem in a move that is not recognized internationally, and it withdrew from Gaza in 2005.

Most of the international community considers settlements illegal and an obstacle to creating a Palestinian state. Israel disputes this, saying the fate of the settlements must be resolved through negotiations with the Palestinians.

Israel's banks lend money to homebuyers, settlement councils or to companies carrying out construction in the West Bank. Most also have branches in settlements.

Israeli law requires banks to accept settlers as customers, meaning they cannot refuse to open accounts for them. But a legal analysis by Human Rights Watch of Israeli banking laws concluded that banks are not obligated to provide financial backing for construction in the West Bank.

While an anti-discrimination law prohibits refusal of service based on place of residence, the report said banks could cite other reasons for declining to provide loans, such as the construction's implications for Palestinians' human rights. The law also allows companies to decline to serve certain areas so long as they provide advance notice to customers.

"It is Human Rights Watch's assessment that banks can, under domestic law, avoid providing many services that support settlements and settlement activity, and that doing so is necessary to fulfill their human rights responsibilities," the report said.

The relevant laws have yet to be challenged in court, meaning the report offers only one interpretation of how they may be read.

But the group presents a warning to Israel's banking sector: Operating in the settlements risks inviting divestment from ethically-minded shareholders. Bashi cited a 2016 move by the pension fund for the United Methodist Church that blocked five Israeli banks from its investment portfolio, saying they profit from rights abuses.

The Association of Banks in Israel, an umbrella group, declined to comment on the report's claims. Spokespeople for Israel's major banks either declined comment or referred queries to the banking association. Israel's central bank had no immediate comment.

Human Rights Watch said the five largest banks in Israel did not respond to questions about whether they adhere to the U.N. guiding principles. Four of the country's biggest banks are members of the U.N. Global Compact, a group of companies that calls on its members to "make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses."

Eugene Kontorovich, an international law expert at the Kohelet Policy Forum, a conservative think tank, disputed the report's claim.

He said that private companies are not obliged under international law to restrict where they work even if others believe the settlements are illegal. He said companies are not necessarily violating human rights if they conduct business in an area where violations are said to occur.

"Granting a mortgage is not a human rights violation," he said.

Settlements have grown rapidly over the decades, providing a lucrative market for bank loans and mortgages, and an incentive for the banks to continue to offer funding.

Human Rights Watch has previously issued a report claiming businesses operating in the settlements contribute to Israel's violation of human rights and has called on them to cease their activities there.

iPhone X puts exclamation point on Apple's pricing strategy

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE and BARBARA ORTUTAY, AP Technology Writers

CUPERTINO, Calif. (AP) — Apple has made a luxury iPhone that punctuates its technological swagger with a high-priced exclamation point. And that exclamation point appears to be a sign of things to come.

The long-anticipated iPhone X unveiled Tuesday will sell for \$999, double what the original iPhone cost a decade ago and more than any other competing device on the market. That's very much in line with Apple's long-term positioning of itself as a purveyor of pricey aspirational gadgets.

But it's also a clear sign that Apple is ramping up that strategy by continuing to push its prices higher, even though improvements it's bringing to its products are often incremental or derivative. Among other things, that runs contrary to decades in which high-tech device prices have fallen over time, often dramatically, even as the gadgets themselves acquired new features and powers.

On Tuesday, for instance, Apple also introduced a TV streaming box that will sell for \$179, far more than similar devices, and a smartwatch with its own cellular connection that will cost almost \$400. In December, Apple will start selling an internet-connected speaker, the HomePod, priced at \$349, nearly twice as much as Amazon's market-leading Echo speaker.

Apple is also raising the price of its runner-up phones, the iPhone 8 and 8 Plus, which will respectively cost \$50 and \$30 more than their immediate predecessors, the iPhone 7 and 7 Plus.

PAYING MORE FOR SOMEWHAT MORE

The premium pricing strategy reflects Apple's long-held belief that consumers will pay more for products that are so well designed that they can't fathom living without them.

Apple CEO Tim Cook left little doubt in the company's confidence in the iPhone X (pronounced "ten"), whose name references the decade that's passed since company co-founder Steve Jobs first pulled out an iPhone that sold for \$499.

Cook attempted to frame the iPhone X as a similar breakthrough, hailing it as "the biggest leap forward" since the original iPhone.

But the original iPhone revolutionized society by putting connected hand-held computers and apps into the hands of millions of ordinary people. The iPhone X mostly promises to do what earlier smartphones have done, only better.

The technological wizardry in the iPhone X is unquestionably impressive. It includes a bright new edge-to-edge screen, a special artificial-intelligence-enabled chip, new sensors for facial recognition and a grab-bag of fun items like animated emojis that mimic your expressions, portrait-mode selfies that blur the background, an augmented reality game platform and wireless charging. Apple said the phone's battery will last two hours longer than that of the iPhone 7.

But rival phones — many of them from Samsung — already offer similar displays, facial recognition, augmented reality and wireless charging, if often in cruder forms that mostly haven't won over large numbers of phone users.

BREAKING NEW GROUND

None of which is to say that Apple won't break new ground. In particular, the iPhone X gives Apple the opportunity to bring augmented reality — essentially the projection of computer-generated images into real-world surroundings, a la the monster hunts in "Pokemon Go" — into mainstream use.

No one can say with certainty what sort of "killer app" will make augmented reality a hit. Whatever it turns out to be, it seems as likely to emerge from an unknown startup as an established company. But Apple is certainly taking a stab at the problem.

On Tuesday, Apple demonstrate a simple use for sophisticated camera technology on the iPhone X with "animoji," which lets people animate emoji characters with their voices and facial expressions — and then send them to their friends.

Showing off a new technology with something that everyday people can use and understand is "what Apple does best," said Gartner analyst Brian Blau. Augmented reality won't be restricted to the iPhone X; the apps will also run on hundreds of millions of other iPhones so long as they install new operating-system

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software called iOS 11 when Apple pushes out a free update next week.

In a way, Apple may have its rivals to thank for this opportunity. Fiercer competition from Samsung, Google and Huawei increased the pressure on Apple to make a big splash with its new iPhone, says technology analyst Patrick Moorhead.

"It looks like they have a good chance at creating a new market segment called the 'super phone,'" Moorhead said. "You could tell they really poured their heart and soul into this."

Other Apple devices are also getting better. A new Apple Watch can finally make phone calls and stream music over cellular networks without an iPhone nearby, and the company's Apple TV streaming box will now deliver super-sharp "4K" video.

Ortutay reported from New York. AP technology writer Tali Arbel contributed to this story from New York; technology writer Ryan Nakashima contributed from Palo Alto, Calif.

Roaring 20: Indians tie AL record with 20th straight win

By TOM WITHERS, AP Sports Writer

CLEVELAND (AP) — Francisco Lindor skipped through the doorway and into the Indians' clubhouse, where the pulsating music was at an ear-splitting level.

As many of his teammates dressed quickly with another game just 14 hours away, Cleveland's star shortstop worked the room, exchanging high-fives with anyone he could find.

It's almost unthinkable for a team to win 20 straight games.

Usually, that only happens in the movies.

"Moneyball" has its sequel.

Following a familiar script of scoring first, playing strong defense and riding dominant pitching, the Indians extended their winning streak to 20 and matched the AL mark held by the 2002 Oakland Athletics, beating the Detroit Tigers 2-0 on Tuesday night.

Cleveland's streak, which began Aug. 24 in Boston, is tied for the majors' second-longest in 82 years — and the Indians show no signs of stopping.

"It's special," Lindor said. "As a kid, you dream about playing in front of a lot of fans and the crowd goes nuts. That's what you want. This is for them. It's not for us."

Lindor homered leading off the first and Corey Kluber (16-4) strengthened his Cy Young Award case with a five-hitter as Cleveland joined the 2002 A's, 1935 Chicago Cubs (21) and 1916 New York Giants (26) as the only teams since 1900 to win at least 20 in a row.

"It's pretty crazy," Kluber said. "To go almost three weeks without losing a game is not something that you ever really expect."

The Progressive Field crowd of 24,654, hanging on each pitch as though it was October, stood and roared when Kluber sprinted to the mound for the ninth.

Second baseman Jose Ramirez made a sensational diving stop in short right field to throw out Ian Kinsler for the second out, and after allowing a double to Alex Presley, Kluber sealed win No. 20 — and Cleveland's seventh shutout during the streak — by getting Miguel Cabrera on an easy grounder to third.

Fireworks exploded overhead and the Indians lined up single-file the same way they have for weeks to celebrate yet another win in this unlikely streak.

"For sure, it's something special," Lindor said. "It's going to be there forever."

Although they insist they're not focused on the streak, the Indians are playing as though they don't want it to end.

They're now within reach of the Giants' revered 101-year-old mark, which includes a tie that interrupted 12- and 14-game unbeaten runs. However, the Elias Sports Bureau, the official statistical custodian for Major League Baseball, has always regarded the Giants' stretch as the gold standard because tie games were replayed from the start back then.

Cleveland can equal the Cubs' 21-game run Wednesday afternoon.

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The Indians and A's, whose unexpected run to the postseason 15 years ago was re-told in the film starring Brad Pitt, don't have much in common besides their 20-game streaks.

Oakland was an overachieving squad loaded with pitching and a roster comprised of low-salaried players assembled by a front office that forced baseball to rethink how it evaluated talent. The Indians, on the other hand, have spent millions to get better, and have been expected to win — big.

Maybe not at this amazing rate, but after getting to Game 7 in 2016, Cleveland was a favorite to return to the World Series.

Closing in on their second consecutive AL Central title, the Indians figured to keep things going with Kluber on the mound, and the right-hander continued his own superb stretch.

Kluber improved to 8-1 in his last nine starts and lowered his ERA to an AL-best 2.45 with his third shutout of the season and fifth complete game. He allowed a leadoff double in the first to Kinsler, but stranded him at third by striking out Cabrera and Nicholas Castellanos to end the inning.

Cabrera came in batting .434 against Kluber but went 0 for 4 with two strikeouts.

The Tigers have been beaten six times by the Indians during their streak.

"In a way, it doesn't surprise me," Detroit manager Brad Ausmus said of Cleveland's three-week dominance. "Because if any team could do it, it's them. They've got it all."

While understanding the fascination with his team's roll, Indians manager Terry Francona has been downplaying the streak so as not to make it a distraction. He chooses his words carefully whether he's talking to reporters, family or friends.

"I got one really good buddy, one of my best friends, but he's notoriously bad luck," Francona said. "Everybody kind of refers to him as like the gray cloud. He knows who he is and you talk about superstitions, I will not talk to him. He is a text only."

"Oh, yeah. He knows. It cost me one job, he's not getting in the way again."

DYNAMIC DUO

Lindor and Ramirez have carried the Indians throughout the streak.

Not only is Cleveland's double-play combination making jaw-dropping plays in the field, they're the team's hottest hitters. Lindor is batting .359 (28 for 78) with nine homers and 19 RBIs while Ramirez is hitting .391 (25 for 64) with eight homers and 14 RBIs.

MILLER'S MOMENT

Indians All-Star LHP Andrew Miller could be pitching again as early as Thursday. He's been on the disabled list with knee tendinitis, but after a successful simulated game Monday, one of the game's top relievers is ready to go. Francona said the team is weighing whether to activate Miller for the series opener against Kansas City or have him pitch another simulated game.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Indians: 2B Jason Kipnis is pushing to return Sunday after being sidelined since Aug. 23 with a strained hamstring. Kipnis will play center field as the club needs to add outfield depth after rookie Bradley Zimmer broke his left hand. Zimmer's fracture required a plate and nine screws in surgery. He will be re-examined in two weeks, but doctors have estimated he'll need two months to recover.

Tigers: DH Victor Martinez underwent a heart ablation to correct an irregular heartbeat that caused the five-time All-Star to be hospitalized last month. The 38-year-old is expected to return next season. RHP Michael Fulmer had ulnar nerve transposition surgery in Pensacola, Florida. Last season's AL Rookie of the Year is expected to be ready for spring training.

UP NEXT

The Indians will go for No. 21 in a row Wednesday at 12:10 p.m. with RHP Mike Clevinger, who hasn't allowed a run in his past three outings, starting against Tigers RHP Buck Farmer.

This story has been corrected with Kluber throwing a five-hitter.

More AP baseball: <https://apnews.com/tag/MLBbaseball>

Odd ball: Indians chase win streak record that includes tie

By TOM WITHERS, AP Sports Writer

CLEVELAND (AP) — As they climb toward baseball history with every win, the streaking Cleveland Indians are chasing a hallowed, 101-year-old record that includes an asterisk.

A major league asterisk.

The 26-game winning string by the 1916 New York Giants includes a tie.

"I think I knew that," Indians closer Cody Allen said.

Not everyone is aware of the peculiarity. And as the Indians, who on Tuesday night became the fourth team since 1900 to win 20 straight, have moved into position to threaten the Giants' revered mark, questions have arisen as to why a team that won 12 consecutive games, played a tie and then ripped off 14 more wins in a row would have the record.

It's simple. It's complicated. It's baseball.

"A tie was never an acceptable result of a baseball game," explained Steve Hirdt, executive vice president at the Elias Sports Bureau, Major League Baseball's official record keeper. "If one happened because of darkness or rain or some certain circumstance, the game was played over.

"Sports fans are used to the nuance in hockey and football of the difference between a winning streak and an unbeaten streak or consecutive games streak without a loss. Baseball has never had those two different records. They would replay the game until a legitimate win or loss result was achieved."

The 1916 Giants, 1935 Chicago Cubs (21), 2002 Oakland Athletics (20) and 2017 Indians are the only teams in the modern era to post winning streaks of at least 20 games. Cleveland joined the exclusive club when ace and Cy Young Award co-favorite Corey Kluber tossed a five-hitter in a 2-0 win over the Detroit Tigers.

Now that they're at 20, the Indians have five more home games to pull closer to a record — albeit with its slight abnormality — that has endured.

Perhaps because of confusion over the tie, New York's 26-game streak has been absent from lists on some baseball websites and elsewhere. The omission could be because some databases only recognize wins and losses and when the Giants' 1916 season is calculated, there is an interruption in a streak that is widely known to hardcore baseball fans as the one to beat.

