

Groton Daily Independent

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Reminder of Traffic Detour

Starting today, access to the west side of Groton will be on 9th Avenue East (north of elementary school), then south to Sixth Avenue West. Also, those gaining access to SD37 on those two avenues will be able to go all the way to US12.

Wednesday, Oct. 18

12:30 to 2:50 p.m.:

6th Grade MathCounts at Warner

Thursday, Oct. 19

1st Round Football Playoffs

6:30 p.m.: Groton hosts Bennett County

Saturday, Oct. 21

State Cross Country in Rapid City

Robotics in Groton

School Surplus Auction at 1 p.m.

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

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

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Put our experienced team to work for you!

GROTON
Ford

GROTONFORD.COM 605-397-2311

“Before the reward there
must be labor.

You plant
before you
harvest.
You sow in
tears before
you reap joy.”

-Ralph Ransom

Chicken Soup
for the Soul

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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")**

Groton Area Help Wanted

The Groton Area School District is seeking qualified applicants for a part-time Assistant Business Manager. Job description and application materials can be found under the employment tab at www.grotonarea.com. Questions should be directed to Joe Schwan, Superintendent at 605-397-2351.

Help Wanted

We are Hiring Nurses – RN or LPN,
Full or Part Time. Cooks/Dietary Aid.

NEW WAGE PACKAGE!!!

Contact Brynn Pickrel 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**

0913.1005

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Wildcats win 3 games over Tigers

Northwestern came to town Tuesday evening and went home with a 3-0 win over the Groton Tigers. Game scores were 25-18, 25-9 and 25-17.

In serving, Groton Area was 44 of 45 with no ace serves. Miranda Hanson was 10 for 10 and Jessica Bjerke was eight for eith. The Wildcats were 68 of 73 with seven ace serves. Hannah Schentzel was 17 of 18 with four ace serves, Peyton Groft was 21 of 21 with two ace serves and Evy Peterson was seven of eight with one ace serve.

The Tigers were 91 of 102 in attacks with 23 kills. Gia Gengerke was 25 of 28 with nine kills and Jennie Doeden was 19 of 21 with eight kills. Northwestern was 106 of 120 with 45 kills. Caitlyn Fischbach was 21 of 23 with 13 kills, Riley Grandpre was 19 of 21 with 12 kills and Evy Peterson was 21 of 25 with 12 kills.

Groton Area was 94 of 96 in sets with 22 assists. Miranda Hanson was 69 of 71 with 18 assists. Northwestern was 117 of 117 with Madalyn Groft being 91 of 91 with 43 assists and Peyton Groft was seven of seven with five assists.

Groton Area had 51 digs with Payton Maine having 20 and Miranda Hanson 13. Northwestern had 67 digs with Peyton Groft having 17, Addi Sparling 12 and Evy Peterson 10. Gia Gengerke had four solo blocks for Groton Area and Riley Grandpe, Caitlyn Fischbach and Maddlyn Groft each had an assist for Northwestern.

Northwestern Area won the junior varsity match by game scores of 25-11 and 25-10. The C team split with Northwestern, 25-19 and 16-25. The eighth graders lost, 25-11 and 25-23 and the seventh graders woner, 25-23 and 25-15.

Groton wraps up the regular season Monday by hosting Milbank area.

| Region 1 | Seed Points | W-L |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|------|
| Groton Area | 42.81 | 16-5 |
| Redfield/Doland | 42.81 | 18-8 |
| Aberdeen Roncalli | 42.09 | 16-6 |
| Milbank | 38.59 | 9-13 |
| Webster Area | 37.08 | 4-20 |
| Sisseton | 36.83 | 5-18 |
| Tiospa Zina | 36.45 | 6-14 |

NSU Football Alumni Rally for Coach Miller Scholarship

Aberdeen, SD -- The Northern State University Wolves Club is proud to announce the creation of the Miller Way Football Scholarship as a tribute to former Head Football Coach Dennis Miller and his NSU legacy. Created by former players from all of the years of the Miller era, the scholarship has raised over \$15,000 thus far.

The Miller Way Annual Football Scholarship will be awarded to a football student-athlete each year that demonstrates the characteristics of Coach Miller – hard work, integrity, and commitment to excellence in the classroom, on the field, and in life.

Miller led the Northern State University football team from 1986-97, compiling a 77-55 record in 12 seasons with the Wolves. He joined the NSU ranks after four seasons as the receivers and line-backers coach for Brigham Young University, where the Cougars claimed the national championship in 1984. The Graceville, Minn. native tallied nine winning seasons while at NSU, including a career best 9-2 record in 1986, just one season after the Wolves had gone 3-6-1 under the previous coach. From 1986-1993, the Wolves were frequently found in the NAIA National Rankings, climbing as high as No. 4 in 1989. In 1990, Northern captured their first NSIC Championship going 7-4 overall and 5-1 in the league. NSU added their second NSIC Championship in 1992, going 5-1 in league action. In addition to the two NSIC titles, Miller's teams also tallied four runner-up finishes, three third place finishes, and two fourth place finishes. He was awarded the NSIC Coach of the Year title in 1986, 1990, and 1992. In his 12 seasons with the Wolves, he coached 51 first team all-conference selections and 15 All-Americans. Following his tenure at NSU, Miller became the head coach at Wisconsin Lutheran College, where he is still at the helm today. The Warriors have seen 137 first team all-conference selections and four players of the year in the NACC under Miller's tutelage. He currently holds a career record of 141-150 through 28 seasons.

In describing Coach Miller's philosophy, Andy Fields (94-98) said, "he never compromised the integrity of the program for a win. Leading by example, his priority was helping young men grow and develop first as stand-up citizens, second as football players."

Frank Birch (93-96) added, "he brought in kids from all over the country and varying backgrounds and made them a part of the Wolves family. When people ask me about my college football experience, I always tell them it was amazing. When they ask about my head coach I always tell them that I would trust my own sons to play for him."

Charles Fitzgerald (93-96) further commented, "with time you realize the principles that Coach Miller advocated and instilled in his players have had a lasting impact on our lives. I am excited to be a part of honoring Coach Miller thru the creation of the Miller Way Football Scholarship and hope that all of his players will join me in supporting NSU and honoring Coach Miller."

The Wolves Club is committed to ensuring all NSU sport programs have the scholarships necessary to bring in high quality student-athletes and compete for championships in the best conference in the country. Recently, the NSIC Board of Directors voted to remove all caps on men's scholarships, thus NSU football now has the ability to offer 36 scholarships, the NCAA maximum. NSU has been at the maximum level in the NSIC for the past few years – 28, but now there is eight new scholarships to fund in order to remain competitive. One full scholarship is approximately \$17,500 per year, thus the "Miller Way" scholarship will be one small step to help reach this goal.

All NSU friends, fans and alumni are encouraged to contribute to the Miller Way Football Scholarship. To make a gift to the "Miller Way" scholarship online: nsuwolves.com » Support » Give Now! (Simply select 'Athletics' select 'The Miller Way Scholarship' in the drop down box.)

You can also make a gift by printing out the pledge card above and returning it to:

NSU Foundation
620 15th Ave SE
Aberdeen, SD 57401



Main Natural Gas line hit

Webster Scale was attempting to repair a broken water valve when it hit a three-inch Natural Gas line that serves much of Groton. According to a Northwestern Energy official, the main was only slightly ruptured. Had it been damaged further and the line would have been depressurized, approximately 200 meters would have had to been turned off individually and once the line was repaired, natural gas would be turned on house by house. "We were lucky," the official said. "If it was any worse, we would have been here until midnight."

What you see in the photo to the left are Northwestern Energy workers Dick Paulson and Mark Hallenbeck working on the line. The yellow line was a temporary bypass while the main line was repaired. Below, Hallenbeck (wearing green) and Paulson are repairing the tracer line.



Marshall County, South Dakota PRIVATE LAND SALE - 155 +/- ACRES

Legal Description: The Northeast Quarter (NE ¼) of Section Nine (9), Township One Hundred Twenty-six (126), Range Fifty-nine (59), West of the 5th P.M., except five acres of said land in the northeast corner of said land which is used for cemetery purposes, Marshall County, South Dakota.

155 acres with the total acres to be determined by survey or the acres used by Farm Service Agency in Marshall County, South Dakota.

SELLERS: Estate of Nancy L. Wright
Clark Wright & Elizabeth LaRocque Co- Personal Representatives

ATTORNEY FOR SELLERS: Rick A. Ribstein – Ribstein & Hogan Law Firm, 621 6th Street, Brookings, SD 57006. Phone: (605) 692-1818

REVISED SALE/AUCTION FORMAT: Preliminary written bids will be accepted by Rick A. Ribstein, Attorney for Sellers, until 5:00 o'clock p.m. on Friday, October 20, 2017. Prospective purchasers will be notified by mail that they are invited to a private auction to be held in Amherst, South Dakota, on Friday, November 3, 2017. Sellers reserve the right to reject any or all bids.

PRELIMINARY WRITTEN BID FORMAT: Preliminary written bids may be submitted in the form of a letter mailed or delivered to Seller's Attorney at the address printed above. Preliminary bid letters should include bidder's name and mailing address, the preliminary bid amount, and should be accompanied by a check for a down payment equal to 5% of the preliminary bid amount. Down payment checks should be payable to Ribstein & Hogan Trust Account.

TERMS: 5% down with preliminary written bid. A 10% additional nonrefundable earnest money payment required on the day of sale and balance at closing. Possession will be subject to existing tenant's rights under their current lease and their rights to harvest the 2017 crops, with Fall tillage privileges for a new buyer(s) to be permitted with approval of the current tenants. Cost of owner's policy of title insurance and closing fees split 50/50. Sellers will pay the 2016 taxes due in 2017, and all prior taxes. 2017 taxes will be prorated until the day of closing.

INQUIRIES: Informal packages available upon request from Seller's Attorney. Questions about the real estate or auction format should be directed to Seller's Attorney by mail, or by calling (605) 692-1818. Ask for Rick A. Ribstein, Attorney or Sheila Maffett, Legal Secretary.

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Water was put down on the road to help with the packing of the gravel. The gravel was dried out so it could be worked and repacked. Hopefully the asphalt work will begin today and if it does, Fourth Avenue will be closed and access will be on Sixth Avenue West and Ninth Avenue East.

The Life of Gilbert Hinkelman



Gilbert Hinkelman 78 of Groton passed away surrounded by his immediate family on Sunday October 15, 2017 at his home near Groton.

Funeral services will be at 11:00 A.M. Thursday, October 19, 2017 at St. John's Lutheran Church in Groton, Rev. Craig Grams officiating. Burial will be at Sunset Memorial Gardens in Aberdeen.

Visitation will be in the church at Groton on Wednesday 5-7 P.M. ending with a 7 P.M. Prayer Service.

Gilbert Herbert Hinkelman was born on June 30, 1939 at Webster, South Dakota. He was baptized and confirmed at St. John's Lutheran Church in Groton, South Dakota. He attended school in Groton and graduated from Groton High School in 1958. After graduation he remained at home helping on the family farm. In 1962, he moved to Beecher, Illinois where he worked at Allis Chalmers Equipment, on the assembly line building engines. In 1963, he was drafted in the United States Army during the Vietnam War. He was stationed in Germany

where he faithfully served. He was honorably discharged in 1965. After discharge, he continued to live in Beecher where he met the love of his life, Rochelle.

On October 29, 1966, he was united in marriage to Rochelle Bakhaus at Zion Lutheran Church in Beecher. To this union two sons were born, Delbert and Elvis. In January of 1969, the couple moved to Groton where Gilbert took over the Hinkelman farming operation. He continued to help out on the farm until present time as his health would allow him.

Gilbert had a great love for his country and was a lifelong member of the American Legion Post #39. He was a member of St. John's Lutheran Church in Groton where he was an elder and served as an usher. He was also a member of the James Valley 2 Cylinder Club. Gilbert had a great passion for music. He was a talented musician playing the accordion, harmonica, concertina, the keyboard and polka dancing. He enjoyed visiting over a cup of coffee with his many friends. Above all else, he cherished time spent with his family. His only grandson, Preston was the apple of his eye! He would often be seen with his sidekick, Preston!

Gilbert passed away on Sunday, October 15, 2017 surrounded by his immediate family at his home near Groton, South Dakota at the age of 78 years, 3 months and 15 days.

He will be forever loved and greatly missed by his wife Rochelle, one son Delbert (Anje) Hinkelman and one grandson Preston Dean Hinkelman all of Groton, SD, and one sister Matilda (Dave) Hemme of Seattle, WA. He was preceded in death by his parents and one son Elvis Hinkelman.

If they want to lead, empower them to lead.

Leaders are the essence of small towns and rural communities. The success or failure of any housing, community or economic development efforts in the places we call home often rests upon the level of engagement and investment of local citizen leaders. Yet, in so many communities I work in across South Dakota there is an invisible divide holding back the development of a strong leadership base. I hear experienced leaders saying, "Young people just don't want to be involved in the community!" and I hear emerging leaders saying, "The people in charge won't let us try anything new!"

So, I am asking you, "How can we empower more people to lead in our rural communities?"

To begin searching for a solution to this question, I want to help you understand two community leadership systems that exist:

1. Most community leadership systems currently operate in a traditional hierarchy – meaning top-down (like a triangle) – the board's officers propose ideas to the members based on their knowledge of what the community needs. Then, following a decision of the board, the tasks gets allocated to the members who carry out the projects with board supervision. Traditional leadership systems define levels of authority and decision-making within the organization and invite you to join the work they are currently doing.

2. The non-traditional community leadership system being implemented by some rural communities has a core leadership team that is structured as a network – meaning connected (like a circle) – with the basic goal of allowing distributed decision-making to empower and raise up resident leaders while giving everyone in the community the opportunity to identify priorities and go to work on projects they are passionate about. The non-traditional community leadership system can be chaotic and allows community leaders to collaborate, innovate, dream, and experiment which creates increased optimism and hope for new possibilities within the community.

The two systems listed above are quite different, yet if we are going to show emerging leaders that they do have the power to innovate and have real impact on the community, then we need to begin transforming the community's leadership structure. Experienced community leaders can initiate this process by asking good questions, listening with curiosity, and taking new ideas seriously. Below are some sample questions to help these transformational conversations begin:

- Open Ended Questions - What needs to be done?
- Challenge Status Quo - Why must it be done that way?
- Learner Mindset - What is good or useful about this?
- Forward Looking - What possibilities does this open up?
- Optimistic - What can we learn from this?
- Empower Others - What are you trying to accomplish?
- Build Relationships - How solid are our connections with others?
- Understand Self – What do I need to reflect on to move us all forward?
- Deal with Dependency - Would you like people to solve their problems rather than coming to you for answers?
- Serve Humbly - How can I help you?
- Encourage Action - What will you commit to do by when?
- Evaluate - What does our leadership team do that gets in the way?
- Listen - Are we listening to each other with curiosity?
- Involve All Stakeholders - What are our common areas of interest?
- Enable Change - What will you need from us in the future?
- Develop Vision and Values - Are we being honest with ourselves?



Paula Jensen
Vice President of
Advancement
Dakota Resources /
Dakotas America

The responsibility of building a pool of leaders in our rural communities falls to both sides. Experienced leaders must let go a little bit, and emerging leaders must build a foundation of trust. This will allow a smooth community leadership structure transformation with minimal chaos – ultimately good for the future of our rural communities. So, if they want to lead, empower them to lead.

Having a passion for community leadership and development is what drives Paula Jensen's personal and professional life. Paula resides in her hometown of Langford, South Dakota, population 318+, where she and her husband own and operate an auto repair business. Together they have raised three boys, who love growing up rural.

She serves as a grant writer and community coach with Dakota Resources based in Renner, South Dakota. Dakota Resources is a 501c3 Community Development Financial Institution with the purpose of stimulating financial and human investments in rural communities that are invested in themselves.

SCHOOL SURPLUS AUCTION

809 N 6th St, Groton SD (School Bus Barns)
Saturday, October 21, 2017 - 1:00 PM

1995 GMC 47 PASSENGER BLUE BIRD BUS

- 165,367 miles, 5 sp, Diesel Cat 6.6 L model 3116
- Tires 75%, 245/75R 22.5



OFFICE/CLASSROOM

- Swintec 4000 electric typewriter
- "Jumbo" 160M laminator with 4 wheel cart
- Blue swivel desk chair
- Office type chairs - several
- LaserJet printer
- Metal desks
- Teacher desks - several
- 2-black stools
- Dukane movie projector
- Overhead projectors – several
- Free standing A-frame chalk/bulletin boards - several
- Leapfrog learning system
- Lots of misc. teaching supplies/books etc.

KITCHEN/HOME

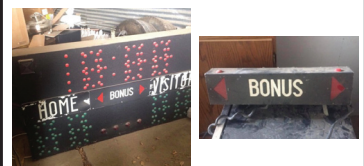
- Icemaker
- Maytag gas range stove with glass front (excellent condition)
- 2-Maytag electric stoves
- Whirlpool microwave
- Panasonic microwave
- Box of cooking pans/cutting boards
- Misc. cooking utensils
- 3- salad bar carts
- Handicapped shower chair
- Room fans - several
- Ceiling fans - several
- Small electric hanging heater
- Room dividers - several
- 6 ft and 8 ft folding tables - several
- 2 sanitizing stations
- Small iron and boards with box of misc.
- Box of sewing templates
- Baby carriers - several
- Realcare baby
- Child's pool/game table
- Assortment of kid's toys
- Playground equipment

CABINETS

- 2 wire baskets
- Steel and wood storage lockers - several
- Card catalogue storage box
- Circular book rack
- File cabinets – several
- Book cases – assortment of different sizes
- Assortment of wall hanging cabinets
- Storage cabinets on wheels – several
- 4 wheel steel utility carts – several
- Wood shelving and accessories - several
- Assortment of wood/steel doors

SCOREBOARD/ MAN CAVE SPECIAL

- Old school scoreboard with controller and bonus display



MUSIC

- "Fender" Amplifier
- "Gallen-Krueger" Amplifier and Speaker
- "Hohner Bass 3" Keyboard
- "Standel" bass amplifier
- "Alesis QS 8.2" keyboard
- AM/FM karaoke machine
- Record player
- Box of music recorders
- 4- music storage units
- Boxes of show choir clothing - several

MISCELLANEOUS

- 2 frames, matted, and numbered pictures – William Wilson – artist
- Framed/matted wall picture – B. Chipton, artist
- Golf pull-type caddy
- Wood shop clamps
- Several TV sets
- 7.4 fl. Fluorescent light fixtures
- 1- 8 ft fluorescent light fixture (new in box)
- Stage lighting fixtures
- Many misc. items

Owner: Groton Area School District 06-6

AUCTIONEERS: Steve Simon and Gerard Simon
SALE DAY CELL PHONE: Steve: 605-380-8506, Peggy: 605-380-8505
CLERK: Simon Auction Service
WEBSITE: www.stevesimongroton.com

The auction company, its employees and associates assume no responsibility for typographical or other errors, which may appear herein. Seller and Auctioneer make NO WARRANTIES, express or implied, to anyone about any aspect of any item, except that Seller will provide marketable title.

TERMS: Cash or bankable check. All items to be paid for and removed on day of auction. Announcements on sale day take precedence over printed material.



P.O. Box 705
 Groton, SD 57445
 605-397-8507 • 1-877-397-4245

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Today in Weather History

October 18, 2012: An area of low pressure rapidly intensified once it moved east of the northern plains. This strengthening resulted in very strong northwest winds across the region. Some of the higher reported wind gusts include 77 mph at the Fort Pierre and Grand River RAWS sites, 74 mph at the Pierre airport, and 70 mph at Murdo, Presho, and Hayes public observation sites.

1906 - A hurricane struck South Florida drowning 124 persons stranded in the Florida Keys. (David Ludlum)

1910 - Northeasterly winds as high as 70 mph (from a hurricane moving northward up the Florida peninsula) carried water out of Tampa Bay and the Hillsboro River. The water level lowered to nine feet below mean low water. Forty ships were grounded. (The Weather Channel)

1916: A tropical depression organized to a tropical storm on October 11 in the western Caribbean. It moved westward, reaching hurricane strength on the 13th before hitting the Yucatán Peninsula on the 15th as an 110 mph hurricane. It weakened over land, and it emerged over the southern Gulf of Mexico as a tropical storm. It quickly re-strengthened to a Category 3 hurricane, hitting Pensacola on October 18. The maximum wind velocity at Mobile was 115 mph from the east at 8:25 am. Pensacola had winds of 120 mph at 10:13 am when the wind instrument tower was blown down.

1930 - A big early season lake effect snowburst on the lee shores of Lake Erie and Lake Ontario produced 47 inches at Gouverneur NY and 48 inches just south of Buffalo. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Thunderstorms in northeastern Texas produced golf ball size hail at Atlanta, along with wind gusts to 86 mph, and four inches of rain. Damage from the storm was estimated at more than a million dollars. Sunny and mild weather continued across much of the rest of the nation. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Eight cities in the southwestern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including Red Bluff CA with a reading of 96 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)






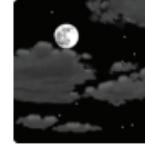

1989 - Unseasonably cold air began to invade the central and eastern U.S. Light snow fell across northern Maine, and snow was also reported in the Great Lakes Region, including the Chicago area. Bismarck ND was the cold spot in the nation with a low of 9 degrees above zero. Five cities in Florida reported record high readings for the date, as temperatures warmed above 80 degrees. Miami FL reported a record high of 90 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

2005 - With the formation of Hurricane Wilma, the 2005 Atlantic hurricane season tied the record for the most named storms for any season (21 storms in 1933), and also tied the record for the most hurricanes in a single season (12 in 1969). Wilma peaked at category-5 intensity on the 19th, with a minimum central pressure falling to 882 millibars (26.05 inches of mercury), the lowest pressure ever recorded in the Atlantic Basin. Wilma also became the most rapidly-intensifying storm on record, with a maximum-sustained surface wind speed increase of 105 mph in a 24-hour period.

2007: A destructive fall tornado hit Nappanee, Indiana causing extensive damage along its 20-mile path across northeast Marshall, Northwest Kosciusko and southwest Elkhart Counties. High-end EF3 intensity winds near 165 mph were estimated based on the most severe damage over southeast Nappanee. Over 100 structures sustained significant damage or were destroyed in town alone. Despite the widespread damage and time of day, only minor injuries were reported.

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| Today | Tonight | Thursday | Thursday Night | Friday | Friday Night | Saturday |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Sunny then Sunny and Breezy | Mostly Clear | Sunny | Mostly Clear | Mostly Sunny and Breezy | Partly Cloudy | Chance Showers |
| High: 65 °F | Low: 37 °F | High: 76 °F | Low: 52 °F | High: 79 °F | Low: 51 °F | High: 62 °F |

TODAY 60s



THURSDAY 72-81°

Breezy
each afternoon, especially Friday



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD
www.weather.gov/abr

FRIDAY 75-83°

Graphic Created
10/18/2017 4:20 AM

Published on: 10/18/2017 at 4:23AM

Dry and breezy conditions, with above normal temperatures to continue each afternoon through Friday. Behind a cold front sliding across the Dakotas this morning, breezy winds out of the northwest will keep high temperatures in the 60s. Expect temperatures to push back into the 70s and low 80s Thursday and Friday, when southerly winds increase for eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota. The strongest winds are anticipated Friday afternoon.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 78.5

Low Outside Temp: 34.3

High Gust: 23

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 90° in 1910

Record Low: 12° in 1930

Average High: 57°F

Average Low: 32°F

Average Precip in Oct: 1.30

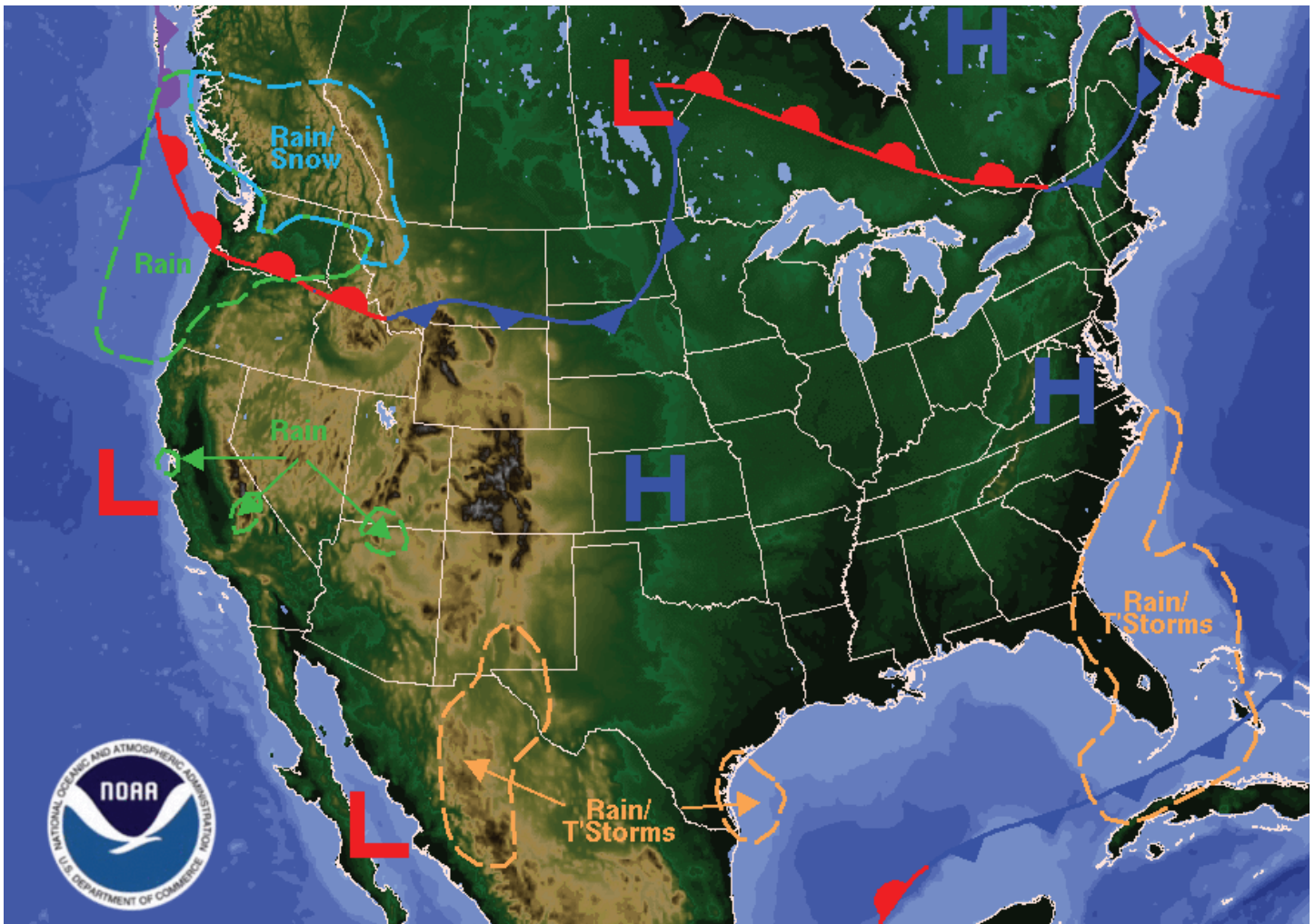
Precip to date in Oct: 0.67

Average Precip to date: 19.78

Precip Year to Date: 13.47

Sunset Tonight: 6:42 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:55 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Wed, Oct 18, 2017, issued 4:57 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain

Rain and T'Storms

Rain and Snow

Snow

Flash Flooding Possible (hatched)

Severe T'Storms Possible (hatched)

Freezing Rain Possible (hatched)

Heavy Snow Possible (hatched)



OVERCOMING THE OVERWHELMING

David was hunted, haunted and harassed. Often he was forced into a crevice and had little room to move or stretch. But in his moments of oppression he did not seem to suffer from depression. He felt free to sing a song of hope that God planted in his heart. He found a source of strength that came to him from his dearest friend and constant companion – God!

“I will sing of Your strength, in the morning I will sing of Your love; for You are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble!” wrote David as he reflected on the troubled times of his life. And he was not the only one who found themselves in life threatening and even life ending situations.

Do you remember what Paul and Silas did when they were thrown into prison for serving the Lord? At midnight they were praying and singing hymns of praise to the Lord while the other prisoners listened to them. God joined in the celebration, sent an earthquake that caused so much shaking that the prisoners’ chains fell off and doors flew open. The confines and chains of being in prison could not silence them.

Josephus, the historian, wrote of the Christians awaiting death in the Coliseum. Waiting on the lions to maul and mangle them, they sang songs of joy so loudly that their voices were heard above the roar of the lions and the cheers of the crowd. As they faced the lions that would devour them, God put His song in their mouths, His peace in their hearts and angels to comfort them.

Prayer: Lord, when we face the confinement of a cell or the threat of being devoured, we know You are present. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 59:16 But I will sing of your strength, in the morning I will sing of your love; for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble.

2018 Groton SD Community Events

- Groton Lion's Club Bingo- Wednesday Nights 6:30pm at the Groton Legion (Year Round)
- 11/18/2017-3/31/2018 Groton Lion's Club Wheel of Meat- Saturday Nights 7pm at the Groton Legion (Fall/Winter Months)
- 1/28/2018 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm
- 3/24/2018 Easter Egg Hunt (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 5/5/2018 Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday in May)
- 5/28/2018 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Program at the Cemetery, Lunch to follow at the American Legion (Memorial Day)
- 6/14/2018 Transit Fundraiser (Middle Thursday in June)
- 6/15/2018 SDSU Golf at Olive Grove
- 6/16/2018 Triathlon (Saturday before Father's Day)
- 7/4/2018 Firecracker Golf Tourney (4th of July)
- 7/22/2018 Summer Fest (4th Sunday in July)
- 9/8/2018 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 10/6/2018 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 10/12/2018 Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/31/2018 Trunk or Treat (Halloween)
- 11/10/2018 Groton American Legion Post #39 Turkey Shoot (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)

- Best Ball Golf Tourney
- SDSU Golf Tourney
- Sunflower Golf Tourney
- Santa Claus Day
- Fireman's Stag
- Tour of Homes
- Crazy Dayz/Open Houses
- School Events

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News from the Associated Press

Tuesday's Scores By The Associated Press

Volleyball

Aberdeen Roncalli def. Hamlin, 25-20, 25-18, 25-11
Arlington def. Estelline, 25-15, 25-14, 25-14
Avon def. Corsica/Stickney, 25-20, 25-18, 25-13
Baltic def. Howard, 25-12, 19-25, 25-19, 25-10
Chester def. Sioux Valley, 17-25, 24-26, 25-22, 24-20, 19-17
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte def. McLaughlin, 25-19, 22-25, 25-15, 25-13
DeSmet def. Colman-Egan, 25-17, 18-25, 23-25, 31-29, 15-8
Deubrook def. Castlewood, 25-9, 25-13, 25-17
Faith def. Timber Lake, 25-14, 25-15, 25-20
Faulkton def. Edmunds Central, 25-22, 25-17, 25-15
Freeman Academy/Marion def. Dell Rapids St. Mary, 25-11, 17-25, 25-14, 25-18
Great Plains Lutheran def. Waubay/Summit, 25-20, 25-18, 18-25, 26-24
Gregory def. Boyd County, Neb., 25-14, 25-18, 10-25, 25-16
Hanson def. Freeman, 19-25, 25-23, 25-20, 25-13
Hendricks, Minn. def. Flandreau Indian, 3-0
Herreid/Selby Area def. Sully Buttes, 25-14, 20-25, 25-13, 25-17
Highmore-Harrold def. Lyman, 26-24, 23-25, 25-16, 25-15
Huron def. Yankton, 25-18, 25-18, 25-17
Irene-Wakonda def. Viborg-Hurley, 25-18, 25-13, 25-13
Kimball/White Lake def. Platte-Geddes, 16-25, 25-21, 25-14, 25-11
Lake Preston def. Elkton-Lake Benton, 25-18, 13-25, 23-25, 25-23, 16-14
Langford def. Britton-Hecla, 25-14, 25-27, 25-11, 25-16
Lead-Deadwood def. Douglas, 25-19, 25-20, 25-19
Lemmon def. Bowman County, N.D., 25-17, 21-25, 25-13, 23-25, 15-10
Lennox def. Alcester-Hudson, 25-15, 20-25, 25-13, 25-19
Linton-HMB, N.D. def. Mobridge-Pollock, 25-17, 14-25, 25-17, 25-22
Madison def. Dell Rapids, 25-19, 25-18, 25-11
McCook Central/Montrose def. Tea Area, 25-12, 25-22, 16-25, 25-21
McIntosh def. Eureka/Bowdle, 27-25, 26-24, 20-25, 23-25, 15-12
Milbank def. Sisseton, 25-17, 25-16, 25-14
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton def. Tri-Valley, 25-21, 25-18, 25-19
Northwestern def. Groton Area, 25-18, 25-9, 25-17
Parker def. Flandreau, 25-9, 25-13, 25-17
Parkston def. Bon Homme, 25-21, 25-19, 25-19
Pine Ridge def. Red Cloud, 25-12, 25-20, 25-12
Sioux Falls Christian def. Southwest Minnesota Christian, Minn., 25-9, 25-14, 25-8
Spearfish def. Sturgis Brown, 25-16, 25-19, 25-18
St. Thomas More def. Hot Springs, 26-24, 25-12, 25-16
Todd County def. St. Francis Indian, 25-22, 25-15, 25-12
Wagner def. Winner, 25-18, 25-21, 25-22
White River def. Lower Brule, 25-9, 25-13, 25-17
Wilmot def. Wyndmere-Lidgerwood, N.D., 25-22, 25-10, 21-25, 25-19
Wolsey-Wessington def. Sunshine Bible Academy, 21-25, 25-17, 25-11, 25-18

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Chamberlain Triangular
Chamberlain def. McLaughlin, 25-14, 25-7, 25-12
Chamberlain def. Cheyenne-Eagle Butte, 25-20, 25-20, 25-18
Gayville-Volin Triangular
Gayville-Volin def. Omaha Nation, Neb., 16-25, 25-14, 19-25, 25-16, 15-8
Gayville-Volin def. Marty Indian, 25-9, 25-9, 25-12
Rapid City Christian def. Harding County, 24-26, 25-15, 25-20, 25-22
Kadoka Triangular
Kadoka Area def. Stanley County, 25-20, 25-9, 25-12
Kadoka Area def. New Underwood, 25-17, 25-12, 21-25, 25-18
New Underwood def. Stanley County, 25-20, 19-25, 25-15, 19-25, 15-9
Mitchell Triangular
Harrisburg def. Mitchell, 28-26, 25-19, 25-19
Mitchell Christian def. Iroquois, 25-9, 25-13, 25-7

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Mega Millions

31-45-49-56-70, Mega Ball: 11, Megaplier: 5

(thirty-one, forty-five, forty-nine, fifty-six, seventy; Mega Ball: eleven; Megaplier: five)

Estimated jackpot: \$15 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$156 million

Alaska Native leader nominated for Indian Affairs post

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — Federal officials say Arctic Slope Regional Corp. official Tara Sweeney has been nominated by President Donald Trump to be the next assistant Indian Affairs secretary.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke announced the nomination Tuesday.

Officials say Sweeney would be the first Alaska Native and second woman to hold the position if the U.S. Senate confirms her nomination.

Sweeney, executive vice president for external affairs for the regional Native corporation, said in a statement she is honored by the nomination. She says would strive to develop strong relationships with tribes and "create a more effective voice" for them.

Transgender state employee sues over health plan provision

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A transgender state employee is challenging a provision in the South Dakota employee health plan that excludes coverage of drugs or services for gender transformations.

The Argus Leader reports that Terri Bruce, a transgender man, argues the health plan violates the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the U.S. Constitution's equal protection clause.

Bruce says in the complaint that he's been blocked from having medically necessary chest reconstruction surgery prescribed by his physician to treat gender dysphoria because of the plan's "discriminatory" exclusion.

Bruce, who works at the South Dakota State Historical Society Archaeological Research Center, filed the federal lawsuit last week against the state and Bureau of Human Resources Commissioner Laurie Gill.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard's chief of staff, Tony Venhuizen, declined to comment to the newspaper.

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

Board of Regents to host town meeting in Watertown

WATERTOWN, S.D. (AP) — The state Board of Regents is set to host a town meeting in Watertown on South Dakota public higher education.

The gathering is scheduled for Oct. 30 at Lake Area Technical Institute. Representatives of the Board of Regents, its staff and public university presidents will attend to speak with local residents.

Regents President Bob Sutton says it's important that the board hears from interested citizens and community leaders across South Dakota as it charts a future course.

The public is invited to come to the meeting.

Federal agency backs Montana tribe's ouster of its president

LAME DEER, Mont. (AP) — The federal Bureau of Indian Affairs says officials with a Montana Indian tribe acted within their authority when they removed the tribe's president from office for reportedly neglecting his duties.

The Billings Gazette reported Tuesday that the federal agency declared its backing for the decision to remove President Jace Killsback in a letter to the Northern Cheyenne Tribal Council.

The council said in a statement that the BIA decision "removes any doubt" that its members were within their rights to remove Killsback. His ouster came Oct. 5 on a 9-1 vote.

Killsback has said he will continue opposing the action, which he contends was illegal because it went against a judgment by the Cheyenne Constitutional Court.

Information from: The Billings Gazette, <http://www.billingsgazette.com>

Grassley threatens Trump EPA nominees over biofuels mandate

By MICHAEL BIESECKER and DAVID PITT, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Republican senator said Tuesday he may seek to block President Donald Trump's nominees for key posts at the Environmental Protection Agency unless the administration backs off a proposed reduction in the volume of biofuels blended into gasoline and diesel.

Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa said he plans to speak with EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt about the Renewable Fuel Standard. Pruitt has proposed targets for 2017 and 2018 set slightly below current levels following a push by oil companies to ease mandates for using ethanol from corn and soybeans.

Grassley said EPA's proposed rollback would result in job losses in his home state. Pruitt's position is in contrast to the staunch support for the biofuel industry Trump pledged as a presidential candidate last year.

"I've made it clear that EPA's latest proposal under the RFS would break the president's and Administrator Pruitt's commitment on this issue," Grassley said Tuesday in a phone call with reporters from his home state. "It would hurt rural America and also hurt Iowa."

Asked what leverage he had to get Pruitt to do what he wanted, the veteran senator immediately replied: "Hold up EPA nominees. I think there's plenty of senators would do that."

In a letter to Pruitt sent Monday, a bipartisan group of 33 senators urged him to change his position and support increases for biomass-based diesel and other biofuels.

EPA did not respond Tuesday to a message seeking comment.

A meeting of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works is set for Wednesday to consider Trump's nominations of four people he's tapped to serve as assistant administrators at EPA.

Democrats have already said they will oppose Trump's nominees, meaning the defection of only one Republican on the committee could potentially sink them. Of the committee's 11 Republicans, three — Sen. Joni Ernst of Iowa, Sen. Deb Fischer of Nebraska and Jerry Moran of Kansas — signed the letter to Pruitt.

Ernst said she also met with Pruitt on Tuesday, saying that representatives of biofuel-producing states will never stop fighting for the requirement.

"Administrator Pruitt again claimed today that he will not do anything to undermine the program," Ernst said, according to a statement. "However, we have heard this before. We now need to see it."

Pitt reported from Des Moines, Iowa.

Follow Biesecker at <http://twitter.com/mbieseck>

Judge: 'Breathtaking' lack of leadership on Flint water

By ED WHITE, Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — A judge on Tuesday ordered Flint, Michigan, to choose a long-term source of drinking water by next week, saying the City Council so far is showing a "breathtaking" lack of leadership.

Gov. Rick Snyder's administration sued Flint to force the council to approve a 30-year deal with the Great Lakes Water Authority, a regional water agency, which has been serving the city since a lead disaster was declared in fall 2015.

Mayor Karen Weaver agrees with the plan, but the council hasn't been persuaded and just recently hired a consultant. A court-appointed mediator has been unable to broker a settlement.

U.S. District Judge David Lawson expressed frustration and started his 29-page decision with a quote by John F. Kennedy about the risks of "comfortable inaction."

"The failure of leadership, in light of past crises and manifold warnings related to the Flint water system, is breathtaking," Lawson said.

He set a Monday deadline for Flint to sign up with Great Lakes Water or come up with another long-term solution. He didn't indicate what would happen if the deadline is missed.

Flint ran into extraordinary trouble when managers appointed by Snyder put the city on water from the Flint River in 2014 while a pipeline was being built to Lake Huron. The corrosive water wasn't properly treated, and lead leached from old plumbing into homes of the roughly 100,000 residents.

The state and other public agencies want Flint to stay with Great Lakes Water for the next three decades and drop a plan to upgrade the water treatment plant and distribute water on its own. The state says a long-term deal will keep Flint's water fund solvent and alleviate the need to significantly raise rates.

"We can only hope that now City Council will put the people of Flint first and comply with the judge's order so we can move forward," Weaver said.

Council member Scott Kincaid told the Detroit Free Press that maybe a shorter deal would satisfy the judge and give Flint time to get its water plant up and running to take water from another agency, the Karegnondi Water Authority.

Follow Ed White at <http://twitter.com/edwhiteap>

National park in North Dakota to reduce bison herd

MEDORA, N.D. (AP) — A national park in North Dakota is reducing the size of its bison herd this week in a move that will benefit several Native American tribes.

A majority of the animals from Theodore Roosevelt National Park will help supplement tribal herds through the InterTribal Buffalo Council, the Bismarck Tribune reported.

"We have a constant need for animals because our tribal herds are being used, they're being utilized the way they traditionally have been, for food source, for ceremonial purposes," said Patrick Toomey, range technician for the Rapid City, S.D.-based organization.

The council represents about 60 tribes across 19 states. Decisions of how to manage the herd are determined by research.

"When we manage our bison herd, we use science. Our decisions aren't made arbitrarily," said Eileen

Andes, chief of interpretation and public affairs.

Wildlife biologist Blake McCann said the reduction roundup is to prevent the bison herds from getting too large to ensure there's enough available forage for the grazing animals.

He said the park aims to keep its herd at about 300 to 500 animals at the South Unit and less than 300 at the North Unit. South Dakota and North Dakota are among the states that will receive the animals.

Tooney said the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe will receive 30 to 40 bison. The Three Affiliated Tribes will be receiving five to 10 animals to establish a new bison herd in Twin Buttes.

"It's a livelihood," said Tribal Business Council member Cory Spotted Bear. "It's a symbol of bringing local opportunity back to the community of Twin Buttes."

The partnership with the park requires the animals to be kept alive for at least one year, said Toomey.

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

Indian Health Service defends questionable contract with CEO

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The federal Indian Health Service agency is defending a contract it awarded to a company whose CEO formerly led a firm that paid \$10 million to settle allegations of submitting false claims to government health programs.

The agency awarded contracts in September to Arizona-based Tribal Emergency Medicine and Virginia-based Central Care Inc. to potentially run the emergency departments at IHS hospitals in South Dakota, North Dakota and Nebraska, the Rapid City Journal reported .

The contracts allow each hospital to select one of the companies to provide emergency department staffing, or to provide staffing along with emergency department management. The agency said the contracts are worth a combined maximum of \$26.8 million per year.

Tribal Emergency Medicine CEO John Shufeldt previously led NextCare Inc., a multistate chain of urgent-care clinics. In 2009, a former NextCare employee filed a lawsuit against the company on behalf of the U.S. government alleging the company conducted hundreds of unnecessary allergy and respiratory tests on patients and then submitted bills for the tests to government programs, including Medicare and Medicaid. The lawsuit also alleged the company inflated billings as part of a practice known as upcoding.

The company paid \$10 million in 2012 to settle the allegations, according to an announcement by the U.S. Justice Department. Shufeldt said he disagreed with the company's decision to pay the settlement and said he had parted ways with NextCare by then. He has denied any wrongdoing and said the company's testing program was medically justified.

The contract-awarding process for the Indian Health Service requires a review to learn whether any bidder has been debarred or suspended from doing business with the federal government. The agency in its review of Shufeldt found that neither he nor Tribal Emergency Medicine are listed as ineligible for conducting business with government agencies, said Jennifer Buschick, a spokeswoman for the agency.

"IHS is committed to monitoring the Great Plains Area ED (emergency department) contracts to ensure they are complying with the terms and conditions of the contract and providing quality services in a timely and lawful manner, as it does with all of its contracts," Buschick said.

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

Upper Midwest farmers report damage from dicamba herbicide

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON, Associated Press**

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — Hundreds of farmers in the Upper Midwest are reporting damage from the controversial herbicide dicamba, and state officials are considering restrictions for the 2018 growing season that might surpass even new federal rules.

The state agriculture departments in North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota this fall all asked farm-

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ers to respond to informal surveys so they could gauge the amount of damage in their states. More than 200 farmers in each state indicated damage.

"The whole dicamba situation, it's something I think about night and day," said Tom Gere, assistant director of ag services for South Dakota's Agriculture Department. "We need the technology, with all of the resistant weeds we have out there, but we don't need the problems that we've had this year."

Dicamba has been around for decades for use on crops such as soybeans and corn, but complaints surfaced across the country this summer over drifting of newly registered formulations onto neighboring crops. Officials in some states issued temporary bans on the herbicide.