"The Giants' 26-game winning streak has existed since the beginning of time," Hirdt said. "I do not know why certain people are looking at the 21 now and holding that up as the record or alternately trying to parse language so that they can somehow exclude the 26.

"It's the longest winning streak, it's the record for most consecutive wins, etc., because a tie game breaks neither a winning streak or losing streak for a team because it always gets replayed unless the season ends first."

Those streaky New York Giants, guided by irascible manager John McGraw, were in the midst of a 31-game homestand at the Polo Grounds when they won 12 straight before a Sept. 18 game against Pittsburgh — 42-year-old Honus Wagner drove in the Pirates' only run with a sacrifice fly — was called by rain after nine innings and the score tied 1-1.

The Giants came back the following day and, playing their third doubleheader in four days, swept the Pirates. They didn't lose again until Sept. 30, falling 8-3 to the Boston Braves.

Earlier that season, the Giants won 17 straight games — all on the road — to offset a 2-13 start. Despite its tendency to take off on a tear, New York finished 86-66 and in fourth place in an eight-team league won by the Brooklyn Robins.

"Incredible," Hirdt said of the Giants' streakiness. "I guess if they weren't streaking, they weren't interested."

Today, games that are tied when called are suspended and resume at that point. There are instances when games end in ties, as happened to the Cubs last season when a late September game with Pittsburgh ended 1-1 because the teams were not scheduled to meet again.

During their streak, the Indians have been bulldozing teams, outscoring opponents 134-32 during a remarkable run that began on Aug. 24 with a 13-6 win at Boston followed by three straight shutouts at

home over Kansas City.

Since then, there's been nothing but Ws, let alone a tie.

But tied games were fairly common a century ago, when doubleheaders often were played in the late afternoon and there were no stadium lights.

While the Indians insist they're not chasing history, often repeating the one-day-at-a-time cliché athletes typically fall back on to explain success, Hirdt, like many baseball fans, is eager to see if Cleveland can topple the Giants' gigantic mark.

"This is the record that I always wanted to see challenged," he said. "People always ask me, 'What record would you like to see broken?' I've always been a team-oriented guy and I tell them I would like to see a consecutive winning streak.

"And here it is."

This story has been corrected with Kluber throwing a five-hitter.

More AP baseball: <https://apnews.com/tag/MLBbaseball>

Europe leaders answer anger over Irma response in Caribbean

By **DANICA COTO, NICOLAS GARRIGA and SYLVIE CORBET, Associated Press**

MARIGOT, St. Martin (AP) — Wrapping up a sweeping visit to the destroyed island of St. Martin, France's president responded to anger that his government didn't do enough to handle Hurricane Irma's wrath and promised to evacuate residents of his country's Caribbean territories and provide services and shelter for those who choose to stay.

French President Emmanuel Macron outlined a plan to distribute drinking water, food and medical help using the islands' radio stations and even megaphones, if necessary. He also said about half of the island's mobile connectivity had been restored and all "essential communication" would be back by next week.

"What we have seen today are people determined to rebuild and return to a normal life," he said Tuesday in a press conference. "They are impatient for answers and some are very, very angry. The anger is legitimate because it is a result of the fear they have faced and of being very fatigued. It is certain that some want to leave, and we will help them in that effort."

He said France was bringing in air-conditioned tents so children can start classes again soon, and he said a center would be established by Monday to begin processing requests for financial help.

Macron pledged to rebuild St. Martin as a "model" for withstanding future storms.

"I don't want to rebuild St. Martin as it was," he said. "We have seen there are many homes that were built too precariously, with fragile infrastructure. The geography of the homes was not adapted to the risks."

Macron said the Category 5 hurricane killed 11 people in St. Martin, while another four people died on the Dutch side of the island, bringing the death toll in the Caribbean to at least 37.

The visit came as residents tried to revive a sense of normalcy with small gestures like sharing radios and rescuing dogs.

The Dutch Red Cross said more than 200 people were still listed as missing on St. Maarten, but with communications extremely spotty a week after the storm hit, it wasn't clear how many were simply without cell service and power and unable to let friends and family know they survived. The organization said 90 percent of buildings on the Dutch territory were damaged and a third destroyed as Irma roared across the island it shares with French St. Martin.

Yogesh Bodha, a jewelry store employee, said there was no response from European officials for two days and he hasn't seen many changes since Dutch authorities arrived on St. Maarten.

"They should've been more organized than they were," he said. "We have not received any food or water. They say it's on its way. Let's see."

For Liseth Echevarría, who works as a bartender in St. Maarten, offering whatever she could to family, strangers and abandoned pets was helping her cope — and those around her were doing the same.

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The manager of a marina next door threw over a hose so Echevarría and her husband could have a semblance of an outdoor shower. He also offered them a temporary power connection from his generator so they could charge phones and listen to the sole radio station still broadcasting.

"This is the only communication that St. Maarten has with the world right now," she said.

It was thanks to that radio station that she found out about a flight for all Latin Americans stuck in St. Maarten. She rushed to the airport with her brother, who was evacuating back to Colombia. As she dropped him off, Echevarría saw a Yorkshire terrier tied to a metal barricade, abandoned by a passenger fleeing the island and told they couldn't bring pets on the plane.

Echevarría scooped up the dog named Oliver and took him home to meet her three other dogs, including one rescued from a neighbor's property. The neighbor fled with her son after the hurricane destroyed their home. There was nothing left of it other than jagged pieces of wood and a shower curtain covered in colorful butterflies tangled in a toppled tree.

Echevarría's husband, Lex Kools, a civil engineer, jumps over the fence every day to feed the other two dogs on the property.

"They were attacking each other, they were so hungry," he said.

At Echevarría's and Kools' home, the couple fed relatives and the girlfriend and two children of Echevarría's cousin, all of whom were staying with them.

Near the front door, a large plastic table sagged under the weight of boxes of spaghetti and cookies, soup cans, chips, bags of almonds and macadamia nuts and rice. Underneath were dozens of bottles of water.

The couple said they took the goods from a grocery store blown open during the storm.

They said they had planned on buying the items, but no one was working at the store and they were running out of food and water. They looked at each other as they observed looting.

"Do we do this as well?" Kools recalled thinking. "Everybody was just running inside. It was chaos."

Dozens of people stood in line for hours Tuesday waiting for flights, some of which never materialized.

"We've been here since 7 a.m.," said Rosa Vanderpool, an accountant who was trying to get her step-daughter and 4-year-old step-granddaughter on a flight to Curacao.

"We only have two days of food left," she said. "We don't know if there are any planes. We don't know anything."

Associated Press journalists Danica Coto reported this story in Philipsburg and AP writer Sylvie Corbet reported from Paris. AP writers Mike Corder in The Hague, The Netherlands, and Gregory Katz in London contributed to this report.

An earlier version of this report had an incorrect spelling for the Dutch side of the island.

HURRICANE NEWSLETTER — Get the best of the AP's all-formats reporting on Irma and Harvey in your inbox: <http://apne.ws/ahYQGtb>

FEMA estimates 25 percent of Florida Keys homes are gone

By JASON DEAREN and MARTHA MENDOZA, Associated Press

LOWER MATECUMBE KEY, Fla. (AP) — With 25 percent of the homes in the Florida Keys feared destroyed, emergency workers Tuesday rushed to find Hurricane Irma's victims — dead or alive — and deliver food and water to the stricken island chain.

As crews labored to repair the lone highway connecting the Keys, residents of some of the islands closest to Florida's mainland were allowed to return and get their first look at the devastation.

"It's going to be pretty hard for those coming home," said Petrona Hernandez, whose concrete home on Plantation Key with 35-foot walls was unscathed, unlike others a few blocks away. "It's going to be devastating to them."

But because of disrupted phone service and other damage, the full extent of the destruction was still a

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question mark, more than two days after Irma roared into the Keys with 130 mph (209 kph) winds.

Elsewhere in Florida, life inched closer to normal, with some flights again taking off, many curfews lifted and major theme parks reopening. Cruise ships that extended their voyages and rode out the storm at sea began returning to port with thousands of passengers.

The number of people without electricity in the steamy late-summer heat dropped to 9.5 million — just under half of Florida's population. Utility officials warned it could take 10 days or more for power to be fully restored. About 110,000 people remained in shelters across Florida.

The number of deaths blamed on Irma in Florida climbed to 12, in addition to four in South Carolina and two in Georgia. At least 37 people were killed in the Caribbean.

"We've got a lot of work to do, but everybody's going to come together," Florida Gov. Rick Scott said. "We're going to get this state rebuilt."

In hard-hit Naples, on Florida's southwest coast, more than 300 people stood outside a Publix grocery store in the morning, waiting for it to open.

A manager came to the store's sliding door with occasional progress reports. Once he said that workers were throwing out produce that had gone bad; another time, that they were trying to get the cash registers working.

One man complained loudly that the line had too many gaps. Others shook their heads in frustration at word of another delay.

At the front of the line after a more than two-hour wait, Phill Chirchirillo, 57, said days without electricity and other basics were beginning to wear on people.

"At first it's like, 'We're safe, thank God.' Now they're testy," he said. "The order of the day is to keep people calm."

Irma's rainy remnants, meanwhile, pushed through Alabama and Mississippi after drenching Georgia. Flash-flood watches and warnings were issued across the Southeast.

While nearly all of Florida was engulfed by the 400-mile-wide (645-kilometer) storm, the Keys — home to about 70,000 people — appeared to be the hardest hit. Drinking water and power were cut off, all three of the islands' hospitals were closed, and the supply of gasoline was extremely limited.

Search-and-rescue teams made their way into the more distant reaches of the Keys, and an aircraft carrier was positioned off Key West to help. Officials said it was not known how many people ignored evacuation orders and stayed behind in the Keys.

Monroe County began setting up shelters and food-and-water distribution points for Irma's victims in the Keys.

Crews also worked to repair two washed-out, 300-foot (90-meter) sections of U.S. 1, the highway that runs through the Keys, and check the safety of the 42 bridges linking the islands.

Federal Emergency Management Agency administrator Brock Long said preliminary estimates suggested that 25 percent of the homes in the Keys were destroyed and 65 percent sustained major damage.

"Basically, every house in the Keys was impacted," he said.

In Islamorada, a trailer park was devastated, the homes ripped apart as if by a giant claw. A sewage-like stench hung over the place.

Debris was scattered everywhere, including refrigerators, washers and dryers, a 25-foot (8-meter) fishing boat and a Jacuzzi. Homes were torn open to give a glimpse of their contents, including a bedroom with a small Christmas tree decorated with starfish.

One man and his family came to check on a weekend home and found it destroyed. The sight was too much to bear. The man told his family to get back in the car, and they drove off toward Miami.

In Key Largo, Lisa Storey and her husband said they had yet to be contacted by the power company or by city, county or state officials. As she spoke to a reporter, a helicopter passed overhead.

"That's a beautiful sound, a rescue sound," she said.

Authorities stopped people and checked for documentation such as proof of residency or business ownership before allowing them back into the Upper Keys, including Key Largo, Tavernier and Islamorada.

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The Lower Keys — including the chain's most distant and most populous island, Key West, with 27,000 people — were still off-limits, with a roadblock in place where the highway was washed out.

In Lower Matecumbe Key, just south of Islamorada, 57-year-old Donald Garner checked on his houseboat, which had only minor damage. Nearby, three other houseboats were partially sunk. Garner had tied his to mangroves.

"That's the only way to make it," said Garner, who works for a shrimp company.

Although the Keys are studded with mansions and beachfront resorts, about 13 percent of the people live in poverty and could face big obstacles as the cleanup begins.

"People who bag your groceries when you're on vacation — the bus drivers, hotel cleaners, cooks and dishwashers — they're already living beyond paycheck to paycheck," said Stephanie Kaple, who runs an organization that helps the homeless in the Keys.

Corey Smith, a UPS driver who rode out the hurricane in Key Largo, said it was a relief that many buildings on the island escaped major damage. But he said conditions were still not good, with branches blocking roads and supermarkets closed.

"They're shoving people back to a place with no resources," he said by telephone. "It's just going to get crazy pretty quick."

Mendoza reported from Atlanta. Associated Press writers Terry Spencer in Palm Beach County; Gary Fineout and Joe Reedy in Tallahassee; Jay Reeves in Immokalee; Terrance Harris in Orlando; Claire Galofaro in Jacksonville; and Freida Frisaro, Jennifer Kay, Curt Anderson and David Fischer in Miami contributed to this report.

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Senate GOP struggles with deficit in work on budget, taxes

By **MARCY GORDON** and **ANDREW TAYLOR**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Republicans are struggling with how many billions of dollars President Donald Trump's tax code overhaul will add to the deficit as they work on a GOP budget plan that's a prerequisite to any far-reaching change in the nation's tax system.

Trump had dinner Tuesday with a group of Republican and Democratic senators to talk taxes, after Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and GOP members of the Budget Committee met with two top Trump administration officials to make progress on forging the budget plan, which is required to stave off potential Democratic blocking tactics and pass the subsequent tax bill with just GOP votes.

The as-yet-undrafted bill to overhaul the tax code is the top priority for Trump and Republicans after the collapse of their effort to dismantle Barack Obama's health care law. Trump's top economic adviser, Gary Cohn, and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin met with McConnell, R-Ky., and budget panel members.

"From my standpoint, let's set ourselves up for success on tax reform," Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Wis., a member of the committee, said before the meeting.

The meeting ended in late afternoon without specific proposed numbers for the size of the budget coming forward. Not wanting to show disappointment, participants stressed that it was intended to be preliminary.

Finance Committee Chairman Sen. Orrin Hatch said afterward that the group, which discussed the broad outlines of the deficit trade-off for a new tax bill, had not reached an agreement. Hatch, R-Utah, said he expected more information to come soon.

Mnuchin signaled ahead of the meeting that the administration would be open to changes sought by lawmakers to improve the chances for passage of a tax overhaul this year. In an interview with CNBC, Mnuchin also said the administration would "absolutely" consider making tax cuts retroactive to the start of this year if overhaul legislation didn't pass until 2018.