The advocacy group Pesticide Action Network has estimated that more than 3 million acres of crops in at least 20 states were damaged by dicamba drift this year — an area the size of Connecticut.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency on Friday announced a deal with the agribusiness giants Monsanto, BASF and DuPont for new voluntary labeling requirements for the chemical for next growing season. Dicamba products will be labeled as "restricted use," requiring additional training and certifications for applicators and limiting when and how the herbicide can be sprayed.

States can go further, even banning the herbicide's use. That option is a possibility in Minnesota, said Margaret Hart, spokeswoman for that state's agriculture department.

"We'll take a look at what our investigations brought forth, what the (farmer) survey presented, what the EPA is recommending," she said. "We'll take all of that information and use it in the process of making our decision about (dicamba) registration for 2018."

In North Dakota, where farmers this year are expected to harvest a record soybean crop, the Agriculture Department also is drafting state-specific dicamba restrictions. The state will not go so far as to ban the chemical but is likely to fine-tune the federal rules to fit North Dakota weather and geography, according to Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring.

"We can be a little more prescriptive in North Dakota," he said. "We have a pretty good idea, a feel, for where soybeans are grown and what the environmental conditions are."

State officials are striving to finalize their regulations soon.

"It's the time of year when growers are wanting to make decisions for 2018," Hart said. "We know the urgency of it."

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

Curiosity does in bear cubs after escape from wildlife park

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Two bear cubs that escaped from a South Dakota wildlife park didn't get far, due in part to their curiosity.

The Rapid City Journal reports that a man spotted the cubs lollygagging in his neighbor's yard about a block away from the Bear Country USA park on Sunday evening.

Pennington County Sheriff's Deputy Kylie Kintigh says that when she arrived at the scene, the bears seemed more interested in following her around than making a getaway. They checked out her squad car and one even tried climbing on the hood.

Park workers eventually arrived and gently sedated the cubs for their return to the park. It's unclear how or when they escaped.

Kintigh says "It definitely was the best call I have had — and that might stand true to the end of my career."

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

Dems slam Arctic drilling plan as 'polar payout' to Big Oil

By MATTHEW DALY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats and environmental groups on Tuesday denounced a Republican plan to allow oil and gas drilling in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, saying it would defile a crown jewel of U.S. wilderness to promote oil exports to China and other nations.

Sen. Edward Markey, D-Mass., called the plan a "massive corporate handout to Big Oil" that amounted to a "polar payout" to finance tax cuts for the "super rich."

The Trump administration and congressional Republicans are pushing the drilling plan, a longtime GOP goal, as a way to help pay for proposed tax cuts promised by President Donald Trump. The drilling plan is included in a GOP budget proposal for the current fiscal year and is expected to generate an estimated \$1 billion over 10 years.

Democrats scoffed at that claim, saying the plan would far less revenue at a time when oil production in the lower 48 states, especially Texas and North Dakota, is booming. Royal Dutch Shell abandoned an oil exploration program in the Arctic Ocean in 2015 amid concerns that lower global oil prices made drilling in the remote region a risky investment.

Sen. Maria Cantwell of Washington state, the senior Democrat on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, called the GOP plan to open the refuge to oil drilling a "sneak attack" on the nation's wildest place. The remote, 19.6 million-acre refuge is home to polar bears, caribou, snowy owls and other wildlife, including migrating birds from six continents.

The refuge has been the focus of a political fight for more than three decades, as Republicans and the oil industry seek to open the area for drilling while Democrats and environmental groups and some Alaska Native tribes try to block it. President Bill Clinton vetoed a GOP plan to allow drilling in the refuge in 1995.

Protecting the Arctic refuge and its iconic polar bears has become a rallying cry for generations of environmentalists. Supporters dressed as polar bears and other animals at Tuesday's news conference outside the Capitol.

The oil industry argues that allowing exploration and development in the U.S. Arctic would enhance national, economic and energy security, benefiting Alaskans and the nation while enhancing U.S. leadership in global energy markets. Trump has vowed to achieve U.S. "energy dominance," promoting virtually unfettered oil and gas production in U.S. lands and waters.

It could be years before any new drilling is actually proposed, although the Interior Department is moving forward with plans to conduct seismic studies to help determine where oil is located, a first step toward drilling.

Congress has sole authority to determine whether oil and gas drilling can take place in the refuge.

Jamie Rappaport Clark, president of the Defenders of Wildlife, an environmental group, called the Alaska refuge "an incomparable wilderness" that supports more than 200 species of migratory birds in addition to its famous polar bears and caribou.

Trump and other Republicans "want to put our wild places out for bid," Clark said. "Enough is enough."

Kristi Noem rejects Marty Jackley's proposed campaign pledge

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — U.S. Rep. Kristi Noem is declining to sign Attorney General Marty Jackley's proposed clean campaign pledge in South Dakota's Republican gubernatorial primary.

Noem said Tuesday that she's not interested in "campaign PR stunts." Noem says she's pledging to residents to take on tough tasks in Pierre to improve South Dakota.

Jackley had earlier challenged Noem to agree to the deal. Jackley says he thinks the campaign should be about the candidates' experience and vision to move South Dakota forward instead of "mudslinging and name-calling."

The pledge would have required the candidates to promise to conduct a factual and honest campaign. It also included a pledge that the candidates wouldn't engage in or condone negative or misleading attacks against the other, among other provisions.

The primary election is in June 2018.

Daugaard asks for flags at half-staff to honor fire chief

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Dennis Daugaard has requested that all flags in the state be flown at half-staff on Thursday in honor of Presho's late fire chief.

Fifty-four-year-old Donald Manger died after suffering a medical condition while fighting a fire in rural Lyman County on Saturday night. He had served as chief for 23 years, and had 36 years of experience as a firefighter.

Manger's funeral is 11 a.m. Thursday at the Lyman Gardens in Presho. Daugaard asks that flags be flown at half-staff that day from 8 a.m. until sunset.

Manger is the 44th firefighter killed in South Dakota since 1924. He's the 45th South Dakota firefighter to die in the line of duty. David Ruhl of Rapid City died in July 2015 while helping battle a forest fire in California.

Opioid indictment of Chinese nationals tied to North Dakota

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — A pair of Chinese nationals has been indicted on charges that they manufactured tons of fentanyl and other powerful narcotics that were peddled in the United States and flowed, in part, through North Dakota.

Authorities said the men controlled one of the most prolific international drug-trafficking organizations but with no extradition treaty with China, the chances are slim they will ever be brought to the U.S. to face the charges.

One of the two, 38-year-old Jian Zhang, was indicted in the District of North Dakota, along with eight others accused in the conspiracy.

North Dakota U.S. Attorney Christopher Myers says the whole investigation began in January 2015 with the overdose death of 18-year-old Bailey Henke in Grand Forks. Officials say American customers could purchase pure fentanyl and other dangerous drugs online, directly from Chinese factories. Inexperienced users don't know the drug is pure and overdose.

Securities officials probing S. Carolina nuke plant fiasco

By MEG KINNARD, Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — Securities regulators are investigating a scuttled nuclear reactor construction project in South Carolina, according to a release Tuesday from one of the plant's co-owners.

In the notice issued to its investors, SCANA said it had been served with a subpoena and would "fully cooperate" with the probe by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission and couldn't provide any details about the inquiry's timeline or outcome.

The probe comes on the heels of legislative, state and federal investigations into the failed V.C. Summer Nuclear Station project. SCANA subsidiary South Carolina Electric & Gas Co. and state-owned utility Santee Cooper spent nearly \$10 billion over a decade before shuttering it earlier this year.

State lawmakers have held a series of hearings questioning company executives about the project's dissolution. State police, at the request of legislators and the state's top prosecutor, have launched a probe into "potential criminality" on the part of SCANA and SCE&G. Federal authorities subpoenaed documents from both utilities.

Thousands of people lost their jobs when the project failed. More than half a dozen lawsuits have been filed, some by ratepayers angry they've been charged \$2 billion to pay interest on debt, via a series of rate hikes since 2009, without any power being generated.

Costs associated with the abandoned project currently account for 18 percent of SCE&G customers' bills, even though the project has been terminated. The Office of Regulatory Staff - the state agency that represents the public interest in utility cases - has asked state regulators to force SCE&G to stop billing

customers for the failure.

Other entities including Attorney General Alan Wilson have sought permission to intervene in that case, calling it his sworn duty to "seek to protect the rights" of South Carolina citizens, including SCE&G's more than 700,000 ratepayers. SCANA executives say halting the payments would reduce the company's annual revenues by more than \$445 million.

Gov. Henry McMaster has said he's seeking a way to improve the situation, negotiating with power companies to buy all or part of Santee Cooper, with the goal of either completing one or both of the partially complete reactors or refunding customers the billions they've sunk into the project. Last week, two powerful legislative leaders emphasized only lawmakers can sell a state-owned utility, stressing it makes no sense to do so at a "fire sale price" following the abandonment of the multibillion-dollar project.

Kinnard can be reached at <http://twitter.com/MegKinnardAP>. Read more of her work at <http://bigstory.ap.org/content/meg-kinnard/>

Navy discusses Alaska exercises that conflict with fishing

KODIAK, Alaska (AP) — The U.S. Navy is working with Kodiak-area officials and residents to come up with a better time to conduct military training in Alaska that conflicts with an important regional fishing season.

Navy officials were in Kodiak last week for a meeting about the exercises, which historically have been conducted in May, the Kodiak Daily Mirror reported. Officials and resident have said the exercises coincide with fishing season for groundfish and salmon.

Rear Adm. John Korka of the U.S. Pacific Fleet said the timing of training has been based on weather, personnel and asset availability and budget constraints. He said he would like to work with local communities in the future to determine the best and worst months for the exercises.

"It's clear to me after what I have observed and people I've talked to, May is a bad month," Korka said.

Assembly member Rebecca Skinner was pleased that the Navy was working to come up with a solution.

Councilor John Whiddon said Kodiak supports the military but said the area's fishing industry is its most important economic sector.

"I understand the need for training, but, having been in the seafood industry for the last 20 years, I appreciate the fragility of our community as it relates to the fishing industry," Whiddon said.

Korka told Kodiak officials that planning for this year's military training will happen soon.

"The transparency is something that we owe to you and to your communities, and rest assured that we're committed to the path that we're on today," he said.

Information from: Kodiak (Alaska) Daily Mirror, <http://www.kodiakdailymirror.com>

Records: Parents of baby left outside say they smoked K2

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The parents of an infant left outside overnight in the rain have told investigators that they were smoking K2 when they left their child alone.

The Argus Leader reports that 28-year-old Mary Jenness has been booked into jail on charges of abuse or cruelty to a minor under the age of 7. Her husband, 38-year-old Ronald Harrison, had previously been arrested after telling police that an argument led to the child being left outside.

Court documents say Jenness told police that they had "blanked out" and fabricated the argument story. The records say she told authorities they had smoked one or two bags of K2.

Authorities say the 2-month-old baby was left 18 hours overnight until an employee at Faith Family Church in Sioux Falls found him the next morning.

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

12 specialty crop block grants awarded in West Virginia

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — Twelve agriculture projects in West Virginia will receive federal specialty crop block grants.

State agricultural officials say in a news release that the U.S. Department of Agriculture awarded \$230,000 in grants for projects aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of specialty crops, which include fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, maple syrup and Christmas trees, among others.

Among the state projects receiving funding are shiitake mushroom production in Wayne County schools, and a joint program between West Virginia University and the state to identify areas through mapping technology for the potential increase of maple syrup production.

Another grant will be used to increase the cultivation and sale of carrot varieties in West Virginia. The Cross Lanes-based Capitol Conservation District will help market the carrots.

Mountain lion roams school playground in Rapid City

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Teachers in Rapids City are paying extra attention during playground duty after a mountain lion was spotted outside an elementary school.

It happened Monday morning at Grandview Elementary where two teachers saw the animal on the west side of the playground. KOTA-TV says the mountain lion quickly disappeared, but students arriving for school were quickly ushered inside.

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks sent officers to the school to search the perimeter, but there was no further sign of the mountain lion.

Rapid City Area Schools spokeswoman Katy Urban says students will still be allowed outside for recess, but teachers will have "extra eyes on the playground."

Information from: KOTA-TV, <http://www.kotatv.com>

Authorities ID victim of rollover crash in Meade County

NEW UNDERWOOD, S.D. (AP) — Authorities have identified the victim of a one-vehicle rollover crash in Meade County late last week.

The Highway Patrol says 54-year-old Haryl Diserly of Rapid City was a passenger in a sport utility vehicle that swerved to miss a deer north of New Underwood on Friday night.

The vehicle went out of control and rolled several times, and Diserly was killed.

The driver suffered minor injuries. Two other passengers weren't hurt.

Water utility sues company over possible contamination

WILMINGTON, N.C. (AP) — A utility that provides water in southeastern North Carolina has sued a company it accuses of polluting the Cape Fear River, where the utility gets its water.

The Cape Fear Public Utility Authority filed a complaint in U.S. District Court on Monday afternoon accusing Chemours and DuPont of violating the Clean Water Act and several other federal laws by putting a chemical known as GenX into the water.

The complaint calls for damages of more than \$75,000.

The chemical is used to make Teflon.

Utility director Jim Fletcher told North Carolina lawmakers earlier this month that the utility's water meets state and federal drinking water standards. But Fletcher said too little is known about the chemical.

A spokesman for Chemours did not immediately respond to questions about the lawsuit.

Dodgers close in on World Series with 6-1 win over Cubs

By JAY COHEN, AP Sports Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — The Los Angeles Dodgers have a tough lineup, a talented pitching staff and a manager making all the right moves.

Yup, it's beginning to look a lot like 1988.

Yu Darvish pitched sparkling ball into the seventh inning, Chris Taylor homered again and the Dodgers beat the Chicago Cubs 6-1 on Tuesday night to open a 3-0 lead in the NL Championship Series.

Andre Ethier also went deep and Taylor added an RBI triple in the fifth as Los Angeles improved to 6-0 in this postseason, setting a franchise record for consecutive playoff wins. Yasiel Puig had two more hits in another entertaining performance that included an impressive bat flip — on a long foul ball in the first inning.

"The focus has certainly been heightened in the postseason," manager Dave Roberts said.

Looking for a four-game sweep and their 22nd pennant, the Dodgers will send Alex Wood to the mound Wednesday night at Wrigley Field with a chance to reach the World Series for the first time since Hall of Famer Tommy Lasorda managed Kirk Gibson, Orel Hershiser and Co. to the club's last championship 29 years ago.

Jake Arrieta, eligible for free agency after the season, pitches for the Cubs in what could be his final start with the team.

"I think we've won four games in a row before," Chicago slugger Kris Bryant said. "Obviously, it's going to be a tougher road. But it'll make the story that much better. Can you imagine that?"

Los Angeles was eliminated by Chicago in the NLCS last year, but this is a different group of Dodgers. Their patient lineup is coming up big in key spots and the pitching staff is much deeper, especially since Darvish was acquired in a trade with Texas in the final minutes before the July 31 deadline.

Not even a return to Wrigley could get the Cubs back on track after a rough stay in Los Angeles. Chicago manager Joe Maddon juggled his lineup, inserting Kyle Schwarber into the No. 2 slot and benching slumping second baseman Javier Baez, but the defending World Series champions were shut down by another Dodgers starter and more stellar relief from the NL West champions.

"I really didn't change much approach-wise from first inning until the end of the game," Darvish said through a translator. "I just kept pitching the same way."

Making their third straight appearance in the NLCS, the weary Cubs also hurt themselves with a couple of big mistakes. Carl Edwards Jr. walked Darvish on four pitches with the bases loaded and two outs in the sixth, continuing a rocky postseason for the reliever and leading to a round of boos from a frustrated crowd of 41,871.

A passed ball brought home another run in the eighth, and pinch hitter Kyle Farmer hit a sacrifice fly to make it 6-1.

Darvish departed after striking out Addison Russell in the seventh, pausing for congratulations from his whole infield before heading to the dugout. The Japanese right-hander allowed six hits, including Schwarber's first-inning homer, in his second career playoff win — both this year. He struck out seven and walked one.

Tony Watson got two outs, Brandon Morrow worked the eighth and Kenley Jansen closed it out after Ross Stripling gave up two hits in the ninth. With Roberts pushing the right buttons, Los Angeles' bullpen has yet to allow a run in the series.

"I think everybody's just been attacking," Morrow said. "That's the No. 1 thing."

The only four-game postseason sweep for the Dodgers came in the 1963 World Series against the New York Yankees. If Los Angeles can finish off Chicago on Wednesday, the Dodgers would have five days off before hosting the Yankees or Houston Astros in the World Series opener.

"We knew today was the most important game, and now tomorrow's the most important game," Ethier said. "We're going to come out and figure out how to get the job done again."

Schwarber's sixth career postseason homer got Chicago off to a fast start, but Jon Jay struck out with two on to end the inning. The Dodgers responded with Ethier's leadoff drive in the second and Taylor's

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second homer of the series in the third, a mammoth shot to center off losing pitcher Kyle Hendricks.

"We had a chance obviously, early," Maddon said. "We hit some balls well early in the game, and then he settled in."

Ethier had two hits in his first start of this year's playoffs after he missed most of the season with a herniated lumbar disk. Taylor also had two hits and is 4 for 14 for the series, helping make up for the loss of All-Star shortstop Corey Seager to a back injury.

ON THIS DAY

Tuesday was the 13th anniversary of Roberts' memorable stolen base for Boston in Game 4 of the 2004 ALCS against the New York Yankees. The Red Sox were three outs from elimination when Roberts ran for Kevin Millar, swiped second and scored on Bill Mueller's single.

Boston went on to rally past New York and sweep St. Louis for its first World Series championship since 1918. Roberts said he never mentions the steal to his players, but it comes up occasionally.

"Yu Darvish about two weeks ago I guess was surfing the internet, and there was an 'aha' moment," Roberts said. "He ran across the stolen base and kind of put 2 and 2 together and didn't realize that was his manager. So he proceeded to kind of awkwardly approach me about it and talked about my goatee and how I could steal a base."

UP NEXT

Dodgers: Wood, who had a career-high 16 wins this season, will make his first appearance since Sept. 26. He was lined up for Game 4 of the NLDS, but the Dodgers swept the Diamondbacks in three games.

Cubs: Arrieta has pitched just 14 1/3 innings since Aug. 30, including four innings of two-hit ball against Washington in Game 4 of the NLDS. The 2015 NL Cy Young Award winner was hampered by a right hamstring injury at the end of the season.

Jay Cohen can be reached at <http://www.twitter.com/jcohenap>

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

US Rep: Trump says fallen soldier knew what he signed up for

MIAMI (AP) — President Donald Trump told the widow of a soldier killed in an ambush in Niger that her husband "knew what he signed up for," according to a Florida congresswoman who says she heard part of the conversation on speakerphone.

Rep. Frederica Wilson said she was in the car with Myeshia Johnson on Tuesday on the way to Miami International Airport to meet the body of Johnson's husband, Sgt. La David Johnson, when Trump called.

When asked by Miami station WPLG if she indeed heard Trump say that she answered: "Yeah, he said that. To me, that is something that you can say in a conversation, but you shouldn't say that to a grieving widow." She added: "That's so insensitive."

Sgt. Johnson was among four servicemen killed in the African nation of Niger earlier this month. They died when militants thought to be affiliated with the Islamic State group ambushed them while they were patrolling in unarmored trucks with Nigerien troops.

Wilson, a Democrat, said she did not hear the entire conversation and Myeshia Johnson told her she couldn't remember everything that was said when asked it about it later.

The White House didn't immediately comment.

Trump has been criticized for not reaching out right away to relatives of the four killed in Niger. On Monday, Trump said he'd written letters that had not yet been mailed. His aides said they had been awaiting information before proceeding.

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. HE 'KNEW WHAT HE SIGNED UP FOR'

That's what Florida Democratic Rep. Frederica Wilson says she overheard Trump say to the widow of a U.S. soldier slain in Niger while the woman had the president on speakerphone.

2. WHERE ISLAMIC STATE MILITANTS MAY BE HEADED

The escape to al-Qaida-held Idlib province presents the opportunity to continue fighting alongside an extremist group that shares much of the decimated group's ideology.

3. ANOTHER 11TH-HOUR SNAFU FOR TRUMP'S TRAVEL BAN

A federal judge in Hawaii blocks the revised order, saying the policy has the same problems as a previous version.

4. WHY WINNING AMAZON HEADQUARTERS BID IS A BIG DEAL

Winning the tech giants' second headquarters would likely launch a city into a "tech hub," where high-skilled, high-paid workers spend freely and help fuel job growth beyond Amazon itself.

5. WHAT IS XI'S VISION FOR CHINA

The president urges his Communist Party to serve as the vanguard on everything from defending national security to providing moral guidance to ordinary Chinese.

6. TRUMP'S LAWYERS TO ASK FOR DISMISSAL OF LAWSUIT

The civil suit alleges that the president is violating the Constitution by letting his businesses accept money from foreign governments.

7. 'ETHNIC CLEANSING' IN SOUTH SUDAN FELL ON DEAF EARS

An AP investigation shows that despite numerous warnings and pleas from both local officials and residents in Yei, the U.N. and the U.S. failed to prevent the bloodshed.

8. CALIFORNIA POT CROP GOES UP IN SMOKE

The same fires that destroyed Northern California wineries also took a toll on the region's marijuana farms just months before the legal weed market is slated to open.

9. GENE TUMOR BOARDS GUIDE CANCER CARE

These experts study a patient's cancer genes and match treatments to mutations that seem to drive the disease.

10. THIS TIME, TALKS WEREN'T ABOUT CONTRACTS

With anthem protests causing off-the-field distractions, NFL owners and players tackled social justice issues when they met in New York.

Xi urges stronger Chinese stand against 'grim' challenges

By GILLIAN WONG and JOE MCDONALD, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday urged a reinvigorated Communist Party to take a stronger role in society and economic development to better address the nation's "grim" challenges as he opened a twice-a-decade national congress.

Speaking in the massive Great Hall of the People near Tiananmen Square, Xi laid out his vision of a ruling party that serves as the vanguard for everything from defending national security to providing moral guidance to ordinary Chinese.

He struck a nationalistic line throughout his speech, calling for the party not only to safeguard China's sovereignty but also to revitalize Chinese culture, oppose "erroneous" ideology and promote religion that is "Chinese in orientation."

"The great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is no walk in the park or mere drum-beating and gong-clanging. The whole party must be prepared to make ever more difficult and harder efforts," Xi told hundreds of delegates, mostly men in dark suits who applauded regularly as they read copies of his prepared

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remarks. "To achieve great dreams there must be a great struggle."

Hailing the start of a "new era," Xi outlined a vision in which the party would lead China on the road to becoming a "great modern socialist country" by midcentury.

Xi wields undisputed power and is expected to get a second five-year term as party leader at the gathering. Analysts say he has consolidated his power by sidelining his competitors in other intra-party cliques, including those surrounding his immediate predecessor Hu Jintao and former leader Jiang Zemin.

Observers will be watching for signs of whether Xi, 64, may be looking to appoint a successor. While the nation's presidency is limited to two five-year terms, the tenure of the party's leader is bound only by tradition.

Xi has already distinguished himself from previous leaders, and is now "leading China into territory in which China is very close to achieving modest prosperity," said Dali Yang, an expert on Chinese politics at the University of Chicago.

According to Xi's vision, "China would not only be a modern, socialist country but one that stands tall among the nations," Yang said. "This message he delivered with vigor."

The Communist Party meetings will largely be behind closed doors and are accompanied by extraordinary security measures, such as restrictions on knife sales and greater monitoring of dissidents. But the congress will see powerful players emerge in new roles and is a chance for Xi to publicly lay out his political and economic vision over the next five years.

In emphasizing the party's supremacy over all aspects of Chinese society, Xi is "making a big pitch for the importance of party leadership and what he claims only the party can achieve," said Willy Lam, a China expert at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. "It's an appeal to ordinary Chinese to abide by the party's instructions, in particular that of the top leadership — that is, himself."

Xi, in his three-and-a-half-hour address, said China's "prospects are bright but the challenges are grim," a rare acknowledgement of severe economic issues. He added that the party would have to take big risks and overcome "major resistance."

Other Chinese leaders have regularly warned since the 2008 financial crisis that China's economic growth faces "downward pressure" due to weak global demand that threatens export industries in the world's second-largest economy. But Xi's comments were unusual in a keynote speech meant to highlight the party's confidence and long-range vision.

Among the grave issues Xi said were insufficiently addressed are a widening income gap and problems in employment, education, medical care and other areas.

He pledged to make high school universally available and promised to extend land-use contracts for farmers for another 30 years after expiration.

Xi hailed China's island-building efforts in the disputed South China Sea as well as his signature foreign-policy initiative, the "One Belt, One Road" infrastructure investment project aimed at improving connections between China, Europe and Africa.

He also praised the party's tightened grip over domestic security, saying that social stability had been maintained and national security strengthened.

To achieve a "moderately well-off society" by 2021 — the 100th anniversary of the party's founding — and even greater national power and prosperity by 2049 — the centenary of the founding of the Communist state — China needs continued economic growth and the lifting of millions out of poverty. The country is also rapidly expanding its military and political power, including its growing ability to dominate the Asia-Pacific region.

Xi affirmed economic plans that call for developing state-owned companies that dominate industries including finance, energy and telecoms while also giving the market the "decisive role" in allocating resources.

The party declared for the first time in 2013 that it would give market forces the "decisive role," a step business groups welcomed as a commitment to freer markets. But the same declaration also said the party would play a bigger role in managing state industry, which could blunt the impact of competitive forces.

Xi emphasized Beijing "must develop the public sector," a goal that reform advocates complain wastes

public money and further slows economic growth.

Xi also confirmed official pledges to make the banking industry more market-oriented and to shrink bloated state-owned steel and coal industries.

Excess industrial capacity has strained trade relations with Washington and Europe, which complain that a flood of low-cost Chinese exports is depressing global prices for steel, aluminum and other goods and threatening jobs abroad.

Xi pledged that the party would have "zero tolerance" for corruption and exhorted members to resist "pleasure seeking, inaction, sloth and problem avoidance."

The most tangible results of the congress will likely be personnel appointments.

China is run by the party's Politburo Standing Committee, currently a seven-member body led by Xi, with Premier Li Keqiang his No. 2. While Xi and Li are expected to stay, the fates of others are determined by loose precedents governing retirement age. Four are expected to depart, while the status of party discipline boss and close Xi ally Wang Qishan appears uncertain.

In a secret process, the congress delegates will select a roughly 200-member central committee, along with more than 150 alternates, from a pool of around 400 candidates. The committee will then pick a 25-member politburo and the elite Politburo Standing Committee, led by the general secretary. The makeup of the top body will only be known at the close of the meeting when its members reveal themselves on stage in front of journalists, according to past practice.

Associated Press writer Christopher Bodeen contributed to this report.

Senate health care deal in doubt as Trump says he's opposed

By ALAN FRAM and ERICA WERNER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A bipartisan Senate deal to curb the growth of health insurance premiums is reeling after President Donald Trump reversed course and opposed the agreement and top congressional Republicans and conservatives gave it a frosty reception.

Sens. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., and Patty Murray, D-Wash., announced their accord Tuesday after weeks of negotiations and five days after Trump said he was halting federal subsidies to insurers. Under the lawmakers' agreement, the payments would continue for two years while states were given more leeway to let insurers sidestep some coverage requirements imposed by President Barack Obama's health care law.

In remarks Tuesday in the Rose Garden, Trump called the deal "a very good solution" that would calm insurance markets, giving him time to pursue his goal of scrapping Obama's 2010 Affordable Care Act, the target of Republican derision since it was signed into law.

Although top Democrats and some Republicans praised the Alexander-Murray compromise agreement, Trump backed off after a day of criticism from many in the GOP.

In an evening speech at the conservative Heritage Foundation, he said that "while I commend" the work by the two senators, "I continue to believe Congress must find a solution to the Obamacare mess instead of providing bailouts to insurance companies."

A White House official said Trump's statement was aimed at conveying opposition to the Alexander-Murray plan. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

The subsidies — called cost-sharing reductions — go to insurers for reducing out-of-pocket costs for lower-income people. Since Obama's law requires insurers to make those cost reductions, insurers and others have warned that halting the subsidies would force premiums higher and prompt some carriers to abandon unprofitable markets.

"This agreement avoids chaos," Alexander said when he announced the deal. "I don't know a Republican or Democrat who benefits from chaos."

Alexander said the president had encouraged his efforts in two phone calls in recent days. But Trump has also repeatedly called the subsidies bailouts of insurers, who he's pointedly said have contributed little to his campaigns.

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Just minutes before Alexander announced the deal, White House legislative director Marc Short told reporters that “a starting point” in exchange for restoring the cost-sharing payments “is eliminating the individual mandate and employer mandate.” Those are the central pillars of “Obamacare,” and Democrats solidly oppose eliminating them.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell was noncommittal about the agreement, telling reporters, “We haven’t had a chance to think about the way forward yet.” Aides to House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., did not provide a statement from him.

Both McConnell and Ryan have been eager to turn national attention away from the GOP push to scuttle Obama’s law, which crashed in the Senate twice, and toward an effort to cut taxes.

Reaction from other Republicans toward the Senate agreement was mixed. For many conservatives it’s practically unthinkable to sign off on federal payments that would arguably prop up a law they’ve been vowing for seven years to destroy.

Rep. Mark Walker of North Carolina, chairman of the conservative Republican Study Committee in the House, quickly denounced the deal over Twitter: “The GOP should focus on repealing & replacing Obamacare, not trying to save it. This bailout is unacceptable.”

Freedom Caucus Chairman Rep. Mark Meadows, who’s been at work on a proposal of his own, was slightly more positive, calling the Alexander-Murray bill “a good start” but saying much more work needed to be done.

Alexander said he and allies including Sen. Mike Rounds, R-S.D., would spend the next several days trying to build up support with the goal of formally introducing legislation later this week. If the legislation does pass, it would almost certainly be as part of a larger package including must-pass spending or disaster relief bills and that might not be until the end of the year.

Murray lauded the effort, saying, “When Republicans and Democrats take the time ... we can truly get things done” for the American people.

The Alexander-Murray deal includes provisions allowing states faster and easier access to waivers that would allow them to shape their own marketplace plans under “Obamacare.”

It would provide for a new low-cost catastrophic coverage insurance option for all consumers. It would also restore \$106 million for outreach and enrollment programs aimed at prodding people to buy policies — efforts that Trump has slashed.

A federal judge ruled in a 2014 lawsuit brought by House Republicans that Congress never legally authorized spending money for the insurers’ subsidies. Obama and Trump, initially, continued making the payments, though Trump declared last week he would pull the plug.

The payments, which cost around \$7 billion this year, lower expenses like co-payments and deductibles for more than 6 million people. But discontinuing them would actually cost the government more money under Obamacare’s complicated structure, because some people facing higher premiums would end up getting bigger tax subsidies to help pay for them.

Associated Press reporters Jill Colvin and Ken Thomas contributed to this report.

Trump and the new politics of honoring war dead

By CALVIN WOODWARD and RUSS BYNUM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After her Army son died in an armored vehicle rollover in Syria in May, Sheila Murphy says, she got no call or letter from President Donald Trump, even as she waited months for his condolences, wrote to him to say “some days I don’t want to live,” and still heard nothing.

In contrast, Trump called to comfort Eddie and Aldene Lee about 10 days after their Army son was killed in an explosion while on patrol in Iraq in April. “Lovely young man,” Trump said, according to Aldene. She thought that was a beautiful word to hear about her boy, “lovely.”

Like presidents before him, Trump has made personal contact with some families of the fallen, not all. What’s different is that Trump, alone among them, has picked a political fight over who’s done better to

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honor the war dead and their families.

He placed himself at the top of this pantheon, boasting Tuesday that "I think I've called every family of someone who's died" while past presidents didn't place such calls.

But The Associated Press found relatives of two soldiers who died overseas during Trump's presidency who said they never received a call or a letter from him, as well as relatives of a third who did not get a call. And proof is plentiful that Barack Obama and George W. Bush — saddled with far more combat casualties than the roughly two dozen so far under Trump, took painstaking steps to write, call or meet bereaved military families.

The subject arose because nearly two weeks passed before Trump called the families of four U.S. soldiers who were killed in Niger nearly two weeks ago. He made the calls Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Rep. Frederica Wilson said late Tuesday that Trump told the widow of a slain soldier that he "knew what he signed up for."

The Florida Democrat said she was in the car with Myeshia Johnson on the way to Miami International Airport to meet the body of Johnson's husband, Sgt. La David Johnson, when Trump called. Wilson says she heard part of the conversation on speakerphone.

When asked by Miami station WPLG if she indeed heard Trump say that she answered: "Yeah, he said that. To me, that is something that you can say in a conversation, but you shouldn't say that to a grieving widow." She added: "That's so insensitive."

Sgt. Johnson was among four servicemen killed in the Niger ambush.

Wilson said that she didn't hear the entire conversation and Myeshia Johnson told her she couldn't remember everything that was said.

The White House didn't immediately comment

Trump's delay in publicly discussing the men lost at Niger did not appear to be extraordinary, judging from past examples, but his politicization of the matter is. He went so far Tuesday as to cite the death of chief of staff John Kelly's son in Afghanistan to question whether Obama had properly honored the war dead.

Kelly was a Marine general under Obama when his Marine son Robert died in 2010. "You could ask General Kelly, did he get a call from Obama?" Trump said on Fox News radio.

Democrats and some former government officials were livid, accusing Trump of "inane cruelty" and a "sick game."

Democratic Sen. Tammy Duckworth of Illinois, an Iraq veteran who lost both legs when her helicopter was attacked, said: "I just wish that this commander in chief would stop using Gold Star families as pawns in whatever sick game he's trying to play here."

For their part, Gold Star families, which have lost members in wartime, told AP of acts of intimate kindness from Obama and Bush when those commanders in chief consoled them.

Trump initially claimed that only he among presidents made sure to call families. Obama may have done so on occasion, he said, but "other presidents did not call."

He equivocated Tuesday as the record made plain that his characterization was false. "I don't know," he said of past calls. But he said his own practice was to call all families of the war dead.

But that hasn't happened:

No White House protocol demands that presidents speak or meet with the families of Americans killed in action — an impossible task in a war's bloodiest stages. But they often do.

Altogether some 6,900 Americans have been killed in overseas wars since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, the overwhelming majority under Bush and Obama.

Despite the much heavier toll on his watch — more than 800 dead each year from 2004 through 2007 — Bush wrote to all bereaved military families and met or spoke with hundreds if not thousands, said his spokesman, Freddy Ford.

Veterans groups said they had no quarrel with how presidents have recognized the fallen or their families.

"I don't think there is any president I know of who hasn't called families," said Rick Weidman, co-founder and executive director of Vietnam Veterans of America. "President Obama called often and President Bush called often. They also made regular visits to Walter Reed and Bethesda Medical Center, going in the

evenings and on Saturdays.”

Bynum reported from Savannah, Georgia. Jonathan Drew in Raleigh, North Carolina, Kristen de Groot in Philadelphia, Jennifer McDermott in Providence, Rhode Island, Michelle Price in Salt Lake City, and Hope Yen and Robert Burns in Washington contributed to this report.

Judge: Newest travel ban ‘same maladies’ as previous version

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER, Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — Just hours before President Donald Trump’s latest travel ban was to take full effect, a federal judge in Hawaii blocked the revised order, saying the policy has the same problems as a previous version.

The revised order “suffers from precisely the same maladies as its predecessor,” U.S. District Judge Derrick Watson wrote in his ruling, which prevented the Trump administration from enforcing the travel ban set to go into effect early Wednesday.

It was the third set of travel restrictions issued by the president to be thwarted, in whole or in part, by the courts.

Watson’s Tuesday ruling said the new ban, like its predecessor, fails to show that nationality alone makes a person a greater security risk to the U.S.

“The categorical restrictions on entire populations of men, women and children, based upon nationality, are a poor fit for the issues regarding the sharing of ‘public-safety and terrorism-related information’ that the president identifies,” Watson wrote.

He said the ban is inconsistent in the way some countries are included or left out. For example, Iraq failed to meet the security benchmark but was omitted from the ban. Somalia met the information-sharing benchmark but was included.

The ban, which was announced in September, applied to travelers from Chad, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Syria and Yemen, along with some Venezuelan government officials and their families.

The Trump administration said the ban was based on an assessment of each country’s security situation and willingness to share information with the U.S.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders called the ruling “dangerously flawed” and said it “undercuts the president’s efforts to keep the American people safe.” The Justice Department said it will quickly appeal.

The judge’s ruling applies only to the six Muslim-majority countries on the list. It does not affect the restrictions against North Korea or Venezuela, because Hawaii did not ask for that.

The state of Hawaii challenged the ban on a set of mostly Muslim countries, arguing that the restrictions would separate families and undermine the recruiting of diverse college students.

“This is the third time Hawaii has gone to court to stop President Trump from issuing a travel ban that discriminates against people based on their nation of origin or religion,” Hawaii Attorney General Doug Chin said in a statement. “Today is another victory for the rule of law.”

Watson, appointed to the bench by President Barack Obama, said the new restrictions ignore a federal appeals court ruling against Trump’s previous ban.

The latest version “plainly discriminates based on nationality in the manner that the 9th Circuit has found antithetical to ... the founding principles of this nation,” Watson wrote.

Hawaii also argued the updated ban was a continuation of Trump’s campaign call for a ban on Muslims, despite the addition of two countries without a Muslim majority.

Watson noted that Hawaii had argued Trump did not back down from that call, listing in the ruling a series of June tweets “in which (Trump) complained about how the Justice Department had submitted a ‘watered down, politically correct version’ to the Supreme Court.”

Other courts that weighed the travel ban have cited Trump’s comments about banning Muslims, including the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Virginia and a federal judge in Maryland. Watson also referred to

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a Trump campaign statement in his previous ruling.

"Judge Watson's ruling makes clear that we are a nation of laws, no matter what this administration may try to do," Hawaii's U.S. Sen. Brian Schatz said in a statement. "There is a place here for peaceful immigrants from every corner of the world: Spain, Syria, Sudan, or Singapore. There is no place here for discrimination or xenophobia."

Watson found fault with what sorts of visitors are barred. For instance, all tourists and business travelers from Libya are excluded from the U.S., but student visitors were allowed.

The judge said he would set an expedited hearing to determine whether the temporary restraining order blocking the ban should be extended. It comes as other courts weigh challenges to the ban.

In Maryland, the American Civil Liberties Union and other groups are seeking to block the visa and entry restrictions. Washington state, Massachusetts, California, Oregon, New York and Maryland are challenging the order in front of the same federal judge in Seattle who struck down Trump's initial ban in January.

That ban — aimed mostly at Muslim-majority countries — led to chaos and confusion at airports nationwide and triggered several lawsuits, including one from Hawaii.

When Trump revised the ban, Hawaii challenged that version, too, and Watson agreed it discriminated on the basis of nationality and religion. A subsequent U.S. Supreme Court ruling allowed the administration to partially reinstate restrictions against Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen and against all refugees.

Hawaii then successfully challenged the government's definition of which relatives of people already living in the U.S. would be allowed into the country, and Watson ordered the list expanded.

As congressional investigations wear on, some eye a finish

By MARY CLARE JALONICK, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As congressional investigations into Russian interference in the 2016 elections wear on in the Capitol, some lawmakers are starting to wonder when — and how — the probes will end.

After months of clandestine interviews and a few public, partisan committee clashes, some Republicans on the House intelligence panel have been pushing for their probe to wrap up by the end of the year. And Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Richard Burr, R-N.C., is signaling he wants his more bipartisan investigation to finish in the next several months, before the 2018 elections get into full swing and the Russians have a chance to again interfere.

It's still unclear whether the congressional committees looking into the interference will come to firm conclusions about whether President Donald Trump's campaign was involved, or if they have found any direct evidence of any collaboration with Russia. Those involved say it's too early to know if they will be able to issue bipartisan reports, and whether those reports will have firm conclusions or just be a series of findings.

With no ability to do criminal investigations and difficulty in getting some witnesses to appear, the panels could leave some of the more controversial assessments to special counsel Robert Mueller, who is also investigating the meddling and the question of whether Trump's campaign was involved. Mueller has the ability to prosecute, and Congress must refer any criminal findings to him.

"I think there are lots of Republicans who just want this to go away, and I think the White House very much wants it to go away," Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I., said Tuesday. "So I don't think it's necessarily the easiest call in the world for our Republican colleagues."

Trump made his views clear, again, at a Monday news conference, saying "the whole Russian thing" is an excuse for Democrats who lost the presidential election.

"So there has been absolutely no collusion," Trump said. "It's been stated that they have no collusion. They ought to get to the end of it, because I think the American public is sick of it."

In the Senate, Burr has worked closely with the top Democrat on the intelligence panel, Virginia Sen. Mark Warner. Burr said Tuesday that the committee "needs to have some conclusion in time to get ready for the 2018 elections ... that gives you a window of somewhere between the end of the year and maybe February."

Burr said the panel's timeline is unrelated to Mueller's probe.

"They're on a criminal investigation and we're looking at Russian influence in the election," Burr said, adding that he hopes his probe will be done before Mueller's.

At a news conference with Warner on Oct. 4, Burr said the issue of collusion is "still open." He has said repeatedly that the committee has continued to find new threads, and that a firm timeline isn't possible. He said the committee has 25 interviews this month, including two public hearings related to the investigation.

"We've still got a fairly long list of people to see, and it's more of a mathematical equation now," Burr said.

The head of the House intelligence probe, Republican Rep. Mike Conaway of Texas, has similarly said the committee is continuing to follow leads and he has declined to set out a timeline. He took over the investigation after the GOP chairman of the intelligence committee, California Rep. Devin Nunes, stepped back amid criticism that he was too close to Trump's White House.

Some other Republicans on the House panel have questioned how long it should go on.

"It's getting old," said Republican Rep. Tom Rooney of Florida, a member of the intelligence panel. He said the committee should not "prolong the investigation for the sake of prolonging it. Those days are going to come to an end here soon."

Rooney said the panel should stick to witnesses that are directly related to the meddling and to the intelligence community, which is the committee's jurisdiction. He said once the committee has interviewed enough pertinent witnesses he'd recommend to Conaway and House Speaker Ryan that the panel write a final report and conclude the probe.

Democrats on the House intelligence committee are trying to head off calls to end the investigations. California Rep. Adam Schiff, the top Democrat on the panel, said in a Washington Post op-ed over the weekend that, unlike with Mueller's probe, the point of the congressional investigations is to "tell the American people what happened or prescribe remedies."

Congress also could serve as a conduit for some of Mueller's findings, if he declines to issue his own report. But it's unclear whether the Justice Department will share that information with Capitol Hill.

Connecticut Sen. Richard Blumenthal, a Democratic member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, believes that it's too soon to wrap up. The Judiciary panel is also doing an investigation, but its probe has moved slowly amid negotiations over witnesses.

"I feel the pressure to move forward at a better pace, but not necessarily to finish," Blumenthal said, adding: "The Russians are going to do it again ... unless they pay a price they will heighten their interference in our elections."

Bannon boosts Flake challenger, snubs Trump plea to back off

By THOMAS BEAUMONT and BOB CHRISTIE, Associated Press

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. (AP) — Former presidential strategist Steve Bannon doubled down on his criticism of the GOP establishment at a Tuesday night fundraiser for a challenger to Arizona's incumbent Sen. Jeff Flake.

Bannon heaped disdain on Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and other incumbent Republicans, saying they failed President Donald Trump by not backing his agenda and are openly critical of their own president.

"If you saw how they try to rip him apart every day, how they are trying to destroy him every day," Bannon said. "And yes, I'm talking about Mitch McConnell and the Senate Republicans."

Senate candidate Kelli Ward held a campaign kickoff in Scottsdale, Arizona, headlined by Bannon and talk show host Laura Ingraham.

Bannon is promoting a field of primary challengers to take on incumbent Republicans in Congress, especially the Senate. He has said he plans to recruit challengers for every GOP senator standing for reelection next year except Ted Cruz of Texas.

"These people hold you in contempt," he said of Washington insiders.

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Bannon wasn't following the game plan Trump seemed to advocate on Monday, when he said during an appearance with McConnell that he would try to discourage Bannon from going after all Republican senators.

"Some of the people that he may be looking at, I'm going to see if we talk him out of that, because frankly, they're great people," Trump said during a joint news conference with McConnell.

Arizona's Flake, seeking a second term, has been among the Senate Republicans' most outspoken Trump critics and is being targeted by Ward and the Bannon-backed Great America PAC, which announced Monday it would back her over Flake.

Flake isn't letting on that he's overly worried about his re-election chances.

"I've had tough primaries almost every time I've run, mostly because of the position I've taken on immigration," he told The Associated Press in an interview after his own Scottsdale fundraiser last week. "People will say, 'Well I can get to the right of Jeff on immigration.' But we came out all right."

Flake has another fundraiser set for Thursday hosted by major Arizona donors, including auto dealership magnate Jim Click and Phoenix Suns owner Robert Sarver. The event featuring former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice comes after Sen. Marco Rubio came to back him last week.

"I believe Jeff Flake is as principled a conservative as there is," Rubio said in an interview. "He believes in free enterprise, limited government, a strong America, he believes in the Constitution."

At least one Republican senator who has been critical of Trump was dismissive of Bannon and his actions.

"He's not on my radar. It's not relevant to what I'm doing," said Sen. Bob Corker, R-Tenn., who has announced he won't seek re-election.