In addition, the administration would consider including an infrastructure spending bill as part of the tax

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legislation, Mnuchin said.

"This is a pass-fail exercise," he said, indicating that the critical goal was to enact legislation. "Passing tax reform, which hasn't been done in 31 years, that is a win," he said.

Capitol Hill Republicans have promised that the tax rewrite will be "revenue neutral" and not add to the nation's \$20 trillion-plus debt, but they are in fact counting on budget maneuvers to find hundreds of billions of dollars to help maximize cuts to corporate and individual tax rates. For starters, they are going to assume the tax legislation will mean higher economic growth and greater future tax revenues.

Underscoring the president's desire for tax legislation, Trump hosted a bipartisan group of senators for dinner at the White House, including a trio of moderate Democrats from states Trump won last November and whose votes he'd like to have on a tax bill.

Democratic Sens. Joe Manchin of West Virginia, Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota and Joe Donnelly of Indiana were joined at dinner by Republican Sens. John Thune of North Dakota, Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania and Hatch, the White House said.

"I had a productive conversation with @POTUS @realDonaldTrump about ways we can work together in a bipartisan manner on tax reform," Manchin tweeted after the dinner, along with a photo of himself and the president. He said in a statement that he would "continue to fight for a simpler tax code that lowers rates for West Virginians," but said that must be done "without adding to our staggering debt."

Heitkamp said she welcomed any chance "to talk with the president about issues important to North Dakota" and was looking forward to reviewing Trump's plans in more detail.

"It's encouraging that this meeting included Republican and Democratic senators, as I've long said I want to work with those on both sides of the aisle on a comprehensive, permanent tax reform plan that works for North Dakota workers and retirees and helps grow the economy, and I hope these bipartisan discussions continue," she said.

Manchin, Heitkamp and Donnelly are the only Democratic senators who did not sign a letter addressed to Republican leaders and Trump that said the Democratic caucus would not support a tax overhaul that cuts taxes for the "top 1 percent" or adds to the government's \$20 trillion debt.

The White House, meanwhile, said the president "looks forward to continuing to work with members from both parties to grow the economy, provide tax relief and look for real solutions."

"When members of different parties sit down together for friendly conversation about the legislative agenda, after not doing so for 8 years, it certainly is progress," Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said.

House action has been held up by a battle between moderates and conservatives over whether to pair spending cuts with the filibuster-proof tax measure. Senate action has been on hold while the House struggles.

An impasse could doom the tax overhaul effort.

GOP aides say the Senate panel is also likely to reject a House plan to link \$200 billion in spending cuts to the tax legislation — a key demand of House conservatives.

The momentum toward deficit-financed tax cuts runs counter to the longtime promises from top Capitol Hill leaders that this year's effort to rewrite the tax code wouldn't add to the government's \$20 trillion-plus national debt. And it sets up a scenario in which many of the promised new tax rates would expire after 10 years. That's because of the Senate's arcane rules.

On the budget panel, Sen. Bob Corker, R-Tenn., is hoping to limit the deficit cost of the tax effort, while Toomey is on the other end of the spectrum favoring more robust deficit-financed tax cuts. GOP leaders have asked them to try to craft an agreement among the 12 budget panel Republicans. Any Republican defection on the budget plan would deadlock the narrowly divided committee.

Associated Press writer Darlene Superville contributed to this report.

Justices allow Trump administration ban on most refugees

By MARK SHERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court is allowing the Trump administration to maintain its restrictive policy on refugees.

The justices on Tuesday agreed to an administration request to block a lower court ruling that would have eased the refugee ban and allowed up to 24,000 refugees to enter the country before the end of October.

The order was not the court's last word on the travel policy that President Donald Trump first rolled out in January. The justices are scheduled to hear arguments on Oct. 10 on the legality of the bans on travelers from six mostly Muslim countries and refugees anywhere in the world.

It's unclear, though, what will be left for the court to decide. The 90-day travel ban lapses in late September and the 120-day refugee ban will expire a month later.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Tuesday night: "We are pleased that the Supreme Court has allowed key components of the order to remain in effect. We will continue to vigorously defend the order leading up to next month's oral argument in the Supreme Court."

The administration has yet to say whether it will seek to renew the bans, make them permanent or expand the travel ban to other countries.

Lower courts have ruled that the bans violate the Constitution and federal immigration law. The high court has agreed to review those rulings. Its intervention so far has been to evaluate what parts of the policy can take effect in the meantime.

The justices said in June that the administration could not enforce the bans against people who have a "bona fide" relationship with people or entities in the United States. The justices declined to define the required relationships more precisely.

A panel of the San Francisco-based 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a district judge's order that would have allowed refugees to enter the United States if a resettlement agency in the U.S. had agreed to take them in.

The administration objected, saying the relationship between refugees and resettlement agencies shouldn't count. The high court's unsigned, one-sentence order agreed with the administration, at least for now.

The appeals court also upheld another part of the judge's ruling that applies to the ban on visitors from Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

Grandparents and cousins of people already in the U.S. can't be excluded from the country under the travel ban, as the Trump administration had wanted. The administration did not ask the Supreme Court to block that part of the ruling.

Attorney: Girl in Slender Man case had 'broken mind'

Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — A Wisconsin girl who told investigators she helped stab a classmate was convinced the crime would protect her and her family from a horror character called Slender Man who she thought was real, her attorney told jurors Tuesday.

The defense is trying to convince jurors that Anissa Weier was suffering from a mental illness at the time of the stabbing at a Waukesha park in 2014 and therefore is not criminally responsible.

Payton Leutner was stabbed 19 times in a plot by Weier and co-defendant Morgan Geyser and left in a wooded park where she eventually crawled for help after the girls left, according to prosecutors. A passing bicyclist found Leutner. Weier and Geyser were arrested later that day and said they were walking to meet Slender Man in a northern Wisconsin forest. All three girls were 12 years old at the time.

"Anissa's broken mind caused her to lose touch with reality," defense attorney Joseph Smith told jurors. "Anissa was under the command and control of a delusional disorder."

During his opening statements, Smith played portions of a police interrogation of Weier shortly after her

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arrest in which she described a plot to kill Leutner in order to become a proxy of Slender Man, whom she described as tall and faceless with numerous tentacles capable of killing her family in a matter of seconds.

Weier, now 15, sat nearby while the snippets of the interview were played on a large screen for jurors.

Smith described Weier as a loner who struggled to fit in with her peers and who found a friend in Geyser. While Weier was dealing with her parents' divorce, teachers began noticing symptoms of depression, he said. With Geyser, Weier developed a "delusional belief system" and together they made a plan to kill Leutner and become Slender Man's proxies, Smith said. Although Weier did not physically stab Leutner, in her mind she knew it had to be done, Smith told jurors.

Waukesha County Assistant District Attorney Kevin Osborne told jurors that Weier may have believed Slender Man was real, but she had the mental capacity to know she was committing a crime. Osborne says the initial plan was for Weier to stab Leutner, but Weier couldn't do it and instead directed Geyser to do the stabbing.

"They knew this was wrong. They understood what they were doing was wrong," Osborne said.

Osborne said the police interviews show it wasn't until after the attack had taken place that Geyser told Weier that Weier or her family could have been in danger.

"She goes along because she wants to preserve the one and only friendship" with Geyser, he said.

William Weier, the first defense witness, testified that his daughter went through trying times in grade school as her parents divorced but he never saw anything to suggest she needed mental health care.

"In my opinion, she was a normal child," he said.

A former classmate of Weier's who also was interested in Slender Man testified that Weier told her one day that she had discovered how to become a Slender Man servant: By killing a friend.

The girl, identified in court only by her initials, K.N., testified that Weier then told her: "Don't worry, it's not you."

The lead investigator in the case, Waukesha police Det. Thomas Casey, also took the stand Tuesday.

Both Weier and Geyser were charged with being a party to attempted first-degree intentional homicide. Weier struck a deal with prosecutors in August in which she pleaded guilty to being a party to attempted second-degree intentional homicide, essentially acknowledging she committed all the elements of the offense. But she also pleaded not guilty due to mental illness of defect, setting up the trial on her mental status.

Judge Michael Bohren told jurors they must decide whether Weier had a mental illness at the time of the crime and if so, whether she lacked the capacity to understand her wrongful conduct.

Psychologists testified at a previous court hearing that Weier suffered from persistent depression and a delusional disorder linked to schizotypy, a diminished ability to separate reality from fantasy.

At least 10 of the 12 jurors must agree on a verdict.

Geyser has pleaded not guilty to being a party to first-degree attempted homicide. Her trial is set to begin Oct. 9.

American household income finally topped 1999 peak last year

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER, AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a stark reminder of the damage done by the Great Recession and of the modest recovery that followed, the median American household only last year finally earned more than it did in 1999.

Incomes for a typical U.S. household, adjusted for inflation, rose 3.2 percent from 2015 to 2016 to \$59,039, the Census Bureau said. The median is the point at which half the households fall below and half are above.

Last year's figure is slightly above the previous peak of \$58,665, reached in 1999. It is also the first time since the recession ended in 2009 that the typical household earned more than it did in 2007, when the recession began.

Trudi Renwick, the bureau's assistant division chief, cautioned that the census in 2013 changed how it asks households about income, making historical comparisons less than precise.

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Still, the Census data is closely watched because of its comprehensive nature. It is based on interviews with 70,000 households and includes detailed data on incomes and poverty across a range of demographic groups.

Elise Gould, a senior economist at the Economic Policy Institute, said that adjusting for the change in methodology, median income still remains below its 1999 peak. Yet she added that the census report shows that American households have made significant economic progress in 2015 and 2016.

"We are definitely pulling ourselves out of the deep hole of the Great Recession," Gould said on a conference call with reporters.

Median household income rose \$4,641, or 8.5 percent, from 2014 through 2016. That's the best two-year gain on records dating to 1967, according to analysts at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

Yet that improvement comes after a steep recession and a slow recovery that left most American households with barely any income increases. The lack of meaningful raises has left many people feeling left behind economically, a sentiment that factored into the 2016 elections.

The report also showed that income inequality worsened last year, extending a trend in place for roughly four decades. Average incomes among the wealthiest 5 percent climbed 5.5 percent to \$375,088. Average incomes for the poorest one-fifth of households, meanwhile rose 2.5 percent to \$12,943.

Other measures of Americans' economic health improved. The poverty rate fell last year to 12.7 percent from 13.5 percent, Census said. The number of people living below the poverty line declined 2.5 million to 40.6 million.

That brings the proportion of households living below the poverty line back to pre-recession levels, though it remains about one and half percentage points higher than its lowest point, in 2000.

A family of four with an income below \$24,563 was defined as poor last year.

And the proportion of Americans without health insurance fell to 8.8 percent, the report showed, down from 9.1 percent. It is the lowest proportion on record.

The Census report covers 2016, the last year of the Obama administration.

Robert Greenstein, president of the CBPP, argued that the agenda being pursued by President Donald Trump and congressional Republican leaders would reverse those gains.

The income gains reflect mostly a rise in the number of Americans with jobs and in people working full time, the agency said. That means households were more likely to include a full-time worker. It also suggests that pay raises for those who already had jobs remained meager.

About 1.2 million more Americans earned income in 2016 than in 2015, and 2.2 million more had full-time year-round jobs.

Incomes rose for most demographic groups. African-American median household income jumped 5.7 percent to \$39,490 in 2016 from the previous year, the most of any group. Among Latinos, it rose to 4.3 percent to \$47,675. For whites, the gain was 2 percent to \$65,041.

Asian-Americans reported the highest household incomes, at \$81,431, which was little changed from 2015.

Jared Bernstein, a senior fellow at the CBPP, said the gains among African-Americans typically occur later in an economic recovery as employers widen their searches and step up hiring among traditionally disadvantaged groups.

"The solid economy is helping to close racial gaps," he said. "It won't make them go away, but it is headed in the right direction."

The report found that the gender gap in wages narrowed last year for the first time since 2007. Women earned 80.5 percent of men's earnings, up from 79.6 percent in 2015.

Still, underneath the broad improvements nationwide, pockets of hardship remain. Poverty rates fell in the Northeast and South in 2016 but were mostly unchanged in the Midwest and West.

Una Osili, a researcher at the Salvation Army and a professor of economics at Indiana University, said the nonprofit group reported a spike in requests for health-related assistance in the Midwest last year, driven mostly by demand for opioid addiction treatment.

That happened even in states like Indiana, where the unemployment rate and poverty fell, she said.

In Nevada and some other Western states, the economic recovery has raised housing costs, offsetting some of the benefit of income growth.

In those states, "the recovery is a good thing, but your rent is now higher," Osili said.

Irma's girth and path made for a bizarre Florida storm surge

BY SETH BORENSTEIN and CLAIRE GALOFARO, Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (AP) — Hurricane Irma's devastating storm surge came with weird twists that scientists attribute to the storm's girth, path and some geographic quirks.

A combination of storm surge, heavy rains and swollen rivers sent some of the worst flooding into Jacksonville, Florida, even though Irma roared into the opposite end of the state, had weakened to a tropical storm and its eye stayed at least 80 miles (130 kilometers) away.

Although preliminary data suggest Irma's eye pushed a surge of more than 10 feet (3 meters) onto southwest Florida's Marco Island, the highest water levels were reported hundreds of miles away in Jacksonville and Savannah, Georgia, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

And southwestern Florida, which is prone to surges, saw the opposite at first: a strange-looking negative surge that sucked the water off the sea floor quickly enough to maroon several manatees. After the water pulled away from the beaches and bay, it came back with vengeance, but much of Florida's west coast wasn't swamped as badly as it could have been because Irma's track kept them safe from the storm's stronger eastern side.

"You can call it bizarre; I might call it unusual or unique," said Rick Luettich, director of the Institute of Marine Studies at the University of North Carolina. "What was very unusual about it was, it spanned two coastlines that were in different-facing directions. As a result, you got the opposite behavior on both coastlines."

Tampa "dodged a bullet" on the weaker side of the storm, especially because Irma's southwestern eyewall had been broken up by high winds near Cuba, MIT meteorology professor Kerry Emanuel said.

Jacksonville and the rest of the east coast, on the other hand, got the northeast brunt of the storm, where winds, surge and rainfall are at the strongest. And because hurricane winds spin counterclockwise and lined up perfectly perpendicular to Jacksonville's St. John's River, "it just pushed the water from the Atlantic right into the river," National Hurricane Center spokesman and meteorologist Dennis Feltgen said.

The city's concave coastline and the shallow water off the beach also made for a bigger storm surge buildup, funneling more water into Jacksonville, said storm surge expert Hal Needham of Galveston, Texas.

On top of that, Jacksonville — unlike western Florida — only got one side of Irma, so the wind kept coming from the same direction, pushing the surge even higher, Needham said.

That's why Paul Johnson was surprised when Monday morning he woke up in Jacksonville, looked out the window and saw boats passing by where cars normally drive. The water was licking at his front door. Before long, the flooding rose nearly to the window of his beloved pickup truck.

"I've lived here most of my life, and I've never seen anything like that," he said.

It was worse than last year's Category 5 Matthew, which sat just off shore, because Irma grew to an immense 415 miles (670 kilometers) wide, Luettich said.

"The size of the storm made a huge difference," Luettich said.

People tend to focus on top sustained winds, but that's only part of the equation that goes into storm surges. The storm's size is another major factor, as with Katrina, said Jamie Rhome, who heads the storm surge unit at the National Hurricane Center.

"As bad as it felt on the east coast of Florida, things were significantly worse in the Florida Keys," Rhome said, as well as in the lower part of southwest Florida where the storm's eye passed close by, such as Immokalee.

Negative storm surge happened where Irma's eye moved over water east of the coastline and winds pushed the water away from the shore. That draining of the bay and coast "tricks people," Rhome said, but Needham said the Tampa region has experienced this type of negative storm surge at least twice before.

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And because the reverse surge means the coastline must be refilled before water inundates land, the resulting speed and effect of the surge is lessened, Luettich said.

Johnson said he had joked with his Facebook friends when Irma's track appeared to turn away from Jacksonville that the storm was too afraid to come near. But this storm's punch came from so far away that it never had to.

"She got us back," Johnson said. "She showed us, she sure did."

Galofaro reported from Jacksonville and Borenstein from Washington.

HURRICANE NEWSLETTER — Get the best of the AP's all-formats reporting on Irma and Harvey in your inbox: <http://apne.ws/ahYQGtb>

After Irma, reverse migration back to Florida begins

By **BILL BARROW, Associated Press**

ATLANTA (AP) — With Irma having weakened into inland rainstorms, Floridians are beginning a mass migration back to a battered, water-logged state where millions remains without power.

But traffic maps, social media reports, gasoline trackers and the ever-reliable eye test all say it isn't an easy trip Tuesday and won't be in the days ahead.

"As soon as we hit the state line, it was traffic jams and accidents," said Elizabeth Priore of Fort Lauderdale, as she continued her return drive from Alpharetta, Georgia, late Tuesday afternoon.

Priore said she had managed to find gas and open restaurants along the way, and she said Interstate 95 south of Jacksonville was "moving well."

But traffic cameras elsewhere in the state, particularly along Interstate 75 where it meets the Florida Turnpike 60 miles north of Orlando, showed gridlock.

"We were expecting a nightmare," Priore said, explaining that she decided it was better to brave it than to wait.

Other Floridians are opting to wait it out, fearing the congestion, lane closures, fender benders, shuttered restaurants and gas stations without fuel.

"We're not leaving until Thursday because of the gas situation," said Nick Westbrook, a Coral Gables resident who has settled in Knoxville, Tennessee with his wife and children.

"We have friends on the road, and they're letting us know it's just what I feared it would be."

Adam Bolanos, a high school teacher from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, says he's talking to neighbors and friends on the road, particularly about fuel access. "The shortage is very real," he said.

Bolanos and his family — a three-car caravan with multiple generations and pets — also is waiting in Tennessee.

Florida Gov. Rick Scott and other authorities are urging evacuees not to be in a rush to return, particularly those who live in the hardest-hit areas, from Key West and the southwest coastline near Naples to the flooded neighborhoods of Jacksonville in state's northeast corner.

As power crews dispersed Tuesday, an estimated 15 million Floridians — about 5.6 million residential and commercial customers — were without electricity. Bridges were being inspected around the state, power outages left traffic signals inoperable on key surface roads, and some roadways remained closed due to standing water, downed power lines or debris.

Still, interstates across the southeast filled with traffic, with metro areas in multiple states reporting backups and slower-than-usual traffic.

The gasoline monitoring app GasBuddy reported Tuesday morning that Florida stations were beginning to replenish their supplies, which were depleted from a mass exodus after Scott asked more than 6.5 million residents to evacuate.

The shortages, though, remained high in several Panhandle and northern Florida locales: 62 percent of stations in Gainesville had no gas; 47 percent in Jacksonville; 51 percent in Tallahassee. Those are key

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junctions for travelers looking to return to the southern peninsula.

Christopher Krebs, head of infrastructure protection for the federal Homeland Security Department, told reporters Tuesday in Washington that Harvey, which made landfall in Texas and Louisiana in late August, took a "significant amount" of the nation's refining capacity offline and affected distribution. "As a result," he said, "there may be some fuel supply shortages throughout the Southeast."

In Georgia, transportation officials hoped to ease the traffic burden. They announced plans to suspend construction-related lane closures on interstates and state routes throughout the entire state until Wednesday.

But Irma didn't allow that everywhere. South Carolina road officials said they had to close a lane of southbound Interstate 95 because the storm's winds apparently damaged a culvert that required repair. The resulting backups had already started Tuesday morning.

Some Floridians say they have no choice but to begin their trip home now.

Pam Szymanski of Fort Myers, Florida, had to leave her Atlanta hotel Tuesday. "They're booked," she said, adding that she planned to stop in Valdosta, Georgia, for at least one night with her mother, two children and two dogs.

"I don't want to run into closed roads," she said of the final 350 miles between Valdosta and her home, "but I want to get home and start cleaning up."

Stephanie Clegg Troxell remained near Nashville, Tennessee, where her family caravan includes three cars and a trailer, five adults, five children, 13 dogs, three mini-horses and a pet pig. The trek from New Port Richey, Florida, north of Tampa Bay, took more than 17 hours, beginning last Wednesday.

She said she's watching another storm, Jose, before deciding when to leave. Jose is still offshore well east of the U.S. mainland.

"I'm trying to sneak out when it's not 30 miles (48 kilometers) per hour-plus winds," she said.

Meanwhile, she's got another worry: a homesick pig. Tank, the 70-pound pet, usually lounges beside the pool in Florida. In Tennessee, Troxell said, "He's missing his tropical scenery."

Associated Press writer Jonathan Mattise in Nashville, Tennessee, and Gary Fineout in Tallahassee, Florida, contributed to this report.

Follow Barrow in Twitter at <https://www.twitter.com/BillBarrowAP> .

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Bernie Sanders' health care plan puts Democrats on the spot

By ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Bernie Sanders rode his impassioned liberal army of supporters through a tumultuous 2016, fighting to snatch the Democratic presidential nomination from Hillary Clinton. Now he's disrupting the party anew, forcing Democrats to take sides over his plan to provide government-financed health care for all.

The Vermont independent's proposal, which he plans to unveil Wednesday, is thrilling the party's progressive base and attracting many potential 2020 presidential hopefuls eager to align those activists behind them. Yet Democratic leaders are stopping short of embracing it, and others are warning it's a political and policy trap.

Meanwhile, the so-called single-payer bill has Republicans gleefully anticipating wielding it as a campaign weapon, particularly against the 10 Democrats defending Senate seats in states President Donald Trump won last year and where liberal voters are scarce.

"I'm not seeing any evidence single payer is attractive to the swing voters Democrats would need to win control of the House and Senate," said Jim Hobart, a GOP political consultant. Using it against Democrats

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will be "a very inviting attack line," he said.

Sanders evolved last year from a fringe senator to a major force commanding loyalty from progressive Democratic voters, activists and contributors. He could still seek the presidency in 2020, when he'd be 79. Clinton, in her new book, accuses him of inflicting lasting damage that hurt her chances of defeating Republican Donald Trump.

As described by aides, Sanders' bill would essentially expand the Medicare health insurance program for the elderly to all Americans, covering virtually all medical needs except long-term nursing care. By Tuesday afternoon, it had been co-sponsored by at least 12 Democratic senators, including four other possible presidential contenders: Kamala Harris of California, Massachusetts' Elizabeth Warren, New York's Kirsten Gillibrand and Cory Booker of New Jersey.

Sanders denies that his proposal is causing rifts in his party.

"You mean because the people in this country want to move toward a Medicare-for-all system, that is divisive?" he said in an interview Tuesday, citing polls showing growing support. "I think in a democracy, we should be doing what the American people want."

With Trump in the White House and Republicans controlling Congress, the bill has no chance of becoming law soon. But for many Democrats, it unfurls an irresistible mix of liberal policy goals: Universal health care and a simpler medical system that would be less expensive than today's for many, likely financed with taxes exempting the poorest Americans while heavily hitting the rich and corporations.

Sanders' plan is "a different value system, one where we all take care of each other and where health care is a right," Robert Weissman, president of Public Citizen, told reporters Tuesday. He added, "This is no longer going to be a fringe position."

Sanders has released no price tag. The version he advanced during his presidential campaign would have cost a huge \$1.4 trillion a year.

A similar House bill by Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., has 117 co-sponsors, more than half that chamber's Democrats, underscoring the concept's growing acceptance in Democratic circles. Yet, others are keeping their distance.

Underscoring the unease, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, of California, a long-time backer of the single-payer idea, declined to endorse Sanders' measure Tuesday. She told reporters her focus is defending President Barack Obama's health care law from the all-but-dead Republican attempt to repeal it. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., noted that Democrats have introduced several bills on expanding coverage and said, "We're looking at all of them."

While Sen. Tammy Baldwin of the swing state Wisconsin is backing Sanders' bill, Democrats facing tough re-election campaigns in GOP-tilting states are being more cautious. Sens. Jon Tester of Montana and Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota say they prefer to improve the existing health care law, not scrap it.

Several others are offering alternatives that will let Democrats vote "yes" to expand government-provided health care without the all-in move Sanders wants.

Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, a potential presidential hopeful, said he's pushing another bill with Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., to let people over age 55 buy into Medicare, 10 years younger than now. Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., another 2020 presidential possibility, has his own Medicare buy-in plan.

Adam Green, co-founder of the Progressive Change Campaign Committee, which works for liberal candidates, said he supports multiple efforts to move toward universal coverage and warned that candidates who don't back such efforts would be "forfeiting a degree of support."

Still other Democrats see Sander's proposal as a nightmare for the party that would make its candidates easy targets for the GOP.

Republicans are poised to paint it as a mammoth tax increase that puts government in control of health care, which the GOP has used as a potent attack line in the past. It would wrest employer-provided health care away from the roughly half of Americans who get coverage that way, a disruption for about 150 million people.

"It's laughable," Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-La., said of Sanders' bill, saying it would appeal to voters "who don't

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understand the expense of it." Sen. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., said the measure was aimed at "a section of the Democratic base that needs to be appealed to."

And as the GOP's failed effort to repeal Obama's 2010 law has demonstrated, opponents can latch onto a plan's details to shove its popularity downward. A June poll by the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation found that while a slight majority favor single payer, support fell significantly when people were told it would mean government control, higher taxes and replacing Obama's 2010 statute.

"There's a Sanders grassroots that aims to pressure Democrats to support this and make it a litmus test, which would be a disaster," said Jim Kessler, a senior vice president for Third Way, a Democratic centrist group.

AP reporters Erica Werner and Kevin Freking contributed.

Without air conditioning, steamy Florida yearns for power

By GARY FINEOUT, Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — In a state built on air conditioning, millions of Florida residents now want to know one thing: When will the power be back on?

Hurricane Irma's march across Florida and into the Southeast triggered one of the bigger blackouts in U.S. history, plunging as many as 13 million people into the dark as the storm dragged down power lines and blew out transformers. It also shattered the climate-controlled bubbles that enable people to live here despite the state's heat, humidity and insects.

Those who evacuated ahead of the hurricane are returning to homes without electricity and facing the prospect of days or even weeks with little to ease the late-summer stickiness.

"Power, power, power," Gov. Rick Scott said. "The biggest thing we've got to do for people is get their power back."

The Irma blackout is still much smaller than a 2003 outage that put 50 million people in the dark. More than 50,000 utility workers — some from as far away as Canada and California — are responding to the crisis, according to the association that represents the nation's investor-owned utilities.

The state's largest utility, Florida Power & Light, said Irma caused the most widespread damage in company history, affecting all 35 counties in its territory, which is most of the state's Atlantic coast and the Gulf Coast south of Tampa.

On Tuesday, the company announced that it expected to have the lights back on by the end of the weekend for the east coast. Customers living in the hard-hit neighborhoods in southwest Florida, where damage was much more extensive, were expected to get power restored within 10 days.

While acknowledging the public's frustration, utility officials said they are getting power back on faster than they did after Hurricane Wilma hit the state 12 years ago. The company said it had already restored service to nearly 1.8 million customers.

Any disaster that wipes out electrical service hits especially hard in the South, where tens of millions of Americans rely on the cocoon of comfort provided by air conditioning. Without it, many cities could barely exist, let alone prosper. When the lights go out in Florida, the muggy, buggy reality can be jarring even to longtime residents.

There were signs on social media that some people were growing angry and tired of waiting. Others steeled themselves for an extended period without electricity.

Standing in front of a produce cooler at a reopened Publix grocery store in Naples, Missy Sieber said the worst thing about not having electricity is not having air conditioning.

"It's miserably hot," Sieber said. "I don't mind standing in line here."

There's no immediate cool-off in sight. The forecast for the next week in Naples and Miami, for instance, calls for highs in the upper 80s (lower 30s Celsius) and lows barely falling below 80 degrees (27 degrees Celsius). Humidity will hover between 70 and almost 80 percent.