The Bannon-backed group also announced Monday it was supporting retired Marine Kevin Nicholson in Wisconsin over state Sen. Leah Vukmir in the GOP primary to challenge Sen. Tammy Baldwin, a Democrat seeking her second term.

Nicholson, a former Democrat, is among a list of outsiders Bannon is backing, including Mississippi state Sen. Chris McDaniel, who lost his challenge to Sen. Thad Cochran in 2014.

The group backed Roy Moore in his Alabama runoff with Sen. Luther Strange, the preferred candidate of McConnell. Moore defeated Strange.

Bannon pointed to that race and to Corker's decision not to seek re-election in his speech before about 500 Ward supporters Tuesday.

"The last couple of days Mitch has been saying, hey you gotta win. Winners make policy, losers go home," Bannon said. "Note to self, Mitch: Big Luther Strange and little Bobby Corker are both going home. The people of Alabama and the people of Tennessee have spoken."

A key goal of Bannon's is to see McConnell dumped as Senate GOP leader, while also getting the president's agenda, including the dismantling of the 2010 Affordable Care Act and major tax cuts, enacted.

A spokesman echoed Nicholson's support for Senate term limits "including leadership." But he declined to say whether the candidate had pledged to Bannon that he would oppose McConnell as majority leader, should he win the primary and beat Baldwin.

Beaumont reported from Des Moines, Iowa. AP reporter Scott Bauer contributed from Madison, Wisconsin.

Judge HR sparks NY, Yanks beat Astros 6-4 to even ALCS at 2

By JAKE SEINER, AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — With a soaring shot headed for Monument Park, Aaron Judge got New York back on course for another memorable October.

Yankee Stadium sounds like it's ready, too.

"That ballpark is alive," Judge said after this latest rousing rally.

Judge ignited a comeback with a home run, then hit a tying double during a four-run eighth inning to spur the unflappable Yankees over the Houston Astros 6-4 Tuesday night and tie the AL Championship Series 2-2.

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The Baby Bombers trailed 4-0 against starter Lance McCullers Jr. until Judge homered leading off the seventh. He tied it with a line drive that nearly left the park in the eighth and scored when Gary Sanchez hit a go-ahead two-run double off loser Ken Giles.

"I didn't know what to do after I touched home plate," Judge said. "I can't describe it."

The Yankees overcame three errors and have roared back from a second straight 0-2 series deficit — they beat Cleveland in the Division Series by winning three in a row to take that best-of-five matchup.

Aroldis Chapman struck out two in a perfect ninth to cap a three-hitter and get the save. Before a sellout crowd of 48,804, New York improved to 5-0 at home in the playoffs and won for the 18th time in its last 21 home games.

"Every home game has been special," manager Joe Girardi said. "I just feel like the fans are back. And I see things that I haven't in a while, and it reminds me a lot of when I was playing here."

Yankee Stadium will be rocking again when Masahiro Tanaka pitches for New York against Dallas Keuchel in Game 5 Wednesday. It's a rematch of the series opener, when Keuchel outdid the Japanese right-hander in a 2-1 Astros win.

An AL MVP candidate mired in a sluggish October, Judge sparked the Yankees by chasing McCullers, who baffled the Yankees with his power breaking ball.

Except for the last one.

Judge launched a curveball into the netting above center field's Monument Park for New York's second hit.

"I thought Aaron's home run just lit a little spark," Girardi said.

Houston manager A.J. Hinch pulled McCullers after 81 pitches, Didi Gregorius tripled off Chris Devenski and Sanchez brought Gregorius in with a sacrifice fly.

Todd Frazier led off the eighth with a single to left, and pinch-hitter Chase Headley, in a 1-for-18 post-season slide, singled. He lost his balance stepping on first, fell en route to second, then took a step back before continuing on and getting his left hand in ahead of Jose Altuve's tag.

"Just stumbled and stumbled and stumbled and finally went down," Headley said. "I went from one of the best feelings of my career to one of the worst in just a matter of seconds."

Headley was awarded second after a video review, and the ballpark boomed when crew chief Gary Cederstrom gave the signal. It got so loud that on-deck hitter Brett Gardner said he "kind of blacked out for a second."

Gardner brought in Frazier on a groundout, and Judge came to bat with the bundled, buzzing crowd on its feet.

He lunged for a low slider and drilled a double high off the left-field wall as a fan in a long-sleeve yellow shirt reached down and touched the ball. Pinch-runner Jacoby Ellsbury came home with the tying run, and Gregorius grounded a single just beyond shortstop Carlos Correa's reach to put runners at the corner. Sanchez, who had been 0 for 13 in the series, scored them both with a slicing drive that skipped to the wall in right-center.

"Those guys came up big for us today," Girardi said.

Judge had multiple hits for the first time since the AL wild-card game against Minnesota. He's still just 7 for 37 with 22 strikeouts in the playoffs, but he's 4 for 13 (.308) with three walks in the ALCS. He also homered in an 8-1 Game 3 win.

Judge said he used to dream about postseason at-bats in Yankee Stadium as a minor leaguer.

"The dreams aren't the same as reality," he said. "To be out with the crowd and the atmosphere, it was unbelievable."

The 35-minute bottom of the eighth was the latest stunning comeback for New York, which has overcome deficits of three or more 11 times this year, including in the wild-card game against Minnesota.

Houston had not lost consecutive games since Sept. 8-10 at Oakland and had the major leagues' best road record during the regular season. The Astros are hitting .153 in the series.

"We're not going to hit the panic button because we lost two games in a row," Correa said. "We got Keuchel going tomorrow."

McCullers cruised in his first start since Sept. 30 and turned over a 4-1 lead to his bullpen.

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"He was awesome," manager A.J. Hinch said. "And really proud of him because I know how important this start was for him."

Yankees starter Sonny Gray pitched one-hit ball through five innings. His teammates have yet to score for him in four career postseason starts while he's still on the mound, including twice with New York this year.

Houston took a 3-0 lead in the sixth after George Springer walked leading off and Josh Reddick reached on catcher's interference by Austin Romine — inserted into lineup for his defense.

Yuli Gurriel lined a three-run double off David Robertson for a 3-0 lead in the sixth and second baseman Starlin Castro misplayed Brian McCann's seventh-inning grounder for his second error, allowing Marwin Gonzalez to score from second.

Winner Chad Green gave up an unearned run over two innings.

"All of a sudden, the pressure's back on the other team," Frazier said. "It's the best place to play and the loudest place in baseball to play. No doubt about it."

OUT, SAFE, OUT

The fourth inning ended strangely. Judge was doubled off first on Sanchez's popup, but the Yankees successfully challenged that Judge beat first baseman Gurriel to the base. Houston then appealed that Judge missed retouching second on his way back to first. Judge — realizing he would be called out on the challenge — decided to race McCullers' appeal throw to second and was tagged out. He would have voided the appeal attempt if he had beaten the throw.

"The coaching staff kind of gave me a heads up," Judge said. "So I said, 'All right, let's go. Got to try something.'"

Adding to the strangeness: throughout the challenge, McCullers was digging around the mound with his hands, scooping up beads off his necklace, which broke during the play.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Tanaka has been receiving treatment on his leg after being struck by Reddick's liner in Game 1. He did not expect it to be an issue Wednesday.

Follow Jake Seiner on Twitter: https://twitter.com/jake_seiner

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

Amnesty: Myanmar army killed at least hundreds of Rohingya

BANGKOK (AP) — Myanmar security forces killed hundreds of men, women and children during a systematic campaign to expel Rohingya Muslims, Amnesty International said in a new report Wednesday that calls for an arms embargo on the country and criminal prosecution of the perpetrators.

More than 580,000 refugees have arrived in Bangladesh since Aug. 25, when Myanmar security forces began a scorched-earth campaign against Rohingya villages. Myanmar's government has said it was responding to attacks by Muslim insurgents, but the United Nations and others have said the response was disproportionate.

The continuing exodus of Rohingya Muslims has become a major humanitarian crisis and sparked international condemnation of Buddhist-majority Myanmar, which still denies atrocities are taking place.

Based on interviews with more than 120 fleeing Rohingya, Amnesty International said at least hundreds of people were killed by security forces who surrounded villages, shot fleeing inhabitants and then set buildings alight, burning to death the elderly, sick and disabled who were unable to flee.

In some villages, women and girls were raped or subjected to other sexual violence, according to the report.

The witnesses repeatedly described an insignia on their attackers' uniforms that matched one worn by troops from Myanmar's Western Command, Amnesty International said.

When shown various insignia used by Myanmar's army, witnesses consistently picked out the Western Command patch, it said.

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The 33rd Light Infantry Division and border police, who wear a distinctive blue camouflage uniform, were also frequently involved in attacks on villages, along with Buddhist vigilante mobs, witnesses said.

Matthew Wells, an Amnesty crisis researcher who spent several weeks at the Bangladesh-Myanmar border, said the rights group plans to issue another report in the coming months examining individual criminal responsibility, including specific commanders and others that may be involved in abuses.

He said hundreds of Rohingya have been treated for gunshot wounds and doctors say that the injuries are consistent with people being shot from behind as they fled.

There were credible indications that a total of several hundred people had been killed in just five villages that were the focus of Amnesty's reporting. Wells said that given that dozens of villages across northern Rakhine State have been targeted in a similar fashion, the death toll could be much higher.

He said satellite imagery, corroborated by witness accounts, show that Rohingya homes and mosques have been burned entirely in villages, while non-Rohingya areas just one or two hundred yards (meters) away were untouched.

"It speaks to how organized, how seemingly well-planned this scorched-earth campaign has been by the Myanmar military and how determined the effort has been to drive the Rohingya population out of the country," Wells said.

Among almost two dozen recommendations, the human rights group called for the U.N. Security Council to impose a comprehensive arms embargo on Myanmar and financial sanctions against senior officials responsible for violations that Amnesty says meet the criteria for crimes against humanity.

It said the council should explore options for bringing the perpetrators to justice under international law if Myanmar authorities do not act swiftly.

"It is time for the international community to move beyond public outcry and take action to end the campaign of violence that has driven more than half the Rohingya population out of Myanmar," Amnesty said.

Witnesses and a drone video shot Monday by the U.N. refugee agency show that Rohingya are continuing to flee persecution in Myanmar and crossing into Bangladesh.

The video showed thousands upon thousands of Rohingya trudging along a narrow strip of land alongside what appears to a rain-swollen creek in the Palong Khali area in southern Bangladesh. The line of refugees stretches for a few kilometers (miles).

The new wave of refugees started crossing the border over the weekend, witnesses said. An Associated Press photographer saw thousands of newcomers near one border crossing Tuesday. Several said that they were stopped by Bangladeshi border guards and spent the night in muddy rice fields.

Nearly 60 percent of the refugees are children. The U.N. children's agency, UNICEF, warned Tuesday that without immediate additional funding, it will not be able to continue providing life-saving aid and protection to Rohingya children. UNICEF said it has received just 7 percent of the \$76 million it needs.

On Aug. 25, a Rohingya insurgent group known as the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army attacked at least 30 security posts on Aug. 25, causing dozens of casualties, according to Myanmar authorities. The brutal attacks against Rohingya that followed have been described by the U.N. as "textbook ethnic cleansing."

Buddhist-majority Myanmar has denied citizenship for the Rohingya since 1982 and excludes them from the 135 ethnic groups officially recognized, which effectively renders them stateless. They have long faced discrimination and persecution with many Buddhists in Myanmar calling them "Bengalis" and saying they migrated illegally from Bangladesh, even though they have lived in the country for generations.

AP journalists Matthew Pennington and Dar Yasin in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh contributed to this report.

Californians head back home to altered lives, communities

By SUDHIN THANAWALA and JOCELYN GECKER, Associated Press

PETALUMA, Calif. (AP) — Some have lost loved ones. Many have survived near-death experiences. Others have lost their homes and a lifetime of possessions.

A week after fleeing raging wildfires, tens of thousands of emotionally ravaged Californians have drifted

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back home to find their lives and their communities dramatically altered.

At a Red Cross shelter in Petaluma on Tuesday, 69-year-old Sue Wortman recalled the words that raced through her mind when she fled the flames near her home in Sonoma.

"We're all going up in smoke," she thought at the time. Since then, she's been walking around in a daze.

Firefighters gained more control Tuesday of the massive wine country wildfires, even as other blazes erupted in mountains near Los Angeles and Santa Cruz.

Meanwhile, officials and trauma experts worried about the emotional toll taken by the grueling week of blazes.

Wortman has been living in her RV outside the Petaluma shelter, while hundreds of other evacuees sought refuge in tents and trailers and on cots inside the fairground facility. She has sought comfort among friends and with her dogs but knows that feeling won't last.

"I think it's really going to hit when we go home and see the destruction," she said.

Highlighting the concerns of mental health professionals, the California Psychological Association has emailed an urgent request calling for volunteers to help wildfire evacuees cope with the trauma they have faced and its aftermath.

"There is tremendous acute and long term impact and we are needed right now to help," Dr. Chip Shreiber, the association's disaster resource coordinator, said in the email sent Monday to a distribution list of 13,000 licensed psychologists across California. "Please get the word out."

The fires that swept through parts of seven counties were the deadliest and most destructive series of blazes in California history. At least 41 people were killed and 6,000 homes destroyed.

On Tuesday, authorities identified the only firefighter to die in the blazes as 38-year-old Garrett Paiz of Missouri. He was killed Monday when a water transport truck he was driving rolled over near one of the wildfires in the Napa Valley community of Oakville.

An estimated 100,000 people were evacuated at the height of the fires, and about 34,000 remain under evacuation. Many have yet to find out if their homes are still standing.

"There's still a lot of shock and numbness when you're in the middle of it. You're in the high-gear of trying to cope," said Peggy Ledner-Spaulding, head of outpatient behavior health services at St Joseph's hospital in Santa Rosa, one of the cities hardest-hit by the fires. "But now we're starting to enter into the next phase, as they have control over the fires. That shock and disbelief starts to wear out, and we have a lot of stress and anxiety and grief and worry."

It's common for survivors to feel a range of emotions — sadness, anger, irritability — and to suffer flashbacks or nightmares while having trouble sleeping, especially in a shelter surrounded by strangers.

Physical reactions from the stress can include stomach aches and headaches, but many evacuees are reporting headaches and sore throats from the thick smoke still cloaking the area.

Evacuees were advised to pace their exposure to news and media, which provide information that can reduce anxiety but also become overwhelming. Talking and debriefing is helpful, and parents should encourage children to talk and express their fears, Ledner-Spaulding said.

Sonoma County Supervisor Shirlee Zane has advised anyone with a family member or loved one who has lost everything to accept that they can't fix the damage but they can offer support.

"Provide a compassionate listening ear right now, and let them feel whatever they're feeling," said Zane, a former grief therapist.

Still, life will change for those who must rebuild from nothing.

"It's never going to be the same," said Rob Brown, a supervisor in Mendocino County, where all 8,000 evacuees have been cleared to go home. "You're going to have to seek a new normal."

"You'll see benefits within years," Brown said. "But you're literally in for decades of recovery."

At the Petaluma shelter, signs advertised a stress management class and group. A welcome table at the medical clinic had handout literature from the American Psychological Association about dealing with the emotional toll of a disaster or traumatic event.

Michelle Patino, a nurse in Santa Rosa who volunteered at the shelter's medical clinic, said she saw people who appeared to be experiencing mental breakdowns and a woman so despondent she threatened suicide.

"You have people who are emotionally displaced," she said.

Lynn Bufka, a psychologist and an associate executive director at the Washington, D.C.-based American Psychological Association, said a sense of community can help with healing and recovery but that isn't possible in some neighborhoods that vanished into ashes.

"The sense of community has burned to the ground as well," Bufka said.

She advised evacuees to focus on the positives of what is left — family, friends, health. But as with war veterans, the symptoms of trauma or depression sometimes don't surface for months or years, she said.

But keeping positive is hard when facing the reality of starting from scratch, said John De Groot, whose home in Santa Rosa burned down along with a lifetime of memories.

"You're filled with anxiety in terms of what is going to happen," said De Groot, who lined up at an assistance center for victims in Santa Rosa. "I'm not 22 anymore. We've worked our whole lives. We've had this house for 23 years. So there are a lot of memories there. Grandkids have been there. They love it. And it's not there. So now what?"

Associated Press writers Ellen Knickmeyer in Sonoma, Terry Chea in Santa Rosa, Janie Har in San Francisco, Andrew Dalton and Christopher Weber in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

Follow the AP's complete wildfire coverage here: <https://apnews.com/tag/Wildfires> .

A short-term health deal by senators _ but Trump a question

By ERICA WERNER and ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican and Democratic senators joined in announcing a plan Tuesday aimed at stabilizing America's health insurance markets in the wake of President Donald Trump's order to terminate "Obamacare" subsidies. The president, at first, spoke approvingly of the deal, but as conservatives rebelled, the White House insisted Trump actually opposed the plan as a bailout of insurance companies.

The agreement followed weeks of negotiations between Republican Sen. Lamar Alexander of Tennessee and Democratic Sen. Patty Murray of Washington that sought to address health insurance markets that have been in limbo following GOP failures to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act. The talks took on added urgency when Trump announced last week that he would end monthly "cost sharing reduction" payments the government makes to help insurance companies reduce costs for lower-income people.

Without that money, premiums for some people buying individual health plans would spike, and some insurers would flee the markets, industry officials warn.

The Alexander-Murray deal would continue the insurer payments for two years, while establishing new flexibility for states under former President Barack Obama's law.

"This would allow the Senate to continue its debate about the long term of health care, but over the next two years I think Americans won't have to worry about the possibility of being able to buy insurance in counties where they live," Alexander said in announcing the deal after a closed-door lunch where he presented it to GOP senators.

"This agreement avoids chaos. I don't know a Republican or Democrat who benefits from chaos," he said.

Alexander said the president had encouraged his efforts in phone calls over the past two weeks. And at the White House, Trump responded positively, expressing optimism that Republicans would ultimately succeed in repealing Obamacare, but until then, "For a period of one year, two years, we will have a very good solution."

"It is a short-term solution so that we don't have this very dangerous little period, including a dangerous period for insurance companies, by the way," he said during a Rose Garden press conference.

Hours later, at an appearance in front of a conservative Washington think tank, Trump said he was pleased Democrats had "finally responded to my call for them to take responsibility for their Obamacare disaster" and were working "with Republicans to provide much-needed relief to the American people."

But, he added, "While I commend the bipartisan work done by Senators Alexander and Murray — and

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I do commend it — I continue to believe Congress must find a solution to the Obamacare mess instead of providing bailouts to insurance companies.”

The White House later highlighted that passage to reporters, and a White House official said the line was intended to communicate that, while the president was supportive of Alexander’s efforts to seek a bipartisan solution, he opposes the Alexander-Murray plan. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

Indeed, White House officials had said they would want more in exchange than the additional state flexibility offered in the Alexander-Murray agreement.

Just minutes before Alexander announced the deal, White House legislative director Marc Short emerged from a Senate GOP lunch saying that “a starting point” in exchange for restoring the cost-sharing payments “is eliminating the individual mandate and employer mandate” — the central pillars of Obamacare.

Initially as president, Trump continued making the payments though resisting, but he declared last week he would pull the plug. The payments, which cost around \$7 billion this year, lower expenses like co-payments and deductibles for more than 6 million people. But discontinuing them would actually cost the government more money under Obamacare’s complicated structure, because some people facing higher premiums would end up getting bigger tax subsidies to help pay for them.

The Alexander-Murray deal does include a host of provisions allowing states faster and easier access to waivers that would allow them to shape their own marketplace plans under Obamacare. It also would provide for a new low-cost catastrophic coverage insurance option for all consumers.

Reaction from the GOP was decidedly mixed. For many conservatives it’s practically unthinkable to sign off on federal payments that would arguably prop up a law they’ve been vowing for seven years to destroy.

Rep. Mark Walker of North Carolina, chairman of the conservative Republican Study Committee in the House, quickly denounced the deal over Twitter: “The GOP should focus on repealing & replacing Obamacare, not trying to save it. This bailout is unacceptable.”

Freedom Caucus Chairman Rep. Mark Meadows, who’s been at work on a proposal of his own, was slightly more positive, calling the Alexander-Murray bill “a good start” but saying much more work needed to be done.

GOP leaders in the House and Senate have also been cool to the Alexander-Murray negotiations, the more so since after their failures on Obamacare they are eager to turn their full attention to tax overhaul legislation.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell was noncommittal, telling reporters, “We haven’t had a chance to think about the way forward yet.” Aides to House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., did not provide a statement from him.

Alexander said he and allies including Sen. Mike Rounds, R-S.D., would spend the next several days trying to build up support with the goal of formally introducing legislation later this week. If the legislation does pass, it would almost certainly be as part of a larger package including must-pass spending or disaster relief bills and that might not be until the end of the year.

Murray lauded the effort, saying, “When Republicans and Democrats take the time ... we can truly get things done” for the American people.

Even more than other aspects of the law, the cost-sharing payments have been in dispute ever since the Affordable Care Act became law. House Republicans sued in 2014 to block the payments, arguing they were illegal because Congress, which has power over government spending under the Constitution, had never specifically authorized them. The Obama administration tried unsuccessfully to get the GOP lawsuit dismissed, but the Republicans won favorable rulings from lower-court judges, putting the payments in legal jeopardy even before Trump won the White House.

Associated Press reporters Jill Colvin and Ken Thomas contributed to this report.

Files reveal details of US support for Indonesian massacre

By **STEPHEN WRIGHT, Associated Press**

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Declassified files have revealed new details of U.S. government knowledge and support of an Indonesian army extermination campaign that killed several hundred thousand civilians during anti-communist hysteria in the mid-1960s.

The thousands of files from the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta covering 1963-66 were made public Tuesday after a declassification review that began under the Obama administration. The Associated Press reviewed key documents in the collection in advance of their release.

The files fill out the picture of a devastating reign of terror by the Indonesian army and Muslim groups that has been sketched by historians and in a U.S. State Department volume that was declassified in 2001 despite a last-minute CIA effort to block its distribution.

In 1965, Indonesia had the world's third-largest communist party after China and the Soviet Union, with several million members, and the country's president, the charismatic Sukarno, was vociferously socialist and anti-American.

U.S. officials despaired of Indonesia's apparently unstoppable drift into the communist fold and were ecstatic when conservative generals imposed martial law in Jakarta, seized state radio and set out to annihilate the country's communist party on the pretext that it had tried to overthrow the government. Within months, the army would prevail in its power struggle with Sukarno, shifting Indonesia's political orientation to the U.S. and opening its huge market to American companies.

The newly released files underline the U.S. Embassy's and State Department's early, detailed and ongoing knowledge of the killings and eagerness to avoid doing anything that would hinder the Indonesian army. Historians had already established that the U.S. provided lists of senior communist party officials, radio equipment and money as part of active support for the army.