Dan Eckler sat next to his luggage Tuesday at Fort Lauderdale Hollywood International Airport, waiting

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for a ride after scoring a seat on one of the few arriving flights after the airport reopened.

"I'm soaking up a few last minutes of AC before I return to my house with no electricity," said Eckler, 46, who lives in Fort Lauderdale and went 16 days without power during Hurricane Wilma.

"You learn what you can cook on your grill. I cooked a frozen pizza because it was about to go bad," he said, referring to his experience during Wilma. "And you finally meet your neighbors."

In Miami, firefighters evacuated a building in the suburb of Coral Gables that had been without power since Sunday, concluding that it was not safe for elderly tenants. The most delicate evacuee was a 97-year-old woman who had to be brought down 12 flights of stairs.

Madeleine Alvarez tried unsuccessfully to get an ambulance to transport her Cuban-born mother who suffers from congestive heart failure.

"Doctors are telling me not to move her. Fire officials say we should evacuate. I don't know what to do. Any change can make her very excited and sick," said Alvarez, who planned to take her mother to a hospital to be examined and then to a hotel because her own home had no electricity yet.

Irma's arrival came in the wake of Hurricane Harvey, which created widespread outages in Texas. Some three weeks after Harvey, at least 10,700 customers in that state remained without power. Many of those were homes and businesses that will have to undergo repairs before they are ready to receive electricity again.

In Houston, about 4,000 customers were without power as many homes remained flooded due to water releases from two reservoirs that were filled by Harvey's torrential rainfall.

Back in Naples, Sieber and her husband and 9-year-old son have been using a generator to run a small air conditioner in a bedroom at night.

"It makes you count your blessings," she said.

Associated Press Writer Adriana Gomez Licon in Miami and AP researcher Rhonda Shafner in New York contributed to this report.

Big holdup for borrowers claiming for-profit college fraud

By MARIA DANILOVA, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Tens of thousands of former students who say they were swindled by for-profit colleges are being left in limbo as the Trump administration delays action on requests for loan forgiveness, according to court documents obtained by The Associated Press.

The Education Department is sitting on more than 65,000 unapproved claims as it rewrites Obama-era rules that sought to better protect students. The rewrite had been sought by the industry.

The for-profit colleges have found allies in the new administration and President Donald Trump, who earlier this year paid \$25 million to settle charges his Trump University misled customers. And it's yet another example of the administration hiring officials to oversee the industries where they had worked previously.

In August, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos picked Julian Schmoke Jr., a former associate dean at DeVry University, as head of the department's enforcement unit. She also has tapped a top aide to Florida's attorney general who was involved in the decision not to pursue legal action against Trump University to serve as the agency's top lawyer. More than 2,000 requests for loan forgiveness are pending from DeVry students.

The Obama rules would have forbidden schools from forcing students to sign agreements that waived their right to sue. Defrauded students would have faced a quicker path to get their loans erased, and schools, not taxpayers, could have been held responsible for the costs.

Now, in a filing in federal court in California, acting Undersecretary James Manning says the department will need up to six months to decide the case of a former student at the now-defunct Corinthian Colleges and other cases like hers. Sarah Dieffenbacher, a single mother of four from California had taken out \$50,000 in student loans to study to become a paralegal, but then couldn't find a job in the field, defaulted on her debt and could face wage garnishment.

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"ED will be able to issue a decision with regards to Ms. Dieffenbacher's Borrower Defense claims within six months, as part of a larger group of Borrower Defense decisions regarding similar claims," Manning wrote to the court on Aug. 28.

Department spokesman Liz Hill said the agency is working to streamline the process and resolve the claims as quickly as possible. "Unfortunately, the Obama administration left behind thousands of claims, and we will need to set up a fair and equitable system to work through them," she said.

She said students with claims pending are not required to make payments on their loans.

But Dieffenbacher says the delay is costing her family dearly.

"They should be protecting the students, because students were led to believe they were protected," she said in an interview. "And they are not, they are protecting Corinthian Colleges and for-profit schools."

Alec Harris, a lawyer with Legal Services Center of Harvard Law School who is representing Dieffenbacher, said the inaction could put his client and her children on the street.

"This is a Department of Education that has seemingly sided with industry and stacked the deck against former students of predatory for-profit schools every step of the way," Harris said.

Reid Setzer, government affairs director for Young Invincibles, an advocacy and research group, said the department's delay is harming thousands of students.

"It's kind of ridiculous," Setzer said. "There have been massive delays since the change of administration."

The Obama administration went hard after for-profit colleges that lured students into taking big loans with false promises. Chains including Corinthian Colleges and ITT Technical Institute were forced to close, and Obama's Education Department approved about \$655 million in loan cancellations for their students.

Under DeVos, no claims have been approved since she came to office seven months ago, according to Manning's July response to questions from Democratic Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois, who is part of a group of lawmakers pressuring her to accelerate the process. The department is in the process of discharging loans for claims that had been approved by the previous administration.

Among the claims still pending are more than 45,000 filed by Corinthian students and over 7,000 by ITT students.

DeVos is working on rewriting two Obama-era regulations that were meant to prevent colleges from misrepresenting their services to students and from failing to provide them with an education that would enable them to find jobs.

In an interview with the AP last month, DeVos said, "Let's be clear, no student should be defrauded, and in case of fraud there should be remedy. But we also know this approach has been unevenly applied, and if there's going to be regulation around some institutions we believe it needs to be fairly applied across the board."

Democratic attorneys general from 18 states and the District of Columbia filed suit against DeVos in July over the rules, which were finalized under President Barack Obama and scheduled to take effect July 1.

"Since Day One of the Trump administration, Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos and the administration have sided with for-profit schools over students," Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey told reporters at the time.

"It seems more like they are trying to protect the industry than trying to help borrowers," said Clare McCann, deputy director for federal higher education policy with New America, a Washington-based think tank.

DeVos' announcement about the Schmoke hiring was met with criticism by Democrats. Sen. Chris Murphy of Connecticut tweeted, "This is a joke, right?"

The department defended its decision, saying Schmoke served only in an academic capacity at DeVry and was not involved in admissions, recruitment or corporate administrative activities.

Other Trump administration agencies also have hired staffers who previously worked on behalf of the industry they now regulate. For example, Nancy Beck, deputy assistant administrator at the Environmental Protection Agency, used to work at the American Chemistry Council, the industry's leading trade group.

Aleppo still badly scarred by war, months after rebel defeat

By NATALIYA VASILYEVA, Associated Press

ALEPPO, Syria (AP) — “Aleppo is in my eyes,” says a billboard depicting President Bashar Assad looking out over two men and a boy repaving the main Saadallah al-Jabiri Square — once a front line in one of the deadliest episodes of the Syrian civil war.

The recapture of eastern Aleppo in December 2016 was a landmark victory for Assad’s forces in the conflict, now in its seventh year, but it left the area in ruins.

Eight months later, neighborhood after neighborhood in the formerly rebel-held sector still look like ghost towns. Only rarely is a family seen sitting on white plastic chairs outside the rubble.

Life is slowly returning to the desolate streets where shop signs are covered with dust, where men hawk cigarettes on a street corner and teenagers sell bananas off a picnic table.

Rami Abdurrahman, director of the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, says thousands of people have returned to their homes in Aleppo — once Syria’s largest city — from camps for the displaced.

Russian troops mediating between the Syrian government and various opposition factions have helped. The task force’s chief in the province, Maj. Gen. Igor Yemelyanov, said it has helped 3,500 people return to nearby villages.

Although Syrian government-controlled neighborhoods did not see the destruction and loss of life on a scale comparable to what eastern Aleppo endured, the seemingly quiet neighborhoods in the west also bear the scars of conflict.

The third floor of a school in southwestern Aleppo still has no glass after its window was blown out when a missile landed in a classroom in November 2016. Two students were killed in the classroom, and four died in a playground under the windows, principal Nakhlya Deri told reporters Tuesday during a visit arranged by the Russian Defense Ministry.

Residents have been resilient throughout, Deri insisted, describing how the school kept operating.

“After the attack, we closed down. On the following day, we cleared out the debris; and on the third day we started working,” she said.

Even though the siege of Aleppo ended eight months ago, municipal services fully restored the electricity supply only last week, said provincial Gov. Hamied Kenno.

Most of the city’s power plants were in eastern Aleppo, which was captured by rebels in 2012 and suffered catastrophic destruction during the battle to recapture it. For weeks after the fighting ended, electricity was cut off across the entire city, even in government-held neighborhood.

Moscow intervened in Syria two years ago to help Assad, its longtime ally. On Tuesday, the Russia military said Syrian troops have liberated about 85 percent of the country’s territory from militants.

Russian warplanes have changed the tide of the war, giving Syrian troops and allied forces an advantage over opposition fighters and militants from the Islamic State group.

Speaking to reporters at the Hemeimeem air base in Syria’s Latakia province, Lt. Gen. Alexander Lapin said the Syrian government still must clear the militants from the remaining 15 percent — approximately 27,000 square kilometers (10,425 square miles).

The Syrian troops, with strong support from Iranian-backed ground forces, have in recent weeks pushed the IS militants out of central Homs province, near the border with Lebanon, and are now fighting them in the oil-rich Deir el-Zour province in the east.

Deir el-Zour is the last major IS holdout in Syria. Assad’s forces, backed by Russians air power, broke a nearly 3-year-old siege on the provincial capital where troops had been encircled by the militants.

Activists said civilians are bearing the brunt of the offensive amid the intense airstrikes, with IS using them as human shields. A recent overnight airstrike hit displaced Syrians from Deir el-Zour on the western side of the Euphrates River, killing at least eight civilians.

The Observatory and Omar Abu Laila, who runs a group that monitors developments in Deir el-Zour, said Russian airstrikes were suspected.

Russian officials have denied targeting civilians there.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu met Tuesday with Assad in the capital of Damascus and discussed measures to eliminate IS, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

Russia and Syria agreed in August 2015 for Moscow to deploy an air force contingent and other military assets at the Hemeimeem base, in the heartland of Assad's Alawite religious minority.

In a matter of weeks, Russia built up the base so it could host dozens of its warplanes. It delivered thousands of tons of military equipment and supplies by sea and cargo planes in an operation dubbed the "Syrian Express." A month later, Russia announced the launch of its air campaign in Syria, its first military action outside its borders since the collapse of the former Soviet Union.

Senior Russian military officers and special forces were deployed alongside Syrian troops, providing training, planning offensives and coordinating airstrikes. Russia has also deployed its latest weapons to the Syrian conflict, including state-of-the-art Kalibr cruise missiles launched by Russian strategic bombers, surface ships and submarines, most recently in Deir el-Zour province last week.

Russia never said how many troops it sent, but turnout figures in voting from abroad in the 2016 parliamentary elections indicated Russian military personnel in Syria at the time likely exceeded 4,300. The Russian military said last week that 34 of its servicemen have been killed in Syria.

Associated Press writers Howard Amos in Moscow and Sarah El Deeb and Bassem Mroue in Beirut contributed.

Man sentenced in 1975 girls' murder case that alarmed region

By DENISE LAVOIE, AP Legal Affairs Writer

BEDFORD, Va. (AP) — It was an innocent time in a safe place, where parents didn't think twice about letting their kids walk to the local shopping mall. All that changed the day the Lyon sisters disappeared.

A sense of security was shattered in the spring of 1975, when two young sisters from the Maryland suburbs of Washington went to the mall to have pizza with friends, but never made it home.

On Tuesday, one of the region's most painful and enduring mysteries came to an end when a 60-year-old convicted sex offender pleaded guilty to felony murder in the deaths of 10-year-old Katherine and 12-year-old Sheila Lyon.

The case haunted the region for decades.

"That fear lingered for years and years, and it was just the kind of thing that nobody will ever forget," said retired Sgt. Harry Geehng, who searched for the girls at the shopping center and in nearby woods in the days after they vanished.

Parents were afraid to let their children go outside. Walks to the mall and other unsupervised activities also came to an end, said Teresa Brookland, a former schoolmate of Katherine Lyon.

"Our parents were very protective. They were quite rattled by this," Brookland said.

The crime went unsolved for decades, and the girls' bodies were never found. Finally, in 2013, cold case detectives in Montgomery County, Maryland, honed in on Lloyd Lee Welch Jr., who fit the description of a man a friend of the girls told police she saw staring at the sisters the day they disappeared.

Welch was sentenced to 48 years in prison Tuesday after pleading guilty to two counts of first-degree felony murder. He admitted participating in the abduction of the girls, but continues to insist he did not participate in any sexual assault of the girls or in their killings, said his attorney, Tony Anderson.

The 48-year sentence is part of a plea agreement that also calls for him to receive a 12-year concurrent prison term for two unrelated sexual assaults in northern Virginia.

The Lyon sisters disappeared on March 25, 1975, after walking from their home in Kensington, Maryland, to the shopping center.

Welch was charged in the girls' killings in 2015 after members of his extended family said they saw him carrying two large duffel bags on property the family owned on Taylor's Mountain in Bedford County, Virginia.

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During Welch's plea hearing in Bedford Circuit Court Tuesday, Commonwealth's Attorney Wes Nance said witnesses told authorities Welch put a green duffel bag in a large fire burning on the mountain. Nance said other witnesses recalled that the fire burned for days and had "the stench of death."

Welch, now 60, did not speak during the hearing, except when asked to enter his plea. He did not address the Lyon family when asked by Judge James Updike Jr. if he had anything he wanted to say.

"It's our hope that with this agreement ... will in some way add some closure in a meaningful, meaningful way to the Lyon family and Mr. Welch," Anderson said.

Nance said Welch repeatedly changed his account of who else was involved in the crime during 13 interviews with police, beginning in 2013. "His credibility is open for questioning," he said.

Authorities had named Welch's uncle as a person of interest in the case, but Nance said they were never able to develop enough evidence to charge him or anyone else.

Nance said Welch's admission that he participated in the kidnapping fits the definition of felony murder — a killing that occurs during the commission or attempted commission of a felony.