The documents also show that U.S. officials had credible information that contradicted the Indonesian army's lurid story that the kidnapping and killing of seven generals in an abortive coup by junior officers on Sept. 30, 1965, which paved the way for the bloodbath, was ordered by the Indonesian communist party and Beijing.

The documents specifically mention mass killings ordered by Suharto, a general who within months would seize total power and rule Indonesia for more than three decades, and the pivotal role in carrying out the massacres by groups that today remain Indonesia's biggest mainstream Muslim organizations: Nahdlatul Ulama, its youth wing Ansor and Muhammadiyah.

A Dec. 21, 1965, cable from the embassy's first secretary, Mary Vance Trent, to the State Department referred to events as a "fantastic switch which has occurred over 10 short weeks." It also included an estimate that 100,000 people had been slaughtered.

In Bali alone, some 10,000 people had been killed by mid-December, including the parents and distant relatives of the island's pro-communist governor, and the slaughter was continuing, the cable said. Two months later, another embassy cable cited estimates that the killings in Bali had swelled to 80,000.

A cable that was part of the 2001 State Department volume showed that by April 1966, the embassy was staggered by the scale of the murders and acknowledged, "We frankly do not know whether the real figure is closer to 100,000 or 1,000,000." Even the Indonesian government had only a "vague idea" of the true number, the cable said.

The release of the documents coincides with an upsurge in anti-communist rhetoric in Indonesia, where communism remains a frequently invoked boogeyman for conservatives despite the collapse of the Soviet Union nearly three decades ago and China's embrace of global capitalism.

Discussion of the 1965-66 period that departs from the Suharto era's partly fictional account of a heroic national uprising against communism is still discouraged. A landmark symposium last year that brought together aging survivors of the bloodbath and government ministers sparked a furious backlash. And last month, an anti-communist mob led by retired generals attacked a building in central Jakarta where activ-

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ists had planned to discuss the killings.

"The mass killings of 1965-66 are among the world's worst crimes against humanity, and our country's darkest secret," said Veronica Koman, an Indonesian human rights lawyer. "The 1965-66 survivors are all very old now, and I'm afraid that they will not see justice before they die. Hopefully with these cables coming to light, the truth can emerge and perpetrators can be held accountable."

U.S. Senator Tom Udall, who in 2015 introduced a resolution in the Senate urging Indonesia's government to create a truth and reconciliation commission, said the U.S. must also confront its role in these "terrible acts."

Indonesia's Muslim mass organizations are among those reluctant to face scrutiny for their role, which in the fevered atmosphere of 1965 was characterized by Islamic leaders as a holy war against atheists.

Under the direction of the army, the Muslim organizations Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah were enthusiastic participants in mass murder, carrying out indiscriminate killings as well as organized executions, according to the documents. They also mention the army's recruiting of Catholics to help with its extermination campaign in central Java.

A December 1965 cable from the U.S. Consulate in Medan, Indonesia, reported that preachers in Muhammadiyah mosques were telling congregations that all who joined the communist party must be killed, saying they are the "lowest order of infidel, the shedding of whose blood is comparable to killing chicken."

A detailed four-page report covering mid- to late November 1965 by the U.S. Embassy's political affairs officer, Edward E. Masters, discussed the spread of mass executions to several provinces and the role of youth groups in helping to solve the "main problem" of where to house and what to feed PKI prisoners. PKI is the Indonesian acronym for the country's communist party.

"Many provinces appear to be successfully meeting this problem by executing their PKI prisoners, or killing them before they are captured, a task in which Moslem youth groups are providing assistance," the report said. A cable from earlier in the month mentions an estimated 62,000 prisoners in the province of Central Java alone.

Ansor, the youth arm of Nahdlatul Ulama, was responsible for "brutal attacks" on communists, according to a Dec. 10, 1965, cable, but also caused problems by doing the same to non-communists involved in personal feuds with its members.

Possibly the earliest mention of systematic bloodshed in cables to Washington is a mid-October 1965 record of conversations between the embassy's second secretary and Bujung Nasution, a special assistant to Indonesia's attorney general involved with intelligence matters. Like other intermediaries of the Indonesian army and its allies sent to approach the embassy, Nasution was apparently trying to assess whether the U.S. would object to the extermination campaign.

According to Nasution, the army had already executed many cadres, but this information, he said, must be closely held because the army needed more time to break the communists.

The memo described Nasution as alarmed that reports of atrocities had been leaked to the Malaysian press. It said he warned that it was critical that Sukarno did not learn of the extent of the army's repression, especially from the foreign media.

In response, the second secretary, Robert G. Rich, reassured Nasution.

The U.S. government was fully aware of the sensitive nature of the current events, said Rich, and was "making every effort to avoid stimulating press speculation."

Iraqi gov't assumes control after Kurds leave disputed areas

By PHILIP ISSA and BALINT SZLANKO, Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Kurdish fighters pulled out of disputed areas across northern and eastern Iraq on Tuesday, one day after giving up the vital oil city of Kirkuk — a dramatic redeployment of forces that opened the way for government troops to move into energy-rich and other strategically important territories.

The vastly outnumbered Kurdish forces, known as the peshmerga, appeared to have bowed to demands from the central government that they hand over areas outside the Kurds' autonomous region, including

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territory seized from the Islamic State group in recent years.

The evacuations exposed a Kurdish leadership in turmoil in the wake of last month's vote for independence as Iraq's central government shores up its hand for negotiations over resource-sharing with the country's self-ruling minority.

Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi acknowledged the power shift, saying Iraqi forces took over the disputed areas from the Kurds with barely a shot fired.

"I call on our citizens to celebrate this day, because we have been united," al-Abadi said, calling the independence vote "a thing of the past" as he offered to begin talks with the Kurdish regional government.

The developments followed weeks of political crisis precipitated by the Kurdish leadership's decision to hold the referendum for independence in territories beyond the boundaries of its autonomous region in northeast Iraq.

The Iraqi government, as well as Turkey and Iran, which border the land-locked Kurdish region, rejected the vote. The U.S. also opposed the vote, saying it was a distraction on the war against IS.

If the mood in Baghdad was triumphant, it was acrimonious in the Kurdish capital of Irbil, reflecting the sense among many Kurds that they had been betrayed — and by their own leaders.

"Kirkuk was sold out, everyone ran away," said Amir Aydn, a 28-year-old Kirkuk resident as he returned to the city after fleeing the day before.

A hospital in the nearby Kurdish city of Suleimaniyah said it had received the bodies of 25 peshmerga fighters killed in clashes over Kirkuk. The claim could not be independently verified.

Kurdish President Masoud Barzani said the evacuation of Kirkuk was forced by "certain people in a certain party," a swipe at his political opponents in the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, known as the PUK. Barzani heads the Kurdistan Democratic Party, or KDP.

The General Command of the peshmerga, nominally in Barzani's hands, went even further, accusing PUK officials of "a great and historic treason against Kurdistan."

Their accusations were grounded in reports that peshmerga divisions loyal to the PUK had abandoned their positions as the Iraqi government forces advanced, though the KDP-aligned divisions also withdrew, in Kirkuk and in other parts of the country.

The KDP leadership also condemned the PUK for meeting with Qassem Soleimani, a commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guards who advises Iraq's predominantly Shiite Popular Mobilization Front militias, in the buildup to this week's territorial withdrawal. The Shiite militias are an integral part of Iraq's military apparatus but are viewed with considerable distrust by the Kurds, who consider them a symbol of Tehran's influence in Iraq.

Peshmerga commander Wista Rasoul, who led a PUK-aligned division in Kirkuk, denied fractures in the Kurdish military ranks and said the pullout was a response to the central government's vastly superior firepower.

Ala Talabani, a leading PUK official, also defended her meeting with Soleimani on Saturday when he came to pay his respects over the death of her uncle, the late Iraqi President Jalal Talabani.

She said Soleimani's counsel was wise and praised Iran's role in Iraq.

"Soleimani advised us ... that Kirkuk should return to the law and the constitution, so let us come to an understanding," she told the Arabic language TV station al-Hadath.

Barzani insisted he would not give up his campaign for independence, though such hopes seem more distant than ever in the dismal fallout from the referendum. Kirkuk was a vital source of oil revenues for the Kurdish regional government.

Vahal Ali, a senior adviser to Barzani, told The Associated Press the peshmerga would have to withdraw to the areas it held in 2014, before it deployed across northern Iraq in the fight against the Islamic State group — territory that accounts for much of the land the central government wants back. The Kurdish leadership has been quick to point out that it secured Kirkuk and its oil bounty against the Islamic State after regular Iraqi forces fled that year.

Analysts saw a return to the opportunism that characterized Kurdish party politics before the independence

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vote allowed them to paper over their differences, if only briefly. The PUK did not want to appear opposed to Kurdish independence even though it expressed misgivings over the referendum called by Barzani.

Both parties have an eye on Kurdish regional elections slated for November, said Ahmed Rishdi, an adviser to Iraqi Parliament speaker Salim al-Jabouri.

"I think the PUK and the KDP distributed roles," he said "The KDP are the dream makers and the PUK are the peacemakers, so now they are going to divide the Parliament between them," and squeeze out other minor parties.

But voters may not want to cast their ballots for either party.

"Nobody is looking especially good at the moment," said Fanar Haddad, a senior Middle East research fellow at the National University of Singapore.

If there is a silver lining for the PUK, it is that it may now be in a position to undermine Barzani for calling the ill-fated referendum, he said. And while its coziness with Baghdad and Iran exposes the party to accusations of treason, which ring strongly in Kurdish national politics, the PUK may find itself in a position to attract Iranian or Iraqi largesse.

"If the PUK is able to pay salaries and spread some wealth then their treason just might be put aside" by some, Haddad said.

Szlanko contributed from Kirkuk, Iraq.

US-backed forces celebrate fall of IS 'capital,' Raqqa

By SARAH EL DEEB and ZEINA KARAM, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — U.S.-backed Syrian forces celebrated in the devastated streets of Raqqa on Tuesday after gaining control of the northern city that once was the heart of the Islamic State's self-styled caliphate, dealing a major defeat to the extremist group that has seen its territory shrink ever smaller since summer.

Militants took over the vibrant metropolis on the Euphrates River in 2014, transforming it into the epicenter of their brutal rule, where opponents were beheaded and terror plots hatched.

It took thousands of bombs dropped by the U.S.-led coalition and more than four months of grueling house-to-house battles for the Syrian Democratic Forces to recapture Raqqa, marking a new chapter in the fight against the group whose once vast territory has been reduced to a handful of towns in Syria and Iraq.

"Liberating Raqqa is a triumph for humanity, especially women," who suffered the most under IS, said Ilham Ahmed, a senior member of the SDF political wing.

"It is a salvation for the will to live an honorable life. It is a defeat to the forces of darkness," said Ahmed, speaking to The Associated Press from Ein Issa, just north of Raqqa.

Fighters from the SDF celebrated by chanting and honking their horns as they spun doughnuts with their Humvees and armored personnel carriers, and hoisting yellow SDF flags around Naim, or Paradise Square.

The infamous square was the site of public beheadings and other killings by the militants. Bodies and severed heads would be displayed there for days, mounted on posts and labeled with their alleged crimes, according to residents who later dubbed it "Hell Square."

Crumbled and flattened buildings stood behind the fighters as they drove around the square, a sign of the massive destruction the city has suffered since the militants took over. It was in Naim Square that the extremists paraded tanks and military hardware in 2014 in a chilling show of force that foretold what would come.

SDF commanders later visited Raqqa's sports stadium, which IS had turned into a notorious prison. Dozens of militants who refused to surrender made their last stand earlier Tuesday holed up inside.

"Immortal martyrs!" chanted the men and women in SDF uniforms, saluting their comrades who died battling for the city. According to the coalition, about 1,100 SDF forces have been killed fighting IS in Raqqa and Deir el-Zour.

"Military operations in Raqqa have ceased and we are now combing the city for sleeper cells and cleaning it from land mines," Brig. Gen. Talal Sillo told the AP earlier in the day.

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A formal declaration that Raqqa has fallen would be made soon, once troops finish their clearing operations, Sillo said.

Col. Ryan Dillon, the Baghdad-based spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition, was more cautious, saying only that "more than 90 percent" of Raqqa had been cleared. He estimated about 100 IS militants were still in the city and said he expects the SDF to encounter "pockets of resistance" during the clearing operations.

The battle of Raqqa has killed more than 1,000 civilians, many of them in coalition airstrikes in recent months, and displaced tens of thousands of people who face the prospect of returning to ruined homes. The coalition and residents who managed to escape accused the militants of using civilians as human shields and tried to stop them from leaving the city.

In a reminder of the humanitarian catastrophe unleashed by the fighting, the international charity group Save the Children said that camps housing tens of thousands of people who fled Raqqa are "bursting at the seams."

It said about 270,000 people from Raqqa are still in critical need of aid. With the high level of destruction reported in and around Raqqa, most families have nowhere to go and are likely to be in camps for months or years. The World Food Program said it was ready to send teams as soon as the area was secure enough.

Ahmed, the SDF official, said the hardest part will be administering and rebuilding Raqqa. The group has appointed a civilian administration of locals to rebuild the city, but larger questions loom.

The SDF is a multi-ethnic force, but its Kurdish leadership harbors ambitions of autonomous rule over a Kurdish region in Syria that now includes the Arab-majority Raqqa, leading to concerns of a possible backlash among the city's Sunni Arab population.

Brett McGurk, the top U.S. presidential envoy to the anti-IS coalition, arrived in northern Syria and met Tuesday with members of the Raqqa Civil Council and members of the reconstruction committee.

He also met tribal leaders and urged them to work closely with the SDF, preventing the government of Syrian President Bashar Assad from using any divisions between them, according to the Furat FM, an activist-run news agency.

An immediate challenge was clearing Raqqa of thousands of land mines and booby traps that have killed returning civilians and senior SDF commanders in recent days. One of those killed Monday was the head of the internal security force affiliated with the SDF.

Another challenge for the troops is searching the tunnels that were dug by the militants around the city, Dillon said.

"This will take some time, to say that the city is completely clear," he told AP. "We still suspect that there are still (IS) fighters that are within the city in small pockets."

The loss of Raqqa will deprive the militants of a major hub for recruitment and planning, Dillon said, because the city attracted hundreds of foreign fighters and was a place where attacks in the Middle East and Europe were planned. The militants remain active in Syria, he said, farther south around the eastern province of Deir el-Zour.

In recent months, the Islamic State has steadily lost ground in Iraq and Syria, including Iraq's second-largest city of Mosul. It has also lost major territory to Syrian government forces who have been marching against the group in a simultaneous but separate offensive, mainly in Deir el-Zour province.

Syria's state news agency said government forces and their Russian and Iranian-backed allies captured the Deir el-Zour villages of Mouhassan, Bouomar and Bouleil that were once extremist strongholds.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights also reported that government forces now control more than 90 percent of the city of Deir el-Zour, where a major offensive is underway to capture remaining IS-held neighborhoods.

The battle for Raqqa began in June and the SDF met with stiff resistance from the militants. It began its final assault on Sunday after nearly 300 IS fighters surrendered. Naim Square was captured Monday.

The force seized the hospital Tuesday, taking down the last black IS flag, according to the Kurdish-run Hawar news agency. A video from Hawar showed the clashes around the hospital, which appeared riddled with bullets and partly blackened from a fire.

Associated Press writer Bassem Mroue in Beirut and National Security Writer Robert Burns in Washington contributed to this report.

Senate moves ahead on GOP budget that's key to taxes

By ANDREW TAYLOR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate is moving ahead on a Republican budget plan, a critical step in President Donald Trump and the party's politically imperative drive to cut taxes and simplify the IRS code.

The nonbinding budget plan would permit Republicans to pass follow-up tax cuts later this year that would cost up to \$1.5 trillion over the coming decade. The plan cleared a procedural hurdle in the Senate on a party-line vote of 50-47.

The plan breaks with longstanding promises by top Republicans like Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Speaker Paul Ryan that the upcoming tax drive won't add to the nation's \$20 trillion debt. Once the budget plan passes through the GOP-controlled Congress, the House and Senate can then advance a follow-up tax overhaul measure without fear of a filibuster by Senate Democrats.

"It is crucial that Congress approve this fiscal framework in order to eliminate the dated and stifling tax policies that are holding back our nation," said Budget Committee Chairman Mike Enzi, R-Wyo.

The budget plan calls for \$5 trillion in spending cuts over the decade, including cuts to Medicare, Medicaid and the Obama-era health care law, though Republicans have no plans to actually impose those cuts with follow-up legislation.

Tuesday's vote sets up a vote later this week to pass the budget. That vote is likely to be close, but key GOP moderates such as Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska have signaled support. And John McCain, R-Ariz., who bucked the party on health care, said Tuesday that he supports the budget as a path to accomplishing tax reform.

Rand Paul, R-Ky., is opposed, but so far he is the only Republican to come out against the measure, and GOP leaders are confident the budget will pass by Friday.

Paul told reporters he wants to strip \$43 billion in war funding from the measure, claiming the money busts budget limits set years ago. He lashed out at McCain and Lindsey Graham, R-S.C. — who are long-standing defense hawks defending the war funding — and questioned whether Republicans are serious about cutting automatic-pilot programs known as entitlement spending.

"You've got the McCain-Graham people clamoring for as much money as they can stuff in there and then we also have people saying, 'Oh yeah, we're going to do entitlement reform' but with no means, no mechanism, and no will shown that they actually are serious."

Graham shot back on Twitter that Paul was dishing out "bad info" and was threatening to "screw up #TaxReform."

Trump and his GOP allies plan to use the \$1.5 trillion in tax cuts to sharply reduce corporate rates, cut taxes for most individuals, and slash taxes on business partnerships such as law firms, medical practices, and accounting firms. After failing to deliver on their promise to "repeal and replace" the health care law, Republicans fear that failure to deliver on taxes would be a political disaster.

The spending cuts in the measure include \$473 billion from Medicare and more than \$1 trillion from Medicaid. Although the budget plan is nonbinding, it puts Republicans and Democrats on record about its policies.

If the measure's politically difficult cuts were implemented, the budget deficit would drop to \$424 billion after 10 years and average about \$540 billion a year over the life of the plan, the Congressional Budget Office estimates.

Republicans use different math, relying on optimistic predictions of economic growth that average 2.6 percent a year, while ignoring growing, chronic deficits run by Social Security to claim that their budget could actually generate a surplus by 2026.

"The Budget Committee expects that enactment of pro-growth policies could generate sufficient economic

growth to offset" the \$1.5 trillion tax cut, according to the panel's budget report.

Even most economists sympathetic to arguments that tax cuts boost the economy don't claim they fully pay for themselves, however.

"A good estimate for real-world tax policy is somewhere around 25-30 cents on the dollar," said GOP economist Douglas Holtz-Eakin.

While Democrats remain united against the budget plan, the Trump administration is making overtures to Democratic senators from states Trump easily won last year. Democratic Sens. Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota, Claire McCaskill of Missouri and Joe Manchin of West Virginia dined Monday night at the home of daughter Ivanka Trump and her husband, Jared Kushner, both top presidential advisers.

The bare-bones tax blueprint issued last month by Trump and Republican leaders lacks critical details, and two of the Democrats said it was premature to consider compromises.

There was "lots of talk" about the tax plan, Heitkamp said Tuesday, but "I still don't know what it is."

McCaskill said, "It's very difficult to discuss what, if anything, we could agree to if they don't have a plan."

Associated Press writer Marcy Gordon contributed to this report.

Former hostage says his American wife was rushed to hospital

By **ROB GILLIES, Associated Press**

SMITHS FALLS, Ontario (AP) — Joshua Boyle, a Canadian who was rescued with his family last week by Pakistani troops, said Tuesday that his wife had to be rushed to the hospital and remains there.

Boyle told The Associated Press in an email that his wife, Caitlan Boyle, was admitted Monday. His email did not specify why she was taken to the hospital.

"My wife has been through hell, and she has to be my first priority right now," Boyle wrote.

Boyle, his American wife and their three children were rescued Wednesday, five years after the couple was abducted in Afghanistan on a backpacking trip. The children were born in captivity.

Joshua Boyle said after landing at Toronto's airport on Friday that the Taliban-linked Haqqani network killed an infant daughter and raped his wife during the years they were held.

In prior email exchange with AP, Boyle did not respond to a question about the fourth child but later told Canadian Broadcasting Corp. that it was a forced abortion. The Taliban said in a statement it was a miscarriage.

On Monday, Boyle told the AP that he and his wife decided to have children even while held captive because they always planned to have a big family and decided, "Hey, let's make the best of this and at least go home with a larger start on our dream family."

"We're sitting as hostages with a lot of time on our hands," Boyle told AP. "We always wanted as many as possible, and we didn't want to waste time. Cait's in her 30s, the clock is ticking."

Boyle said their three children are now 4, 2 and "somewhere around 6 months."

"Honestly we've always planned to have a family of 5, 10, 12 children ... We're Irish, haha," he wrote in an email.

The parents of Caitlan Boyle have said they are elated she is free, but also angry at their son-in-law for taking their daughter to Afghanistan.

"Taking your pregnant wife to a very dangerous place, to me, and the kind of person I am, is unconscionable," Caitlan's father, Jim Coleman said, told ABC News.

Politics and the fallen: Trump hasn't called all families

By **CALVIN WOODWARD and JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has pulled bereaved military families into a painful political fight of his own making, going so far Tuesday as to cite the death of his chief of staff's son in Afghanistan to question whether Barack Obama and other presidents did enough to honor the military dead.

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He's boasted that "I think I've called every family of someone who's died," though The Associated Press found relatives of two soldiers who died overseas during Trump's presidency who said they never received a call or a letter from him, as well as relatives of a third who did not get a call from him.

The White House said Trump did telephone on Tuesday the families of four soldiers who were killed in Niger nearly two weeks ago, the issue that had spawned the controversy this week.

"He offered condolences on behalf of a grateful nation and assured them their family's extraordinary sacrifice to the country will never be forgotten," said a White House statement.

Contending that Trump's propensity for a political fight has drifted into "sacred" territory, Democrats and some former government officials have expressed anger at his comments that he, almost alone among presidents, called the families of military members killed in war. They accused him of "inane cruelty" and a "sick game."

For their part, Gold Star families, which have lost members in wartime, told the AP of acts of intimate kindness from two presidents — Obama and George W. Bush — when those commanders in chief consoled them.

Trump's posture has been defensive in recent days after he was criticized for not reaching out right away to relatives of the soldiers killed in Niger. On Monday, Trump said he'd written letters that hadn't yet been mailed; his aides they had been awaiting information on the soldiers before proceeding.

Then Trump stirred things further Tuesday on Fox News Radio, saying, "You could ask General Kelly, did he get a call from Obama?"

John Kelly, a Marine general under Obama, is Trump's chief of staff. His son, Marine 2nd Lt. Robert Kelly, was killed in Afghanistan in 2010. John Kelly was not seen at Trump's public events Tuesday.

A White House official said Obama did not call Kelly after his son's death but did not say whether the former president reached out in some other fashion. White House visitor records show Kelly attended a breakfast Obama hosted for Gold Star families six months after his son died. A person familiar with the breakfast — speaking on condition of anonymity because the event was private — said the Kelly family sat at Michelle Obama's table.

Obama aides said it was difficult this many years later to determine if he had also called Kelly, or when.

Former Obama spokesman Ned Price tweeted: "Kelly, a man of honor & decency, should stop this inane cruelty. He saw up-close just how — & how much — Obama cared for the fallen's families."

Democratic Sen. Tammy Duckworth of Illinois, an Iraq veteran who lost both legs when her helicopter was attacked, said Obama did right by the fallen.

"I just wish that this commander in chief would stop using Gold Star families as pawns in whatever sick game he's trying to play here," she said.

And retired Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, once chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, tweeted that Bush, Obama and their wives "cared deeply, worked tirelessly for the serving, the fallen, and their families. Not politics. Sacred Trust."

Trump initially claimed, in a news conference Monday, that only he among presidents made sure to call families. Obama may have done so on occasion, he said, but "other presidents did not call."

He equivocated Tuesday as the record made plain that his characterization was false. "I don't know," he said of past calls. But he said his own practice was to call all families of the war dead.

But that hasn't happened:

— Army Spc. Christopher Michael Harris, 25, of Jackson Springs, North Carolina, was killed along with another soldier in a suicide attack in Afghanistan in August.

His widow, Brittany Harris, said the White House did offer to set up a call with Trump but "it fell through" and no letter came from the president. She figured Trump was too busy with the approach of Hurricane Harvey and North Korea woes. The family, though, saw Vice President Mike Pence at Dover Air Force Base, where they went to receive Michael's remains, and found Pence's words comforting.

Now 17 weeks pregnant, Brittany Harris said she's had an outpouring of support from the Pentagon and others in government, handwritten notes from Defense Secretary James Mattis and many others.

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"Everybody treats me like gold, salutes me, takes off their hats for me," she said.

— Army Spc. Etienne J. Murphy, 22, of Snellville in metropolitan Atlanta, died May 26 after an armored vehicle he was in rolled over in Syria. No letter or phone call came from Trump to the parents or his widow.

"Because it was non-combat, I feel like maybe he thought it was an accident, it doesn't matter," said Sheila Murphy, his mother. "But my son was in Syria."

She said the Army casualty assistance officer assigned to her family told her a letter would be coming from the White House. Nearly five months later, she said, no letter has arrived. She said she finally wrote a letter to Trump about six weeks ago, to tell him she and her husband still suffer from deep grief, but there's been no reply.

"It wasn't a mean letter," she said. "I was telling him I know he's a grandfather. I told him I'm trying to be here for my grandkids, but some days I don't want to live."

— Aaron Butler, a 27-year-old guardsman from Monticello, Utah, was killed Aug. 16 at a booby-trapped building in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan. His mother, Laura Butler, and family spokesman Bill Boyle say Trump has not called. Many other officials have.

Boyle said the family had no expectation of a call from the president and appreciates the "intense support" from the White House.

"The family is very careful that they do not want to be pulled into a partisan slugfest," Boyle said. "He would be very upset if his name or his death or his sacrifice was used as a tool to divide the country, and they're fearful that this could happen."

No White House protocol demands that presidents speak or meet with the families of Americans killed in action — an impossible task in a war's bloodiest stages. But they often do.

Altogether some 6,900 Americans have been killed in overseas wars since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, the overwhelming majority under Bush and Obama. Since Trump took office in January, about two dozen U.S. service members have been killed.

Despite the much heavier toll on his watch — more than 800 dead each year from 2004 through 2007 — Bush wrote to all bereaved military families and met or spoke with hundreds if not thousands, said his spokesman, Freddy Ford.

Judy Parker lost a son, Army Spc. William Evans, 22, in a roadside bomb in Iraq in 2005 and said the first time she saw her younger son cry over his brother's death was in Bush's arms.

"He took my son who was just 21 and held him and let him cry," she said. Bush "said he didn't know what he would do if it was his child."

Parker, who now lives in Chenango Forks, New York, said she voted for Trump and wishes he would quit tweeting "and get to work."

Veterans groups said they had no quarrel with how presidents have recognized the fallen or their families.

"I don't think there is any president I know of who hasn't called families," said Rick Weidman, co-founder and executive director of Vietnam Veterans of America. "President Obama called often and President Bush called often. They also made regular visits to Walter Reed and Bethesda Medical Center, going in the evenings and on Saturdays."

Lemire reported from New York. Associated Press writers Russ Bynum, in Savannah, Georgia; Jonathan Drew in Raleigh, North Carolina; Kristen de Groot in Philadelphia; Jennifer McDermott in Providence, Rhode Island, Michelle Price in Salt Lake City, and Robert Burns, Richard Lardner, Jesse J. Holland and Hope Yen in Washington contributed to this report.

This story corrects that White House chief of staff John Kelly's son was killed in Afghanistan, not Iraq.

Judge halts newest Trump travel ban, saying it has same woes

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER, Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — A federal judge in Hawaii blocked most of President Donald Trump's latest travel ban Tuesday, just hours before it was set to take effect, saying the revised order "suffers from precisely the same maladies as its predecessor."

It was the third set of travel restrictions issued by the president to be thwarted, in whole or in part, by the courts.

U.S. District Judge Derrick Watson issued the ruling after the ban on a set of mostly Muslim countries was challenged by the state of Hawaii, which warned that the restrictions would separate families and undermine the recruiting of diverse college students.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders called the ruling "dangerously flawed" and said it "undercuts the president's efforts to keep the American people safe." The Justice Department said it will quickly appeal.

At issue was a ban, announced in September and set to go into effect early Wednesday, on travelers from Chad, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Syria and Yemen, along with some Venezuelan government officials and their families.

The Trump administration said the ban was based on an assessment of each country's security situation and willingness to share information with the U.S.

Watson, appointed to the bench by President Barack Obama, said the new restrictions ignore a federal appeals court ruling against Trump's previous ban.

The latest version "plainly discriminates based on nationality in the manner that the 9th Circuit has found antithetical to ... the founding principles of this nation," Watson wrote.

The judge's ruling applies only to the six Muslim-majority countries on the list. It does not affect the restrictions against North Korea or Venezuela, because Hawaii did not ask for that.

"This is the third time Hawaii has gone to court to stop President Trump from issuing a travel ban that discriminates against people based on their nation of origin or religion," Hawaii Attorney General Doug Chin said in a statement. "Today is another victory for the rule of law."

Hawaii argued the updated ban was a continuation of Trump's campaign call for a ban on Muslims, despite the addition of two countries without a Muslim majority.

Watson noted that Hawaii had argued Trump did not back down from that call, listing in the ruling a series of June tweets "in which (Trump) complained about how the Justice Department had submitted a 'watered down, politically correct version' to the Supreme Court."

Other courts that weighed the travel ban have cited Trump's comments about banning Muslims, including the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Virginia and a federal judge in Maryland. Watson also referred to a Trump campaign statement in his previous ruling.

His Tuesday ruling said the new ban, like its predecessor, fails to show that nationality alone makes a person a greater security risk to the U.S.

"The categorical restrictions on entire populations of men, women and children, based upon nationality, are a poor fit for the issues regarding the sharing of 'public-safety and terrorism-related information' that the president identifies," Watson wrote.

He said the ban is inconsistent in the way some countries are included or left out. For example, Iraq failed to meet the security benchmark but was omitted from the ban. Somalia met the information-sharing benchmark but was included.

"Judge Watson's ruling makes clear that we are a nation of laws, no matter what this administration may try to do," Hawaii's U.S. Sen. Brian Schatz said in a statement. "There is a place here for peaceful immigrants from every corner of the world: Spain, Syria, Sudan, or Singapore. There is no place here for discrimination or xenophobia."

Watson found fault with what sorts of visitors are barred. For instance, all tourists and business travelers from Libya are excluded from the U.S., but student visitors were allowed.

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The judge said he would set an expedited hearing to determine whether the temporary restraining order blocking the ban should be extended. It comes as other courts weigh challenges to the ban.

In Maryland, the American Civil Liberties Union and other groups are seeking to block the visa and entry restrictions. Washington state, Massachusetts, California, Oregon, New York and Maryland are challenging the order in front of the same federal judge in Seattle who struck down Trump's initial ban in January.

That ban — aimed mostly at Muslim-majority countries — led to chaos and confusion at airports nationwide and triggered several lawsuits, including one from Hawaii.

When Trump revised the ban, Hawaii challenged that version, too, and Watson agreed it discriminated on the basis of nationality and religion. A subsequent U.S. Supreme Court ruling allowed the administration to partially reinstate restrictions against Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen and against all refugees.

Hawaii then successfully challenged the government's definition of which relatives of people already living in the U.S. would be allowed into the country, and Watson ordered the list expanded.

Showrunner alleges sexual harassment by Bob Weinstein

By FRAZIER MOORE, AP Television Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Spike network is investigating reports of sexual harassment by the brother of disgraced film mogul Harvey Weinstein against the female showrunner of a series produced by The Weinstein Co. and aired on Spike.

Amanda Segel, a former executive producer of the sci-fi series "The Mist," claims Bob Weinstein made repeated overtures to her that included invitations to dinner, to his home and to a hotel room, according to a story published Tuesday by Variety.

"We take all allegations of this nature very seriously, and are investigating," Spike said in a statement.

She says the propositions began in June 2016 and were put to a stop a few months later only after Segel's lawyer gave Weinstein Co. executives an ultimatum that Segel would leave the show if Weinstein persisted.

An arrangement reportedly was struck that restricted Weinstein's contact with Segel while she was doing her job. ("The Mist" was recently cancelled after a 10-episode first season.)

Bert Fields, an attorney for Weinstein, strongly refuted the allegations.

"Variety's story is riddled with false and misleading assertions by Miss Segel," Fields said. "Even if you believed anything that she said, it contains not a hint of any inappropriate touching, or even a request for such touching."

"I've known Bob Weinstein for many years," Fields added, "and he's the last guy that would be involved in any form of sexual harassment."

Segel's attorney, David Fox, did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

Segel's accusations came to light just two weeks after an explosive story by The New York Times reported on older brother Harvey Weinstein's alleged sexual harassment and assault of women spanning several decades. That story was followed by another expose in The New Yorker.

Since those stories surfaced, more than three dozen women have spoken up with additional accusations. Harvey Weinstein was fired from the company he co-founded with Bob, and on Tuesday resigned from its board. He lost his membership in the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the Producers Guild and the British Academy of Film and Television Arts. The very future of The Weinstein Co. is currently in doubt.

In the meantime, Bob Weinstein has publicly condemned his brother while professing he was unaware that Harvey had engaged in any non-consensual relations with women.

"I'm mortified and disgusted by my brother's actions. And I am sick for the victims," he said in an interview by The Hollywood reporter published Saturday.

Until now, no such accusations had been made against Bob Weinstein.

Frazier Moore is a national television columnist for The Associated Press. He can be reached at fmoore@

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NFL players, owners hold 'constructive' talks on issues

By BARRY WILNER, AP Pro Football Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — NFL players and owners held an unusual meeting Tuesday to discuss social issues, a session both sides termed positive and productive.

What was not discussed at any length was the divisive topic of the national anthem that has caught the attention of President Donald Trump.

"We spent today talking about issues that the players are trying to bring attention to," NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said. "That was the entire focus."

Asked if the players committed to standing during the anthem, Goodell responded: "We did not ask for that."

A group of 11 owners and more than a dozen players met for more than two hours at the league's headquarters. Among the topics discussed was enhancing the players' platforms for speaking out on social issues.

"We heard what they had to say and they heard us," Miami Dolphins owner Stephen Ross said. "It's open talks and that's a good thing."

The NFL's policy on the national anthem did not come up. That policy states that the players "should" stand for the anthem, and some have suggested the league would seek to change that to "must" stand. Goodell said in a memo to the teams last week that the NFL prefers for players to stand during "The Star-Spangled Banner."

"Very little of the meeting was about the actual anthem," Eagles safety Malcolm Jenkins said. "We were really more talking about solutions and how we get the results that we want to get."

Ross called the session "constructive," and Colts defensive back Darius Butler termed it "positive."

Goodell spoke briefly before heading to further league meetings. He emphasized the commitment on the part of the players and the NFL "to work together on issues of social justice."

"Our players are men of great character," he added, "and they have a deep understanding and tremendous knowledge of the issues going on in all our communities. This is something our owners said we want to support you in."

Butler, who played Monday night in Nashville before attending the meeting hours later, said both sides are headed in the right direction. He said the players delivered "our perspective. Obviously it's a different perspective. I think that's the most important thing when it comes to these issues is perspective and respecting everyone's rights regardless of how they feel."

The players' union and the league issued a joint statement just before the annual fall owners meetings began. The owners meetings continue Wednesday, when the anthem could be discussed.

"Today owners and players had a productive meeting focused on how we can work together to promote positive social change and address inequality in our communities," the statement said. "NFL executives and owners joined NFLPA executives and player leaders to review and discuss plans to utilize our platform to promote equality and effectuate positive change. We agreed that these are common issues and pledged to meet again to continue this work together."

"As we said last week, everyone who is part of our NFL community has a tremendous respect for our country, our flag, our anthem and our military. In the best American tradition, we are coming together to find common ground and commit to the hard work required for positive change."

On hand at the meeting were Goodell and the league's football operations chief, former player Troy Vincent; and owners Michael Bidwill (Arizona), Arthur Blank (Atlanta), Terry Pegula (Buffalo), Robert McNair (Houston), Shad Khan (Jacksonville), Ross, Robert Kraft (New England), John Mara (New York Giants), Art Rooney (Pittsburgh), Jeffrey Lurie (Philadelphia) and Jed York (San Francisco).

Representing the players were NFLPA Executive Director DeMaurice Smith, union president Eric Winston, former player Anquan Boldin, and current players Butler (Indianapolis), Russell Okung (Los Angeles)

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Chargers), Kenny Stills, Julius Thomas and Michael Thomas (Miami), Mark Herzlich (New York Giants), Kelvin Beachum and Demario Davis (New York Jets), Jenkins and Chris Long (Philadelphia), Eric Reid (San Francisco) and Josh Norman (Washington).

Jenkins has been one of the leading spokesmen among the players, as well as highly active in the community. He said the discussion was about "everything to do with the state of the NFL now, obviously anthem protests, activism that players have been doing, and how we can move this forward to really amplify players' voices and amplify these issues and make some long sustainable changes."

"I'm not sure we're close to a resolution, but conversations are ongoing," he added. "It went from just phone calls to obviously this is the first time meeting. So I don't think we could come up with a whole plan and solution in two hours, but we are happy that these things are happening. We're looking forward to the opportunity to really put a good plan together."

Earlier, outside of the hotel where the owners are meeting, two dozen supporters of Black Lives Matter New York held a rally backing the players for speaking out — particularly former 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick for kneeling during the anthem last year in protest of racial injustice in America. Demonstrations during the anthem increased when Trump called the players unpatriotic if they knelt during the anthem, with both players and league executives saying the meaning of the protests has been misconstrued by the president and his supporters.

At a game earlier this month, Vice President Mike Pence walked out of Indianapolis' Lucas Oil Stadium after several 49ers knelt during the anthem.

Jenkins said after the meeting that Kaepernick had been invited by the players but didn't attend.

Also Tuesday, Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones was confronted by two people in the lobby of the Manhattan hotel where the owners are meeting. The protesters shouted at him about the issue of white supremacy while Jones was surrounded by bodyguards. Jones stopped to listen but said nothing, and the protesters were peacefully led away.

AP Sports Writer Simmi Buttar contributed to this report.

For more NFL coverage: <http://www.pro32.ap.org> and http://www.twitter.com/AP_NFL

Catalans protest sedition case, court declares vote illegal

By **ARITZ PARRA** and **CIARAN GILES**, Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — Spain's top court ruled Tuesday that an independence referendum in Catalonia was unconstitutional, adding weight to government efforts to block the region from breaking away from the rest of the country but not persuading demonstrators demanding the release of two jailed separatist activists.

The Constitutional Court's ruling was not a surprise. The Spanish government had repeatedly insisted the referendum was illegal. Regional leaders defied the Madrid-based central government and held the Oct. 1 vote even after police seized millions of ballots and used force to close polling stations.

Supporters of secession maintain the "Yes" vote won and Catalan officials have a mandate to declare independence. Portraying the central government as repressive, they showed no signs of giving up despite the court ruling that concluded the referendum was invalid.

Thousands of people holding candles and banners flooded a main avenue in Barcelona on Tuesday night to demand the release of the two Catalan activists jailed by Spanish authorities on possible sedition charges a day earlier.

Jordi Sanchez and Jordi Cuixart, the leaders of grassroots organizations Catalan National Assembly and Omnium Cultural, are being investigated for organizing rallies last month that allegedly hampered a judicial probe of preparations for the secession vote.

"We are facing an executive power in the state that uses the judiciary branch to block the legislative," Catalan government spokesman Jordi Turull told reporters shortly after the Constitutional Court ruling

was announced.

Spanish Justice Minister Rafael Catala said Sanchez and Cuixart, were jailed because they are suspected of committed crimes by interfering with a judge's orders. Catala rejected the term "political prisoners" to describe the two, saying it could be considered a case of "politicians in prison."

Catalan President Carles Puigdemont made an ambiguous statement about the region's future last week, saying he has the mandate to declare independence but adding that he would not immediately move to implement it in order to allow time for talks with the central government.

Spain has said that no dialogue can take place with independence on the table because a reform of the country's Constitution with an ample majority in the national parliament is the only legal way to achieve secession.

On Monday, a Madrid judge provisionally jailed Sanchez and Cuixart, leaders of different grassroots groups promoting independence for Catalonia. The judge ruled they were behind huge demonstrations Sept. 20-21 in Barcelona that got in the way of a police operation designed to prevent the referendum.

Participants in the Tuesday protest chanted, "Political prisoners, freedom."

Meanwhile, Agusti Alcoberro, the man who standing in for Sanchez as head of the Assembla Nacional Catalana, said peaceful protests would be the local response to what he said was the Spanish government's heavy-handed approach.

"No modern state in the 21st century can survive if it bases its legitimacy on subjugating politically and dominating part of its population with the police and military," Alcoberro told The Associated Press. "That is suicidal, and somebody should explain it to the Spanish government."

Ciaran Giles contributed from Madrid. Barry Hatton in Lisbon, Portugal also contributed.

Trump: Drug czar nominee pulls his name from consideration

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE and MATTHEW DALY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rep. Tom Marino, President Donald Trump's nominee to be the nation's drug czar, has withdrawn from consideration, following reports that he played a key role in weakening the federal government's authority to stop companies from distributing opioids.

"He didn't want to have even the perception of a conflict of interest with drug companies or, frankly, insurance companies," Trump told Fox News Radio in an interview Tuesday, shortly after breaking the news on Twitter.

The announcement follows reports by The Washington Post and CBS News, which detailed the Pennsylvania lawmaker's involvement in crafting a 2016 law, signed by President Barack Obama, that weakened the Drug Enforcement Administration's authority to curb opioid distribution.

It also comes amid growing pressure on Trump to fulfill his pledge to declare the nation's opioid epidemic a "national emergency," as a commission he's convened on the subject has urged him to do. Trump told reporters Monday that he would be making the declaration official next week.

Interviewed by Fox News Radio's Brian Kilmeade, Trump said Marino "felt compelled" to step down from the job.

"He feels very strongly about the opioid problem and the drug problem and Tom Marino said, 'Look, I'll take a pass,'" Trump added. Trump did not say when he and the congressman spoke. Marino could not immediately be reached Tuesday for comment.

Trump had told reporters during a news conference in the White House Rose Garden on Monday that he would look "very closely" at the reports about Marino, adding: "If I think it's 1 percent negative to doing what we want to do, I will make a change," he said.

Democrats had called on Trump to withdraw the nomination, and hailed the news, with Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer calling Marino's decision the "right decision."

"We need a drug czar who has seen these devastating effects and who is passionate about ending this opioid epidemic," said Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin, whose home state of West Virginia has been among

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the hardest-hit by the opioid epidemic.

Manchin had scolded the Obama administration for failing to “sound the alarm on how harmful that bill would be for our efforts to effectively fight the opioid epidemic,” which kills an estimated 142 people a day nationwide.

In a letter to Trump, Manchin called the opioid crisis “the biggest public health crisis since HIV/AIDS,” and said, “we need someone leading the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy who believes we must protect our people, not the pharmaceutical industry.”

The Post reported Sunday that the drug industry worked behind the scenes with lobbyists and key members of Congress, including Marino, pouring more than a million dollars into their election campaigns. The major drug distributors prevailed upon the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Justice Department to agree to the industry-friendly law, which undermined efforts to restrict the flow of pain pills that have led to tens of thousands of deaths.

Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, the bill’s lead Senate sponsor, defended the measure Monday, calling allegations that he or Marino “conspired” with drug companies “utterly ridiculous.” Hatch, a 40-year veteran of the Senate, said he was “no patsy” of the drug industry.

The language affecting DEA enforcement authority was suggested by DEA and the Justice Department, Hatch said, adding that the agencies could have tried to stop the bill at any time — or recommended that Obama veto the measure.

“Let’s not pretend that DEA, both houses of Congress and the Obama White House all somehow wilted under Representative Marino’s nefarious influences,” Hatch said.

Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., said Monday she will introduce legislation to repeal the 2016 law.

A White House commission convened by Trump and led by New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie has called on Trump to declare a national emergency to help deal with the growing opioid crisis. An initial report from the commission in July noted that the approximate 142 deaths each day from drug overdoses means the death toll is “equal to September 11th every three weeks.”

Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein also announced Tuesday that a pair of Chinese nationals had been indicted on charges that they manufactured tons of fentanyl and other powerful narcotics that were then peddled in the United States, killing at least four people and seriously injuring five others.

Authorities said the men controlled one of the world’s most prolific international drug-trafficking and money laundering organizations. Also indicted were at least 21 other people accused of trafficking the drugs in the U.S. and Canada, often through the U.S. mail.

Associated Press writers Sadie Gurman and Jill Colvin contributed to this report.

Follow Darlene Superville and Matthew Daly on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/dsupervilleap> and <http://www.twitter.com/MatthewDalyWDC>

After IS collapse in Raqqa, US faces other extremism threats

By ROBERT BURNS, AP National Security Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The imminent fall of the Islamic State’s de facto capital leaves America a multitude of tasks to restore stability in the Middle East, starting with pockets of remaining IS resistance in Syria and Iraq.

Then there are the more deeply rooted problems, not fixable by guns or bombs, that allowed extremism to rise and flourish: Syria’s civil war and Iraq’s intractable political, religious and ethnic disputes, which turned violent again this week.