Welch had faced the possibility of the death penalty. Nance said prosecutors decided against pursuing a death sentence based on changes in the law that could have prompted years of appeals and the Lyon family's wish to bring the case to a close.

The girls' parents, John and Mary Lyon, and her two brothers, thanked Montgomery County police for sticking with the investigation.

"We just want to say, simply, 'thank you,' and it's been a long, long time, and we're tired, and we just want to go home," John Lyon said.

Welch is now serving a prison sentence in Delaware for sexually assaulting a 10-year-old girl. Once he completes that sentence in 2026, he will begin serving his sentence in Virginia.

Nance said because the crime was committed in 1975, before truth-in-sentencing laws were passed, Welch could become eligible for parole when he reaches his early- or mid-80s. But he called the chances of Welch actually getting paroled "very slim or none."

US: 2 more Americans were affected by Cuba health attacks

By JOSH LEDERMAN and MATTHEW LEE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two more Americans have been confirmed to be affected by unexplained health attacks against U.S. diplomats in Cuba, the United States said Tuesday, raising the total number of victims to 21.

The additional two individuals appear to be cases that were only recently reported but occurred in the past. The State Department said no new, medically confirmed "incidents" have taken place since the most recent one in late August. Earlier this month, the U.S. disclosed there had been another incident in August after previously saying the attacks had stopped.

It's possible the number could grow even higher as more cases are discovered. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said the U.S. continues to assess American personnel.

The U.S. citizens were members of the American diplomatic community, the U.S. said. Officials have said previously that the incidents, deemed "health attacks" by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, affected diplomats posted to the Embassy in Havana along with family members who live with them.

The U.S. didn't say how serious the newly disclosed incidents were. But the State Department said it was providing "the best possible medical evaluation and care" throughout the ordeal, including aid from a medical officer on staff at the embassy.

The union representing American diplomats has said mild traumatic brain injury is among the diagnoses given to some diplomats victimized in the attacks. The American Foreign Service Association has said permanent hearing loss was another diagnosis, and additional symptoms had included brain swelling, severe headaches, loss of balance and "cognitive disruption."

The evolving U.S. assessment indicated investigators were still far from any thorough understanding of what transpired in the attacks, which started in the fall of 2016. The U.S. has described them as unprec-

edented.

As the bizarre saga has unfolded, the U.S. has encouraged its diplomats to report any strange physical sensations. So it's unclear whether some symptoms being attributed to the attacks might actually turn out to be unrelated.

Notably, the U.S. has avoided accusing Cuba's government of being behind the attacks. The U.S. did expel two Cuban diplomats, but the State Department emphasized that was in protest of the Cubans' failure to protect the safety of American diplomats while on their soil, not an indication the U.S. felt that Havana masterminded it.

U.S. investigators have been searching to identify a device that could have harmed the health of the diplomats, believed to have been attacked in their homes in Havana, but officials have said no device had been found.

Reach Josh Lederman on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/joshledermanAP> and Matthew Lee and <http://twitter.com/APDiploWriter>

Trump: North Korea sanctions 'small step,' warns of more

By MATTHEW PENNINGTON, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Tuesday new U.N. sanctions "are nothing compared to what ultimately will have to happen" to stop North Korea's nuclear march. U.S. officials showed Congress satellite images of illicit trade to highlight the challenge of getting China and Russia to cut off commerce with the rogue nation.

The U.N. Security Council's new restrictions could further bite into North Korea's meager economy after what Kim Jong Un's authoritarian government says was a hydrogen bomb test Sept. 3. The world body on Monday banned North Korean textile exports, an important source of hard currency, and capped its imports of crude oil.

The measures fell short of Washington's goals: a potentially crippling ban on oil imports and freezing the international assets of Kim and his government.

"We think it's just another very small step - not a big deal," Trump said as he met with Malaysia's prime minister at the White House. "But those sanctions are nothing compared to what ultimately will have to happen." He did not elaborate.

Despite its limited economic impact, the new sanctions succeed in adding further pressure on Pyongyang without alienating Moscow and Beijing. The U.S. needs the support of both of its geopolitical rivals for its current strategy of using economic pressure and diplomacy — and not military options — for getting North Korea to halt its testing of nuclear bombs and the missiles for delivering them.

Trump said it was "nice" to get a 15-0 vote at the U.N.

But underscoring the big questions about Chinese and Russian compliance, senior U.S. officials told the House Foreign Affairs Committee on Tuesday that effective enforcement by both of the North's neighbors and trading partners will be the acid test of whether sanctions work.

The U.N. has adopted multiple resolutions against North Korea since its first nuclear test explosion in 2006, banning it from arms trading and curbing exports of commodities it heavily relies on for revenue. That has failed to stop its progress toward developing a nuclear-tipped missile that could soon range the American mainland.

Briefing the U.S. lawmakers, Treasury Assistant Secretary for Terrorist Financing Marshall Billingslea displayed satellite photos to demonstrate North Korea's deceptive shipping practices. He focused in particular on how it masks exports of coal that were banned in August after the North tested two intercontinental ballistic missiles.

In one example, a North Korean ship registered in St. Kitts and Nevis was said to have sailed from China to North Korea, turning off its transponder to conceal its location as it loaded coal. The ship then docked in Vladivostok, Russia, before finally going to China to presumably unload its cargo.

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China accounts for 90 percent of North Korea's external trade.

"The success of the pressure strategy will depend on cooperation from international partners, especially Beijing," said Susan Thornton, America's top diplomat for East Asia. "We have also made clear that if China and Russia do not act, we will use the tools we have at our disposal."

Those tools include more sanctions. In June, the U.S. designated the Bank of Dandong, a regional Chinese bank, as a "primary money laundering concern" over its alleged help to North Korea in accessing the U.S. and international financial systems.

Billingsea described the action as "a very clear warning shot that the Chinese understood."

He said North Korean bank representatives still operate in Russia in "flagrant disregard" of U.N. resolutions that Moscow voted for. This summer, the U.S. targeted two Russian companies with penalties for supporting North Korean missile procurement.

Lawmakers who spoke Tuesday supported the U.S. pressure tactics, while voicing skepticism that North Korea could be forced into abandon nuclear weapons it regards as a guarantee of survival for the Kim dynasty.

Republican Rep. Ed Royce, the committee chairman, said U.S. and allied efforts should be "super-charged."

Describing the North's access to hard currency as its "Achilles heel," he urged the administration to target more entities dealing with North Korea, particularly Chinese banks. He singled out the China Merchants Bank and the Agricultural Bank of China.

Rep. Eliot Engel, the committee's top-ranking Democrat, also supported the pressure campaign. But he criticized Trump's commentary on the North Korean crisis, which he said was making matters worse.

Playing on Trump's "fire and fury" threat of a month ago, Democratic Rep. Gerald Connolly said Trump's policy looks more like "fecklessness and failure."

Connolly protested that Trump had branded South Korea's leader, a supporter of diplomacy with North Korea, as an appeaser.

The State Department's Thornton said Seoul had "come around very nicely" and appeasement not South Korea's policy.

Associated Press writer Jill Colvin contributed to this report.

NASA's Saturn-orbiting Cassini spacecraft faces fiery finish

By **MARCIA DUNN, AP Aerospace Writer**

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — After a 20-year voyage, NASA's Cassini spacecraft is poised to dive into Saturn this week to become forever one with the exquisite planet.

There's no turning back: Friday it careens through the atmosphere and burns up like a meteor in the sky over Saturn.

NASA is hoping for scientific dividends up until the end. Every tidbit of data radioed back from Cassini will help astronomers better understand the entire Saturnian system — rings, moons and all.

The only spacecraft ever to orbit Saturn, Cassini spent the past five months exploring the uncharted territory between the gaseous planet and its dazzling rings. It's darted 22 times between that gap, sending back ever more wondrous photos.

On Monday, Cassini flew past jumbo moon Titan one last time for a gravity assist—a final kiss goodbye, as NASA calls it, nudging the spacecraft into a deliberate, no-way-out path.

During its final plunge early Friday morning, Cassini will keep sampling Saturn's atmosphere and beaming back data, until the spacecraft loses control and its antenna no longer points toward Earth. Descending at a scorching 76,000 mph (122,000 kph), Cassini will melt and then vaporize. It should be all over in a minute.

"The mission has been insanely, wildly, beautifully successful, and it's coming to an end," said NASA program scientist Curt Niebur. "I find great comfort in the fact that Cassini will continue teaching us up to the very last second."

Telescopes on Earth will watch for Cassini's burnout nearly a billion miles (1.6 billion kilometers) away. But

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any flashes will be hard to see given the time — close to high noon at Saturn — and Cassini's minuscule size against the solar system's second largest planet.

The plutonium on board will be the last thing to go. The dangerous substance was encased in super-dense iridium as a safeguard for Cassini's 1997 launch and has been used for electric power to run its instruments. Project officials said once the iridium melts, the plutonium will be dispersed into the atmosphere. Nothing — not even traces of plutonium — should escape Saturn's deep gravity well.

The whole point of this one last exercise — dubbed the Grand Finale — is to prevent the spacecraft from crashing into the moons of Enceladus (ehn-SEHL'-uh-duhs) or Titan. NASA wants future robotic explorers to find pristine worlds where life might possibly exist, free of Earthly contamination.

It's inevitable that the \$3.9 billion U.S.-European mission is winding down. Cassini's fuel tank is almost empty, and its objectives have been accomplished many times over since its 2004 arrival at Saturn following a seven-year journey.

The leader of Cassini's imaging team, planetary scientist Carolyn Porco, already feels the loss.

"There's another part of me that's just, 'It's time. We did it.' Cassini was so profoundly, scientifically successful," said Porco, a visiting scholar at the University of California, Berkeley. "It's amazing to me even, what we were able to do right up until the end."

Until Cassini, only three spacecraft had ventured into Saturn's neighborhood: NASA's Pioneer 11 in 1979 and Voyager 1 and 2 in the early 1980s. Those were just flybys, though, and offered fleeting glances. And so Cassini and its traveling companion, the Huygens (HOY'-gens) lander, actually provided the first hard look at Saturn, its rings and moons. They are named for 17th-century astronomers, Italian Giovanni Domenico Cassini and Dutch Christiaan Huygens, who spotted Saturn's first moon, Titan. The current count is 62.

Cassini discovered six moons — some barely a mile or two across — as well as swarms of moonlets that are still part of Saturn's rings.

All told, Cassini has traveled 4.9 billion miles (7.9 billion kilometers) since launch, orbited Saturn nearly 300 times and collected more than 453,000 pictures and 635 gigabytes of scientific data.

The European Space Agency's Huygens lander — which hitchhiked all the way to Saturn aboard Cassini — still rests on Titan. It parachuted down in 2005, about six months after Cassini arrived at Saturn, and relayed data for more than an hour from the moon's frigid surface.

Still believed intact, Huygens remains the only spacecraft to actually land in one of our outer planetary systems.

Other than Titan's size — about as big as Mercury — little was known about Saturn's biggest and haze-covered moon before Cassini and Huygens showed up. They revealed seas and lakes of methane and ethane at Titan — the result of rainfall — and provided evidence of an underground ocean, quite possibly a brew of water and ammonia.

Over at the little moon Enceladus, Cassini unveiled plumes of water vapor spewing from cracks at the south pole. These geysers are so tall and forceful that they actually blast icy particles into one of Saturn's rings. Thanks to Cassini, scientists believe water lies beneath the icy surface of Enceladus, making it a prime spot to look for traces of potential life.

"Enceladus has no business existing and yet there it is, practically screaming at us, 'Look at me. I completely invalidate all of your assumptions about the solar system.'" Niebur said. "It's an amazing destination."

That's precisely why scientists didn't want to risk Cassini crashing into it, said program manager Earl Maize at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California.

"The book is not complete. There's more to come" from exploring the planets, Maize said. "But this has been a marvelous ride."

Age matters when it comes to screening for cervical cancer

By LAURAN NEERGAARD, AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Getting checked for cervical cancer isn't one-size-fits-all: Millions of women may soon have to decide between a routine Pap or a newer test that detects if they have a cancer-causing virus.

Draft national guidelines released Tuesday for the first time say either option is reasonable for certain women — those ages 30 to 65.

Paps, a mainstay for women's health for decades, can spot pre-cancerous abnormalities in time to prevent cancer. Newer HPV tests detect the virus that causes nearly all of that cancer, and while they're widely used to confirm Pap results, most U.S. medical groups haven't yet pushed them as a stand-alone alternative for screening.

Tuesday's proposal doesn't signal an imminent end to the Pap era. Paps, not HPV tests, still are recommended for screening women in their 20s, stressed the guidelines from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force.

And don't let the which-test debate blur the main message: "Screening for cervical cancer saves lives," said Task Force member Dr. Carol Mangione of the University of California, Los Angeles.

Today, too many women still miss out. Some things to know:

CERVICAL CANCER STILL A THREAT

Cervical cancer has dropped dramatically over the past half-century thanks to Pap testing. Still, this year an estimated 12,820 U.S. women will be diagnosed with cervical cancer, and about 4,200 will die. Most haven't been screened, or have gone too long between checks.

Paps examine cells scraped from the cervix. HPV testing looks for high-risk strains of the human papillomavirus, the nation's most common sexually transmitted infection. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, just about everyone will get at least one strain at some point in their lives. But only certain strains cause cervical cancer — and only if they linger long enough in the body.

AGE MATTERS FOR SCREENING

Otherwise healthy women need a Pap every three years from age 21 to 29, agree most U.S. physician groups and the draft Task Force guidelines. Cervical cancer grows so slowly that regular Paps can find a problem early enough to treat.

While the Food and Drug Administration has approved an HPV test for women as young as 25, national guidelines have long recommended Pap screening for 20-somethings. That age group is most likely to get HPV — and the vast majority of the time their bodies clear the infection before it harms.

WHAT CHANGES AT AGE 30?

The older you get, the greater the chance that an HPV infection is the yearslong, harmful kind. To better catch those cases, today what's called co-testing is increasingly common for women 30 and over — a Pap-plus-HPV test combination. If the results of both tests are negative, women can wait five years to test again.