The challenge is more than the U.S. can handle alone. It likely will keep some troops in Iraq for years to come to train and advise the army, police and other members of security forces that imploded when IS fighters swept across the Syrian border and captured Mosul in June 2014.

The militants also have footholds in Afghanistan and beyond. On Monday, the Pentagon said it used

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drone aircraft to strike two IS training camps in Yemen, killing dozens.

Syria has been fertile ground for IS, which capitalized on the civil war to expel al-Qaida and more moderate opposition fighters from Raqqa almost four years ago, making the city the capital of its self-declared "caliphate." The Obama administration sought to stay out of the civil war even as it claimed hundreds of thousands of lives.

The Trump administration has largely stayed on the sidelines of attempts, now led by Russia and Iran, to organize local cease-fires and create so-called "de-escalation zones," with the exception of one such area near the Israeli and Jordanian borders. But it has been generally supportive of U.N.-led efforts to resurrect stalled political talks aimed at forging a transitional administration.

On the ground in Syria, the administration has redefined America's priorities to focus primarily on securing military gains and providing immediate reconstruction assistance to restore critical infrastructure and temporary governance.

Heather Nauert, the State Department spokesperson, said that once Raqqa is fully liberated the U.S. and its coalition partners will focus on helping to remove dangers posed by unexploded bombs in the area.

"Eventually, we would get to the point where we would start to remove some of the rubble, get to the point where we would get the electricity going once again, providing clean water -- the same types of things that the U.S. and coalition partners were able to do in Mosul," she said.

The collapse of IS defenses in Raqqa, after four months of fighting, does not necessarily equate to the collapse of the militant group. The U.S. military on Tuesday estimated 6,500 IS fighters remain in eastern Syria and western Iraq, many concentrated along the Euphrates River valley straddling the border. Even if they no longer control significant territory, they pose an insurgent threat in both countries and an ideological threat globally.

Col. Ryan S. Dillon, a spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition fighting IS in Syria and Iraq, told reporters at the Pentagon that Raqqa is about 90 percent freed, but more fighting will be required to fully liberate the city. As evidence of remaining risks, he said the Syrian commander of a so-called Raqqa Internal Security Force, whose task will be to keep order in the city once the last IS fighters have been ousted, was killed Monday by an improvised bomb.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said last week that IS is "close to being crushed." He also cautioned against assuming an easy end game, likening the problem to squeezing a tightly packed snowball.

"You can compact them and compact them, and eventually it shatters," meaning IS remnants "can show up in other places." He was speaking about four soldiers killed this month in the African nation of Niger, possibly by an IS affiliate.

Planning for some of the major attacks in Europe in recent years was traced back to Raqqa. These include the 2015 Paris attacks, which killed 130 people, and the 2016 suicide attacks on the Brussels airport and subway, which killed 32.

The breadth of the problem was underlined by Britain's chief of domestic intelligence, who said in London that the Islamist extremist threat facing his country has accelerated at an alarming pace and is worse now than at any time in his 34-year career. MI5 Director General Andrew Parker said the risk is further heightened by the possible return to Britain of people who had joined IS in Syria and Iraq.

"That threat is multi-dimensional, evolving rapidly, and operating at a scale and pace we've not seen before," he said.

In Iraq, optimism created by a series of relatively swift victories by Iraqi security forces was punctured by renewed conflict between the central government in Baghdad and the semi-autonomous Kurdish regional government, whose peshmerga militia fighters had taken control of the disputed city of Kirkuk after IS took Mosul in 2014.

The Kurds had included disputed areas, including Kirkuk, in a non-binding referendum last month in which more than 90 percent of voters favored independence. The Iraqi government, as well as Turkey and Iran, which border the land-locked Kurdish region, rejected the vote.

Baghdad has spent the last three years demanding the Kurds return Kirkuk to federal control, and appeared to be on the verge of taking military action after the referendum. Sporadic clashes broke out as

Iraqi forces moved toward Kirkuk on Monday, but within hours Kurdish forces had withdrawn from the city's airport, an important military base and nearby oil fields.

AP Diplomatic writer Matthew Lee contributed to this report.

Trump warns 'I fight back' after McCain hits foreign policy

By KEN THOMAS, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Tuesday warned Sen. John McCain that "I fight back" after McCain questioned "half-baked, spurious nationalism" in America's foreign policy.

McCain, a former Navy pilot who spent 5½ years in a Vietnam prisoner of war camp and is battling brain cancer, offered a simple response to Trump: "I have faced tougher adversaries."

Trump said in a radio interview with WMAL in Washington, "I'm being very, very nice but at some point I fight back and it won't be pretty." He bemoaned McCain's decisive vote this past summer in opposition to a GOP bill to dismantle Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act, a move that caused the failure of GOP efforts to repeal and replace "Obamacare."

In Philadelphia on Monday night, the six-term Republican senator from Arizona received an award for a lifetime of service and sacrifice to the country. In addition to recalling his more than two decades of military service and his imprisonment during the war, McCain took a moment to go a step further than the night's other speakers, who lamented what many described as a fractured political climate.

"To abandon the ideals we have advanced around the globe, to refuse the obligations of international leadership for the sake of some half-baked, spurious nationalism cooked up by people who would rather find scapegoats than solve problems," he said, "is as unpatriotic as an attachment to any other tired dogma of the past that Americans consigned to the ash heap of history."

He continued: "We live in a land made of ideals, not blood and soil."

Former Vice President Joe Biden presented McCain with the Liberty Medal. Though members of opposing parties, the two men worked together during their time in the Senate. Former President Barack Obama, who defeated McCain in his bid for the presidency in 2008, congratulated the senator on the award in a tweet Monday night.

"I'm grateful to @SenJohnMcCain for his lifetime of service to our country. Congratulations, John, on receiving this year's Liberty Medal," Obama wrote.

Another political foe, 2012 GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney, said on Twitter: "Ran against him, sometimes disagree, but proud to be a friend of @SenJohnMcCain: hero, champion of character and last night, Lincolnesque."

The back-and-forth between the president and McCain represented the latest skirmish between the two Republican party heavyweights and another example of Trump tangling with GOP senators who could undermine his agenda in Congress.

Trump in recent weeks has feuded with Tennessee Sen. Bob Corker and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, although the president joined with the Kentucky senator at the White House to publicly declare they were on the same page. McCain played a consequential role in the health care debate and will be lobbied heavily to support the president's push to overhaul the tax system.

In the radio interview, Trump aired his frustration with fellow Republicans who have eluded him in his attempt to overhaul the health care law approved during President Barack Obama's administration.

"We need some votes from some of the Republicans. For some reason, they weren't there on health care. They should have been," Trump told WMAL's Chris Plante. "We thought we had it. John McCain voted no, which was a shocker."

As a presidential candidate, Trump said in 2015 that McCain was "not a war hero" because he was captured in Vietnam, adding, "I like people who weren't captured." McCain, the 2008 Republican presidential nominee, said Trump owed other veterans an apology.

During Trump's presidency, McCain has questioned the president's immigration policies and warned him

against cozying up to Russian President Vladimir Putin. The senator also criticized Trump in August for saying that both white nationalists and counterprotesters were responsible for violent clashes in Charlottesville, Virginia.

McCain insisted in a tweet that "there's no moral equivalency between racists & Americans standing up to defy hate and bigotry" and the president should say so.

The senator underwent surgery in mid-July to remove a 2-inch (51-millimeter) blood clot in his brain after being diagnosed with an aggressive tumor called a glioblastoma. It's the same type of tumor that killed Sen. Edward M. Kennedy at age 77 in 2009 and Beau Biden, son of then-Vice President Joe Biden, at 46 in 2015.

Pressed on Trump's threat Tuesday morning, McCain told reporters he has had tougher fights, and then smiled.

AP Congressional Correspondent Erica Werner contributed to this report.

On Twitter, follow Ken Thomas at @KThomasDC.

NTSB: Balloon crash pilot was as impaired as a drunk driver

By PAUL J. WEBER, Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — The pilot in the deadliest hot air balloon crash in U.S. history was probably impaired by Valium, opioids and cold and allergy medicine when he ignored weather warnings and flew the ride into a power line, investigators said Tuesday.

Besides Valium and oxycodone, there was enough of the over-the-counter antihistamine Benadryl in Alfred "Skip" Nichols' system to mimic "the impairing effect of a blood-alcohol level" of a drunken driver, said Dr. Nicholas Webster, a National Transportation Safety Board medical officer.

During a meeting in Washington, NTSB revealed its findings about the July 2016 crash near Austin that killed all 16 people aboard. Investigators scolded the Federal Aviation Administration for lax enforcement of the ballooning industry and recommended that balloon pilots submit to the same medical checks as airplane pilots.

Nichols, 49, had at least four prior convictions for drunken driving, though no alcohol was found in his system after the crash. Investigators said Nichols was told during a weather briefing before the flight that clouds may be a problem. He brushed off the warning.

"We just fly in between them," Nichols allegedly answered back, according to NTSB investigators. "We find a hole and we go."

Visibility was 10 miles about two hours before the balloon took off from a Walmart parking lot near the rural town of Lockhart but had diminished to just 2 miles before the ride began.

Investigators said Nichols told his psychiatrist three months before the crash that he was not using his antidepressant medication and that his psychiatrist documented his mood as "not good." Nichols was prescribed 13 medications and was also being treated for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, known as ADHD, which investigators say also was a contributing factor.

The final public hearing by the NTSB into the crash wasn't the first time the federal government's crash-site investigators have urged the FAA to more closely regulate the balloon industry. NTSB Chairman Robert Sumwalt ripped the FAA and questioned why the agency was endorsing voluntary pilot requirements written by the Balloon Federation of America instead of tightening regulations.

"Why is the FAA promoting it? It is not an FAA program," Sumwalt said. "The FAA is treating this as the be-all, end-all. They are abdicating their responsibility to provide oversight. They are saying, 'The BFA will take care of this so we do not have to do anything.' That is what is sad."

The FAA said in a statement that it will carefully consider the NTSB recommendations but did not address Sumwalt's criticism.

Before the Texas crash, Nichols' balloon-ride companies in Missouri and Illinois were the targets of various customer complaints dating back to 1997. Customers reported to the Better Business Bureau that

their rides would get canceled at the last minute and their fees never refunded.

Aviation experts say the FAA might allow a recovering alcoholic to fly commercial jets if the pilot could show that he or she was being successfully treated but that the agency is unlikely to accept pilots with drunken driving convictions.

Scott Appelman, owner of the New Mexico-based balloon operator Rainbow Ryders Inc., said his pilots already meet the higher standard and that federal requirements won't have an impact. He called Nichols a renegade who operated outside the rules anyway. He said the Texas crash has taken a toll on customers.

"It was a significant effect on the balloon industry. The industry has not recovered," Appelman said.

Follow Paul J. Weber on Twitter: www.twitter.com/pauljweber

This story corrects the name of the Federal Aviation Administration from Federation Aviation Agency.

Big question for US cities: Is Amazon's HQ2 worth the price?

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER, AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Dozens of cities are working frantically to land Amazon's second headquarters, raising a weighty question with no easy answer:

Is it worth it?

Amazon is promising \$5 billion of investment and 50,000 jobs over the next decade and a half. Yet the winning city would have to provide Amazon with generous tax breaks and other incentives that can erode a city's tax base.

Most economists say the answer is a qualified yes — that an Amazon headquarters is a rare case in which a package of at least modest enticements could repay a city over time. That's particularly true compared with other projects that often receive public financial aid, from sports stadiums to the Olympics to manufacturing plants, which generally return lesser, if any, benefits over the long run.

For the right city, winning Amazon's second headquarters could help it attain the rarefied status of "tech hub," with the prospect of highly skilled, well-paid workers by the thousands spending freely, upgrading a city's urban core and fueling job growth beyond Amazon itself.

Other companies would likely move, over time, to that city, including employers that partner with Amazon in such cutting-edge fields as virtual reality and artificial intelligence. Some Amazon employees would also likely leave the company to launch their own startups, thereby producing additional job growth.

In theory at least, those trends could help attract more highly educated residents in a virtuous cycle that helps increase salaries and home values.

"This definitely beats other deals that I have seen, to be sure," said Enrico Moretti, an economist at the University of California, Berkeley and author of "The New Geography of Jobs." "It would certainly increase the attractiveness of that city for other well-paying high-tech jobs."

It's that hope that has triggered excitement, from such metropolises as New York, Boston and Chicago to tiny Maumee, Ohio (population 14,000). The deadline for submissions is Thursday.

High-tech firms like Amazon create a "clustering effect," Moretti's research has found, whereby a company attracts workers with specialized knowledge in, say, software and data analysis. These workers are rare in other cities but reach a critical mass in a tech hub. And higher-skilled workers are more productive when they work in proximity to each other, sharing ideas and experiences.

A result is that each new high-tech job can create up to five more jobs, Moretti estimates. That's far more "spillover" than is true in manufacturing, where a new job typically creates fewer than two other jobs, he calculates. His findings suggest that Amazon's second headquarters could lead to as many as 300,000 total jobs over a couple of decades.

The spillover job growth would likely include not only other high-tech positions but also professional occupations — doctors, accountants and architects, for example — in addition to higher-paying blue collar jobs, in, say, construction, and lower-paid service jobs at retailers and restaurants.

By contrast, manufacturing jobs tend to decline over time, Moretti said, as factories become more ef-

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ficient through automation or succumb to competition from overseas.

"When you lock in manufacturing, you don't know what will be there in 10 years," he said.

Like most economists, Moretti doesn't think cities should dangle billions in subsidies to Amazon. Many say local governments should focus instead on developing assets that would benefit the larger region, such as offering to upgrade community colleges.

Still, for a city struggling to develop a modern economic base, landing Amazon could be transformative.

"Not all corporate relocations are scams, and not all of them are created equal," Mark Muro, a senior fellow at Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Policy Program, said, referring to Amazon's HQ2 announcement. "It's certainly big enough that one place, particularly in the Midwest, could have its fortunes meaningfully improved."

That said, the competition for Amazon might not be as intense as it seems: Few metro areas meet the company's criteria, including a population of more than 1 million people, an international airport and a "strong university system." That reality should give the eligible cities some leverage, Moretti says.

Amazon's search comes at a particularly fraught time, with regional income and employment gaps are widening. The effects of clustering have lifted a limited number of cities far above the rest of the country.

EMSI, an economic consulting firm, calculates that workers in only five of the nation's 100 largest cities experienced healthy average annual pay increases of at least 2 percent, adjusted for inflation, from 2012 through 2016: San Jose; Seattle; San Francisco; Raleigh, North Carolina; and Madison, Wisconsin. The first four are tech hubs, while Madison is the home of the University of Wisconsin.

And the Economic Innovation Group, a think tank, found in a recent report that the nation's wealthiest communities, where about one-quarter of all Americans live, captured 52 percent of new jobs from 2011 through 2015.

Amazon built its headquarters in Seattle in 1994 partly because Microsoft's presence there had attracted many software programmers, Moretti notes. Microsoft employees went on to start other companies in the area, including Real Networks and Expedia.

Boston, one of many cities competing for Amazon's second headquarters, has benefited from clustering effects in the past decade. Amazon and Apple have already set up smaller offices there, mostly in search of voice-recognition and artificial intelligence expertise.

Boston is also now the site of a robotics cluster, thanks in part to iRobot, the company that makes the Roomba automated vacuum, which launched there in 1990.

Reese Mozer, chief executive of American Robotics, chose to start his firm in Boston even though he had earned an advanced degree from Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh.

"Boston just had a little bit more access to capital and talent than Pittsburgh," Mozer said.

Amazon's preferences — which also include mass transit and a "highly educated labor pool" — suggest that the ultimate winner might turn out to be a city that is already economically vibrant.

"When you find places like that that have all those characteristics, that place is likely already doing well," said John Lettieri, a co-founder of the Economic Innovation Group.

Many analysts say they hope Amazon chooses a city far from the tech hubs on the coasts, so the new headquarters can benefit a city that needs the lift — Indianapolis, say, or Columbus, Ohio. Even so, the company's decision isn't going to address the country's geographical imbalances. It would take "50 Amazons" to do that, Muro said.

Landing Amazon is like "trying to win the lottery," Lettieri said. "Economic development can't be dependent on these once-in-a-generation opportunities."

AP Technology Writer Matt O'Brien contributed to this report from Boston.

Asia stocks mixed, Nikkei cheered by likely ruling party win

By YURI KAGEYAMA, AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Asian shares were mixed on Wednesday, as some indexes got a boost from overnight gains on Wall Street. Japan's benchmark held steady as expectations grew that a likely ruling party win in Sunday's Japanese parliamentary elections will help stability and growth. The Shanghai Composite index advanced as China's ruling communists began a congress that is due to give President Xi Jinping a second, five-year term.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 was nearly unchanged at 21,340.36 and Australia's S&P/ASX 200 added 0.1 percent to 5,894.40. South Korea's Kospi lost 0.2 percent to 2,480.35. Hong Kong's Hang Seng was flat at 28,698.50, while the Shanghai Composite gained 0.3 percent to 3,381.27.

WALL STREET: The S&P 500 index added 0.1 percent to 2,559.36. The Dow picked up 0.2 percent to 22,997.44 and the Nasdaq composite was almost unchanged at 6,623.66. Gains were led by health care companies after strong earnings from UnitedHealth Group and Johnson & Johnson. Traders also drew encouragement Tuesday from economic data that showed U.S. industrial production rose a solid 0.3 percent last month, as manufacturing of automobiles, home electronics and appliances increased.

CHINA PARTY CONGRESS: President Xi Jinping said China's prospects were bright but made a rare acknowledgement of severe economic challenges as he opened the ruling Communist Party's twice-a-decade national congress on Wednesday. The leadership is struggling to balance long-term reforms with a need to support growth in an era of weak global demand. Among the grave issues Xi said were insufficiently addressed are a widening income gap and problems in employment, education, medical care and other areas.

JAPAN BALLOT: The party of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, credited with bringing about "Abenomics" growth in recent years, is likely to emerge a winner in the parliamentary elections set for Sunday, although a new party is expected to make some gains. Traditional opposition parties are in disarray after the Democratic Party of Japan struggled to deal with the aftermath of the 2011 tsunami, quake and nuclear disasters in northeastern Japan.

ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. crude rose 24 cents to \$52.12 a barrel. It gained a penny to settle at \$51.88 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange overnight. Brent crude, used to price international oils, rose 34 cents to \$58.22 a barrel in London.

CURRENCIES: The dollar inched up to 112.22 yen from 112.20 yen. The euro strengthened to \$1.1770 from \$1.1766.

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Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Oct. 18, the 291st day of 2017. There are 74 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Oct. 18, 1767, the Mason-Dixon line, the boundary between colonial Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware, was set as astronomers Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon completed their survey.

On this date:

In 1685, King Louis XIV signed the Edict of Fontainebleau, revoking the Edict of Nantes that had established legal toleration of France's Protestant population, the Huguenots.

In 1867, the United States took formal possession of Alaska from Russia. The cornerstone was laid for Baltimore City Hall.

In 1892, the first long-distance telephone line between New York and Chicago was officially opened (it could only handle one call at a time).

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In 1922, the British Broadcasting Co., Ltd. (later the British Broadcasting Corp.) was founded.

In 1931, inventor Thomas Alva Edison died in West Orange, New Jersey, at age 84.

In 1944, Soviet troops invaded Czechoslovakia during World War II.

In 1954, Texas Instruments unveiled the Regency TR-1, the first commercially produced transistor radio.

In 1967, the first issue of Rolling Stone magazine (which carried a cover date of Nov. 9) was published.

In 1969, the federal government banned artificial sweeteners known as cyclamates (SY'-kluh-maytz) because of evidence they caused cancer in laboratory rats.

In 1977, West German commandos stormed a hijacked Lufthansa jetliner on the ground in Mogadishu, Somalia, freeing all 86 hostages and killing three of the four hijackers.

In 1982, former first lady Bess Truman died at her home in Independence, Missouri, at age 97.

In 1997, a monument honoring American servicewomen, past and present, was dedicated at Arlington National Cemetery.

Ten years ago: Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto returned to Pakistan, ending eight years of self-imposed exile; a suicide bombing in a crowd welcoming her killed more than 140 people, but Bhutto escaped unhurt. (However, she was slain in Dec. 2007.) Former Joint Chiefs chairman William Crowe (krow) died in Bethesda, Maryland, at age 82.

Five years ago: In a case that would reach the U.S. Supreme Court, the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New York ruled that a federal law defining marriage as a union between a man and a woman was unconstitutional and said the gay population had "suffered a history of discrimination." The Detroit Tigers completed a four-game sweep of the New York Yankees, winning the finale of the American League Championship Series 8-1. The St. Louis Cardinals beat the San Francisco Giants 8-3 to take a 3-1 lead in the National League Championship Series.

One year ago: President Barack Obama hosted his final state dinner as he welcomed Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi and his wife, Agnese Landini, to the White House. The Toronto Blue Jays staved off elimination in the American League Championship Series, beating the Cleveland Indians 5-1 in Game 4. In the National League contest, the Los Angeles Dodgers took a 2-1 series lead by defeating the Chicago Cubs 6-0.

Today's Birthdays: Sportscaster Keith Jackson is 89. Actress Dawn Wells is 79. College and Pro Football Hall of Famer Mike Ditka is 78. Singer-musician Russ Giguere is 74. Actor Joe Morton is 70. Actress Pam Dawber is 67. Author Terry McMillan is 66. Writer-producer Chuck Lorre is 65. Gospel singer Vickie Winans is 64. Director-screenwriter David Twohy (TOO'-ee) is 62. International Tennis Hall of Famer Martina Navratilova is 61. International Hall of Fame boxer Thomas Hearns is 59. Actor Jean-Claude Van Damme is 57. Jazz musician Wynton Marsalis is 56. Actor Vincent Spano is 55. Rock musician Tim Cross is 51. Tennis player Michael Stich (sh-teek) is 49. Singer Nonchalant is 44. Actress Joy Bryant is 43. Rock musician Peter Svenson (The Cardigans) is 43. Actor Wesley Jonathan is 39. Rhythm-and-blues singer-actor Ne-Yo is 38. Country singer Josh Gracin is 37. Country musician Jesse Littleton (Marshall Dyllon) is 36. Olympic gold medal skier Lindsey Vonn is 33. Jazz singer-musician Esperanza Spalding is 33. Actress-model Freida Pinto is 33. Actor Zac Efron is 30. Actress Joy Lauren is 28. TV personality Bristol Palin is 27. Actor Tyler Posey is 26. Actor Toby Regbo is 26.

Thought for Today: "I do not prize the word cheap. It is not a badge of honor ... it is a symbol of despair. Cheap prices make for cheap goods; cheap goods make for cheap men; and cheap men make for a cheap country!" — President William McKinley (1843-1901).