But both Paps and HPV testing can trigger false alarms, prompting unneeded, and sometimes harmful, additional care to rule out cancer. New studies show co-testing leads to more false alarms than either test alone, without adding benefit.

That spurred Tuesday's Task Force proposal to let women 30 and over choose an HPV test by itself every five years — or a Pap every three years instead. The proposal is open for public comment through Oct. 9, before it will be finalized.

Some countries already are moving to make HPV testing the chief screening tool, including the Netherlands and Australia.

"Most experts in this area are in agreement that HPV testing alone is the future of cervical screening," said Debbie Saslow of the American Cancer Society, who wasn't involved with Tuesday's draft guidelines.

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WEIGH PROS AND CONS

Women in their 30s and older need to discuss screening options with their health providers, said Dr. Jason Wright, gynecologic oncology chief at New York-Presbyterian/Columbia University Medical Center, who also wasn't involved with the new guidelines.

An HPV test can cost twice as much as a \$40 Pap, but doesn't require screening as often. Some data suggest HPV testing leads to more diagnosis of risky pre-cancer — but even by itself, an HPV test can spark more false alarms than a Pap, Wright said.

Also, some follow-up tests can alter the cervix in ways that may affect future pregnancies, a consideration for women still interested in childbearing, added the Task Force's Mangione.

WHO CAN SKIP CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING?

It's not recommended for women younger than 21, or those who had a cervix-removing hysterectomy. Women can stop screening after age 65 if proper checks until then show they're healthy, current guidelines agree.

WHAT IF WOMEN RECEIVED THE HPV VACCINE AS AN ADOLESCENT?

Keep getting screened, following recommendations for your age. The first HPV vaccine hit the market about 10 years ago, too soon to know if it's safe for the now-grown first recipients to be screened less often, and newer vaccine versions protect against more strains, said Saslow, the cancer society's senior director of HPV-related and women's cancers.

Eventually, if enough young women grow up fully vaccinated, screening recommendations may change, she said.

In blow to Murdoch, UK refers Fox bid for Sky to regulator

By JILL LAWLESS, Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The British government will refer Twenty-First Century Fox Inc.'s bid for satellite broadcaster Sky to the country's competition regulator for further examination, in a blow to Rupert Murdoch's takeover plans.

Culture Secretary Karen Bradley told lawmakers Tuesday that she intended to refer the takeover to the Competition and Markets Authority because of concerns that the deal might concentrate too much power in one company's hands. Murdoch already owns British newspapers including the Sun and The Times of London.

And, in a change of view, she said she was also "minded" to refer it out of concerns about broadcasting standards. Bradley said there is a risk, "which is not purely fanciful," that the merger would not be in the public interest.

Twenty-First Century Fox said it was disappointed in the decision, noting that U.K. broadcast regulator Ofcom had advised the government that the deal did not raise concerns about broadcast standards. Ofcom has said that the takeover could give the Murdoch family too much influence over Britain's media.

"We urge the secretary of state to take a final decision quickly," Fox said, adding that the deal, announced in December 2016, was now likely to be completed by June 30, 2018, "subject to any further delays in the decision-making process."

Murdoch's media group is trying to buy the 61 percent of Sky it doesn't already own. The takeover values Sky, which broadcasts Premier League soccer and top film and television offerings in Britain and other European markets, at 18.5 billion pounds (\$25 billion).

An earlier attempt to buy the remaining shares was scuttled by the 2011 phone-hacking scandal that rocked Murdoch's British newspapers and led him to close the 168-year-old News of the World.

Bradley's announcement is a victory for Murdoch's critics, who have been emboldened by scandals over alleged racial discrimination and sexual harassment at his U.S. TV network Fox News. They say Murdoch does not meet the requirement that U.K. media owners be "fit and proper" people.

Bradley said that because of submissions she had received over the summer, "I am now minded to refer

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the merger to the (regulator) on the grounds of genuine commitment to broadcasting standards.”

She said one area raised by critics of the deal was “what they termed the ‘Foxification’ of Fox-owned news outlets internationally.”

British broadcasters are bound by stricter rules governing balance and neutrality than those in the United States, where Fox News’ partisan style has won it a large audience.

Bradley said it was “important that entities which adopt controversial or partisan approaches to news and current affairs in other jurisdictions should, at the same time, have a genuine commitment to broadcasting standards here.”

Tom Watson, media spokesman for the opposition Labour Party, congratulated Bradley on her decision. “This is the first time a minister in the current government has ever stood in the way of what the Murdochs want, and frankly it’s about time,” he said.

Douglas Wigdor, a U.S. lawyer representing current and former employees who are suing Fox for racial discrimination, also welcomed the announcement.

Wigdor, who previously wrote to Ofcom listing allegations against Fox News, said he was “hopeful that Fox will now waive any gag orders so that other individuals can provide relevant information without fear of reprisal.”

Once a formal referral takes place, the regulator will have six months to conduct an investigation.

Sky said in a statement it was “disappointed by this further delay.”

“Nevertheless we will continue to engage with the process as the secretary of state reaches her final decision,” the company said.

Sky shares fell 1.7 percent on the news, to 936 pence.

UK engineers launch ‘sewer war’ against giant fat blob

LONDON (AP) — British engineers say they have launched a “sewer war” against a giant fat blob clogging London’s sewers.

Thames Water officials said Tuesday it is likely to take three weeks to dissolve the outsize fatberg.

They caution against expecting quick results as the fatberg is 250 yards long and weighs as much as 11 double-decker busses.

The unsavory blob consists of congealed wet wipes, diapers, fat and oil.

Thames Water’s Matt Rimmer says the fatberg is “a total monster and taking a lot of manpower and machinery to remove as it’s set hard.”

He said the task is “basically like trying to break up concrete.”

Eight workers are using high powered jet hoses to break up the blob before sucking it out into tankers for disposal at a recycling site.

Unhappy moderate House Republicans complicate 2018 for GOP

By ERICA WERNER and THOMAS BEAUMONT, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Veteran Republicans are bailing on Congress in growing numbers, as GOP control of Washington fails to produce the unity or legislative successes party leaders wish for. With President Donald Trump willing, if not eager, to buck fellow Republicans and even directly attack them, a number of lawmakers no longer wish to be involved.

The latest was two-term Rep. Dave Trott of Michigan, who said in a statement Monday that he’d decided after careful consideration that the best course for him was to spend more time with his family and return to the private sector.

In contrast to those diplomatic words was Trott’s most recent tweet, sent in mid-August: “I think America needs more unity and less divisiveness...meaning @realDonaldTrump should focus more on golf & have less press conferences.”

Trott joins a string of moderate Republicans, including Reps. Charlie Dent of Pennsylvania, Dave Reichert

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of Washington state and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida, who are not seeking re-election.

Each of these seats will be heavily contested by Democrats eager to take back control of the House, and rumors abound of other GOP retirements still to come. Michigan Republican, Rep. Fred Upton, is mulling a campaign for U.S. Senate, according to party operatives who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private deliberations.

Also Monday a senior GOP senator, Bob Corker of Tennessee, issued a statement indicating indecision about his future following a CNN report stating that the influential chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee had not yet decided whether to seek re-election next year.

"It's not an automatic for me. It just isn't," Corker told reporters, although he added that as chairman he has "a lot of impact without passing legislation. I can influence things. This is more about just what I believe to be the right thing to do."

Although Republicans are hopeful Corker ultimately will decide to run — he already has \$7.5 million in his campaign account — the senator was in Trump's Twitter cross-hairs in August after criticizing the president's response to the racially motivated protests in Charlottesville.

"Tennessee not happy!" the president declared after claiming that Corker was "constantly" asking him whether or not he should run again next year.

The developments have alarmed GOP operatives concerned that the trickle of retirements could turn into a flood unless congressional Republicans and Trump can come together and produce on their promises, particularly by overhauling the tax code. And, with Trump bypassing Republicans to make deals with Democrats, and encouraging primary challenges against sitting GOP senators, the retirement decisions also reflect concerns among some about whether they will get party support when they need it, especially with former Trump adviser Steve Bannon threatening all-out war on congressional leadership.

"There are some stability concerns in the party about whose team everyone is on," said Josh Holmes, a GOP consultant and former chief of staff to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky. "Concerns about whether your party is really with you."

It all illustrates that, far from producing unity within the Republican Party, the Trump era appears to be exacerbating existing GOP divisions while creating new ones. The familiar divide between pragmatic and ideologically driven Republicans has been heightened, while Trump's deal-making with top Democrats last week is forcing elected Republicans to choose sides between Trump and GOP leaders McConnell and House Speaker Paul Ryan.

"The party never united around Trump as it would another nominee, let alone president, and Trump is not a limited government conservative," said Alex Conant, a former top aide to Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla. "And so he is not a traditional Republican and as a result is going to clash with the traditional Republicans that fill the ranks of Congress."

The chaos and uncertainty produced by Trump and his orbit would be more acceptable to congressional Republicans if the party was achieving legislative success. Instead, its long-standing promise to repeal and replace Barack Obama's health care law collapsed on the Senate floor in July, while other priorities are moving slowly. As a result, a number of Republicans on and off Capitol Hill have come to view tax reform of some kind as a must-pass priority, without which the dam would likely break on retirements and Republicans would be in serious jeopardy of losing control of the House.

"Republicans need to put points on the board, to deliver and show they are getting something done," said Tom Reynolds, a former New York congressman who once chaired the National Republican Congressional Committee and is now a lobbyist.

Yet despite enthusiasm among Republicans, any final tax plan is a long way off, and many analysts are already predicting that Republicans will end up settling for some tax cuts that add to the deficit rather than full-blown reform.

For their part, Democrats are projecting increased confidence about their prospects in next year's mid-terms, especially in the House, where they must gain 24 seats to win the majority. Republicans have a 240-194 edge, with one vacancy. Democrats have their highest hopes pinned on the 23 districts where GOP House candidates won last year, as did Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton.

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House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi pointed to Trump's overall approval rating nationally, which has dipped below 40 percent.

"There's probably nothing more dispositive of who wins next year's elections than where the president stands a year before," Pelosi, D-Calif., told reporters Friday. "The year is fraught with meaning because that's when people decide whether to run or not, and that really is a timetable that's very important to us, and very positive for us right now."

Beaumont reported from Des Moines, Iowa. Associated Press writer Richard Lardner contributed to this report.

The story has been corrected to delete a reference to Rep. Leonard Lance, R-N.J., as a possible retirement. An aide said Tuesday he is running for re-election.

With LA bid sealed, US cities look at possible Winter Games

By EDDIE PELLIS, AP National Writer

LIMA, Peru (AP) — There's an outside shot the United States won't have to wait 11 years to host its next Olympics.

It's a longshot, but there's talk in Salt Lake City, and even some in Denver, of a bid for the 2026 Winter Games, which take place two years before the Summer Olympics return to Los Angeles.

The same country hosting back-to-back Olympics hasn't happened since before World War II, but as this round of bidding has shown, rules are made to be changed.

Five people familiar with internal discussions in both cities told The Associated Press that preliminary talks have taken place about what it would take to bring the Winter Games back to the United States for the first time since Salt Lake hosted in 2002. None of the people wanted their names used because the discussions are preliminary, and because the U.S. Olympic Committee wants to stay focused on the Los Angeles bid for the 2028 Olympics.

"Salt Lake City would enjoy hosting the Games again," said Fraser Bullock, a key player in Salt Lake City's 2002 Olympics. "The focus at this point is on LA, as it should be."

On Wednesday, the International Olympic Committee will award the 2024 Summer Games to Paris and 2028 to Los Angeles.

Both were in the running for 2024. But realizing he had two top-tier candidates, IOC president Thomas Bach spearheaded a rules change to approve the awarding of the 2028 Games, as well. It helped prevent a potentially embarrassing bid process for those games. At the same time, Bach led a streamlining of the bid process for the 2026 Winter Games, in part to avoid an unwanted repeat of the 2022 bidding when the only bidders were from China and Kazakhstan.

"The sooner the Winter Olympics can come back to the U.S., the better," said Max Cobb, the president of U.S. Biathlon. "We've got a fantastic set of venues in Utah that are still in use and more or less at world-class standard."

The Salt Lake City Games were marred by a bidding scandal that resulted in several IOC members losing their positions for taking bribes.

But with help of Mitt Romney and others, the Olympics were saved, while Salt Lake and Park City have stood as prime examples of the sort of legacy that modern Olympics are supposed to leave in a region. There's an eight-lane interstate running from the Salt Lake airport, which was upgraded for the Olympics, to Park City, which is the home of U.S. Ski and Snowboard. Park City is the host of key U.S. training centers for freestyle skiing, speedskating and cross country skiing.

Overall, the area has hosted about 75 World Cup and world-championship events in winter sports since the Olympic cauldron was extinguished more than 15 years ago.

Denver would have a steeper hill to climb. Although it's bigger than Salt Lake City, the mountains are farther away, and more infrastructure would be needed.

"We would welcome an invitation to discuss, in depth, what it would take for Denver to become a Winter

Olympic host city," said Matthew Payne, executive director of the Denver Sports Commission.

Denver also stands as the only city to once be awarded the Olympics — the 1976 Winter Games — only to turn them back after public opinion turned against hosting the event.

The public support piece is as crucial as ever, especially in the wake of a number of cities pulling out of the running for 2022 and 2024 because of poor response from citizens and failed referendums.

One of the few declared candidates for 2026 — Innsbruck, Austria, which has hosted two previous Winter Olympics — has a referendum scheduled for Oct. 15 that has the potential to scuttle the bid.

Calgary and Sion, Switzerland, have also shown interest in hosting. Salt Lake City and Denver are officially on the sideline, though after Wednesday, things could heat up. The 2026 Games are next on the docket — and the only Olympics through 2028 still in search of a host.

Toshiba agreement on sale to Bain-led consortium protested

By YURI KAGEYAMA, AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Toshiba's long meandering sale of its computer memory business took another turn Wednesday, as the Japanese nuclear and electronics company's announcement of a deal with a consortium was immediately met with opposition from U.S. joint venture partner Western Digital.

Embattled Toshiba Corp. needs the sale of its lucrative NAND flash-memory SanDisk joint venture to survive. But Western Digital has begun legal action, opposing the sale to anyone else.

Toshiba sank into the red for the fiscal year through March. Its money-losing nuclear business in the U.S., Westinghouse Electric Co., filed for bankruptcy protection in March.

In the latest move, Toshiba said it entered a memorandum of understanding with Bain Capital Private Equity, which leads the consortium that also includes South Korea's SK Hynix, and hoped to enter a final decision by the end of this month.

But Western Digital protested within hours of the announcement.

"We are disappointed that Toshiba would take this action despite Western Digital's tireless efforts to reach a resolution that is in the best interests of all stakeholders," it said in a statement, stressing that it has also offered many proposals.

Toshiba said it was talking with two others bidders — Western Digital's consortium and another that includes Hon Hai, also known as Foxconn, of Taiwan. Bain has now come up with a new proposal, it said, while noting other negotiations were also ongoing.

"Toshiba intends to reach a definitive agreement that fully meets our objectives at the earlier possible date," Senior Executive Vice President Yasuo Naruke said.

Western Digital, which bought SanDisk last year, has argued the sale might violate terms of the joint venture with Toshiba. Such sales can be sensitive because they involve the transfer of technology.

Toshiba had said in June its preferred bidder was the Bain consortium, which also includes Innovation Network Corp. of Japan and the Development Bank of Japan, for the sale of the unit called Toshiba Memory Corp.

But after Western Digital opposed the move, it said it was talking to others.

Toshiba's massive red ink began with the reactors it has been building in the U.S., which are still unfinished, partly because of beefed up safety regulations following the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster.

Bain Capital Private Equity, based in Boston, is one of the world's leading investment firms. The Development Bank of Japan is backed by the government of Japan. The Innovation Network Corp. of Japan is made up of 26 big-name Japanese corporate investors, including Sony Corp., Canon Inc., Toyota Motor Corp. and Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corp.

Toshiba's earnings reports initially failed to get endorsements from its auditors, meaning that it could have been delisted.

But the auditors finally signed off in August after an investigation that centered on whether Toshiba had known in advance the subsequent losses that emerged related to Westinghouse's acquisition of CB&I Stone & Webster, a nuclear construction and services business.

In 2015, Toshiba acknowledged it had been systematically falsifying its books since 2008, as managers tried to meet overly ambitious targets. An outside investigation found profits had been inflated and expenses hidden across the board.

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Rights group blasts Israeli banks for settlement expansion

By TIA GOLDENBERG, Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli banks are contributing to the proliferation of West Bank settlements by providing loans and mortgages for construction there, violating their human rights obligations, Human Rights Watch said in a report Wednesday.

The report said that Israeli law does not require banks to provide such services to the settlements, and urged them to distance themselves from such activities. It also urged the banks' shareholders to "ensure that their business relationships do not contribute to or benefit from" human rights violations.

Human Rights Watch says the banks have helped the expansion of the West Bank settlements, which are now home to some 400,000 Israelis.

Sari Bashi, the group's Israel and Palestine advocacy director, said the banks should abide by the U.N. guiding principles on business and human rights, a set of non-binding guidelines meant to address and remedy abuses committed in business activity, or else face action by shareholders.

"There are many, many steps banks can and should take to at the very least reduce their involvement in settlements, if not stop it entirely," she said. "If they choose not to take steps, institutional investors who care about their own human rights activity should take action."

Israel captured the West Bank, along with the Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem, in the 1967 Mideast war. Israel has since annexed east Jerusalem in a move that is not recognized internationally, and it withdrew from Gaza in 2005.

Most of the international community considers settlements illegal and an obstacle to creating a Palestinian state. Israel disputes this, saying the fate of the settlements must be resolved through negotiations with the Palestinians.

Israel's banks lend money to homebuyers, settlement councils or to companies carrying out construction in the West Bank. Most also have branches in settlements.

Israeli law requires banks to accept settlers as customers, meaning they cannot refuse to open accounts for them. But a legal analysis by Human Rights Watch of Israeli banking laws concluded that banks are not obligated to provide financial backing for construction in the West Bank.

While an anti-discrimination law prohibits refusal of service based on place of residence, the report said banks could cite other reasons for declining to provide loans, such as the construction's implications for Palestinians' human rights. The law also allows companies to decline to serve certain areas so long as they provide advance notice to customers.

"It is Human Rights Watch's assessment that banks can, under domestic law, avoid providing many services that support settlements and settlement activity, and that doing so is necessary to fulfill their human rights responsibilities," the report said.

The relevant laws have yet to be challenged in court, meaning the report offers only one interpretation of how they may be read.

But the group presents a warning to Israel's banking sector: Operating in the settlements risks inviting divestment from ethically-minded shareholders. Bashi cited a 2016 move by the pension fund for the United Methodist Church that blocked five Israeli banks from its investment portfolio, saying they profit from rights abuses.

The Association of Banks in Israel, an umbrella group, declined to comment on the report's claims. Spokespeople for Israel's major banks either declined comment or referred queries to the banking as-

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sociation. Israel's central bank had no immediate comment.

Human Rights Watch said the five largest banks in Israel did not respond to questions about whether they adhere to the U.N. guiding principles. Four of the country's biggest banks are members of the U.N. Global Compact, a group of companies that calls on its members to "make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses."

Eugene Kontorovich, an international law expert at the Kohelet Policy Forum, a conservative think tank, disputed the report's claim.

He said that private companies are not obliged under international law to restrict where they work even if others believe the settlements are illegal. He said companies are not necessarily violating human rights if they conduct business in an area where violations are said to occur.

"Granting a mortgage is not a human rights violation," he said.

Settlements have grown rapidly over the decades, providing a lucrative market for bank loans and mortgages, and an incentive for the banks to continue to offer funding.

Human Rights Watch has previously issued a report claiming businesses operating in the settlements contribute to Israel's violation of human rights and has called on them to cease their activities there.

Global markets mixed after Wall Street gains

By JOE McDONALD, AP Markets Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Global stock markets were mixed Wednesday after U.S. shares rose on encouraging jobs data while worries about North Korea and twin hurricane disasters eased.

KEEPING SCORE: In early trading, London's FTSE 100 declined 0.5 percent to 7,361.08 points and France's CAC 40 was off just under 0.1 percent at 5,205.08. German's DAX lost just under 0.1 percent to 12,517.85. On Tuesday, the CAC 40 rose 0.6 percent and the DAX gained 0.4 percent while the FTSE 100 slipped 0.2 percent. On Wall Street, futures for the Dow Jones industrial average and the Standard & Poor's 500 index were down 0.1 percent.

ASIA'S DAY: Tokyo's Nikkei 225 rose 0.4 percent to 19,865.82 and the Shanghai Composite Index advanced 0.1 percent to 3,384.15. Hong Kong's Hang Seng declined 0.3 percent to 27,894.08 and Seoul's Kospi shed 0.2 percent to 2,360.18. Sydney's S&P-ASX 200 was little-changed at 5,744.30. India's Sensex gained 0.3 percent to 32,363.73. Malaysia and Manila advanced while New Zealand and Taiwan retreated.

WALL STREET: Banks rose for a second day and retailers gained after the Labor Department said numbers of job openings and new hires both grew in July. That left investors hopeful people will shop and spend more. The Standard & Poor's 500 index rose 0.3 percent to a record 2,496.48. The Dow Jones industrial average gained 0.3 percent to 22,118.86, a fraction of a point higher than its previous record. The Nasdaq composite picked up 0.3 percent, to 6,454.28.

NORTH KOREA: President Donald Trump said Tuesday new U.N. sanctions "are nothing compared to what ultimately will have to happen" to stop North Korea's nuclear program. U.S. officials showed Congress satellite images of illicit trade to highlight the challenge of getting China and Russia to cut off commerce. The measures fell short of Washington's goals: a potentially crippling ban on oil imports and freezing the international assets of Kim Jong Un and his government.

ANALYST'S TAKE: "Financial markets seem to have abruptly stopped worrying about the end of the world, with stocks soaring again, bond yields pushing higher, and safe haven currencies such as the JPY selling off," said Rob Carnell of ING in a report. "It won't last. But until the next risk off event appears, we might as well enjoy it and can focus back on the underlying macro story." A potential trigger is U.S. threats to restrict Chinese access to the American financial system, said Carnell. "Were this U.S. threat to be carried out, we are fairly sure that China would retaliate in ways that would also hurt the U.S. economically."

STORM DAMAGE: Americans counted the cost of hurricanes Harvey and Irma but worries about further economic disruption eased. Estimates of damage from each storm topped \$100 billion in wrecked houses, petrochemical plants and crops of citrus and vegetables.

APPLE: Apple announced its newest iPhones. The iPhone 8, out Sept. 22, will be able to shoot pictures with better colors and less distortion. The iPhone X has an edge-to-edge screen and can be unlocked with

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facial recognition. The iPhone is the source of most of Apple's revenue, and some investors worry supply constraints will slow down sales. Apple closed down 64 cents at \$160.86.

ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. crude rose 29 cents to \$48.52 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract gained 16 cents on Tuesday to close at \$48.23. Brent crude, used to price international oils, added 27 cents to \$54.54 in London. It rose 43 cents the previous session to \$53.84.

CURRENCY: The dollar declined to 110.07 yen from Tuesday's 110.15 yen. The euro gained to \$1.1980 from \$1.1966.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Sept. 13, the 256th day of 2017. There are 109 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On September 13, 1788, the Congress of the Confederation authorized the first national election, and declared New York City the temporary national capital.

On this date:

In 1759, during the French and Indian War, the British defeated the French on the Plains of Abraham overlooking Quebec City.

In 1814, during the War of 1812, British naval forces began bombarding Fort McHenry in Baltimore but were driven back by American defenders in a battle that lasted until the following morning.

In 1911, the song "Oh, You Beautiful Doll," a romantic rag by Nat D. Ayer and Seymour Brown, was first published by Jerome H. Remick & Co.

In 1923, Miguel Primo de Rivera, the captain general of Catalonia, seized power in Spain.

In 1948, Republican Margaret Chase Smith of Maine was elected to the U.S. Senate; she became the first woman to serve in both houses of Congress.

In 1959, Elvis Presley first met his future wife, 14-year-old Priscilla Beaulieu, while stationed in West Germany with the U.S. Army. (They married in 1967, but divorced in 1973.)

In 1962, Mississippi Gov. Ross Barnett rejected the U.S. Supreme Court's order for the University of Mississippi to admit James Meredith, a black student, declaring in a televised address, "We will not drink from the cup of genocide."

In 1971, a four-day inmates' rebellion at the Attica Correctional Facility in western New York ended as police and guards stormed the prison; the ordeal and final assault claimed the lives of 32 inmates and 11 hostages.

In 1977, conductor Leopold Stokowski died in Hampshire, England, at age 95.

In 1989, Fay Vincent was elected commissioner of Major League Baseball, succeeding the late A. Bartlett Giamatti (juh-MAH'-tee).

In 1997, funeral services were held in Calcutta, India, for Nobel peace laureate Mother Teresa.

In 2002, the earliest known online use of the term "selfie" (a photographic self-portrait, usually taken with a smartphone) occurred on an Australian Broadcasting Corp. website forum; it came from a man named Nathan Hope, who denied coining the term, saying it was "common slang."

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush, defending an unpopular war, ordered gradual reductions in U.S. forces in Iraq and said in a televised address, "The more successful we are, the more American troops can return home." Abdul-Sattar Abu Risha, the most prominent figure in a U.S.-backed revolt of Sunni sheiks against al-Qaida in Iraq, was killed by a bomb planted near his home in Anbar province. The NFL fined New England Patriots coach Bill Belichick \$500,000 and the team \$250,000 for spying on the New York Jets during a game.

Five years ago: Chanting "death to America," hundreds of protesters angered by an anti-Islam film stormed the U.S. Embassy compound in Yemen's capital and burned the American flag. New York City's Board of Health passed a ban on the sale of big sodas and other sugary drinks, limiting the size sold at

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restaurants, concession stands and other eateries to 16 ounces.

One year ago: Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump rolled out a plan aimed at making child care more affordable, guaranteeing new mothers six weeks of paid maternity leave and suggesting new incentives for employees to provide their workers childcare during a speech in Aston, Pennsylvania. Former Israeli President Shimon Peres, 93, suffered a major stroke (he died 15 days later).

Today's Birthdays: Actress Barbara Bain is 86. Actress Eileen Fulton (TV: "As the World Turns") is 84. Actor Joe E. Tata is 81. TV producer Fred Silverman is 80. Rock singer David Clayton-Thomas (Blood, Sweat & Tears) is 76. Actress Jacqueline Bisset is 73. Singer Peter Cetera is 73. Actress Christine Estabrook is 67. Actress Jean Smart is 66. Singer Randy Jones (The Village People) is 65. Record producer Don Was is 65. Actor Isiah Whitlock Jr. is 63. Actress-comedian Geri Jewell is 61. Country singer Bobbie Cryner is 56. Rock singer-musician Dave Mustaine (Megadeth) is 56. Radio-TV personality Tavis Smiley is 53. Rock musician Zak Starkey is 52. Actor Louis Mandylor is 51. Olympic gold medal runner Michael Johnson is 50. Rock musician Steve Perkins is 50. Actor Roger Howarth is 49. Actor Dominic Fumusa is 48. Actress Louise Lombard is 47. Tennis player Goran Ivanisevic (ee-van-EE'-seh-vihch) is 46. Country singer Aaron Benward (Blue County) is 44. Country musician Joe Don Rooney (Rascal Flatts) is 42. Actor Scott Vickaryous is 42. Singer Fiona Apple is 40. Contemporary Christian musician Hector Cervantes (Casting Crowns) is 37. Former MLB pitcher Daisuke Matsuzaka is 37. Actor Ben Savage is 37. Rock singer Niall Horan (One Direction) is 24. Actor Mitch Holleman is 22. Actress Lili Reinhart (TV: "Riverdale") is 21.

Thought for Today: "Better to be without logic than without feeling." — Charlotte Bronte (BRAWN'-tee), English author (1816-1855).