

Groton Daily Independent

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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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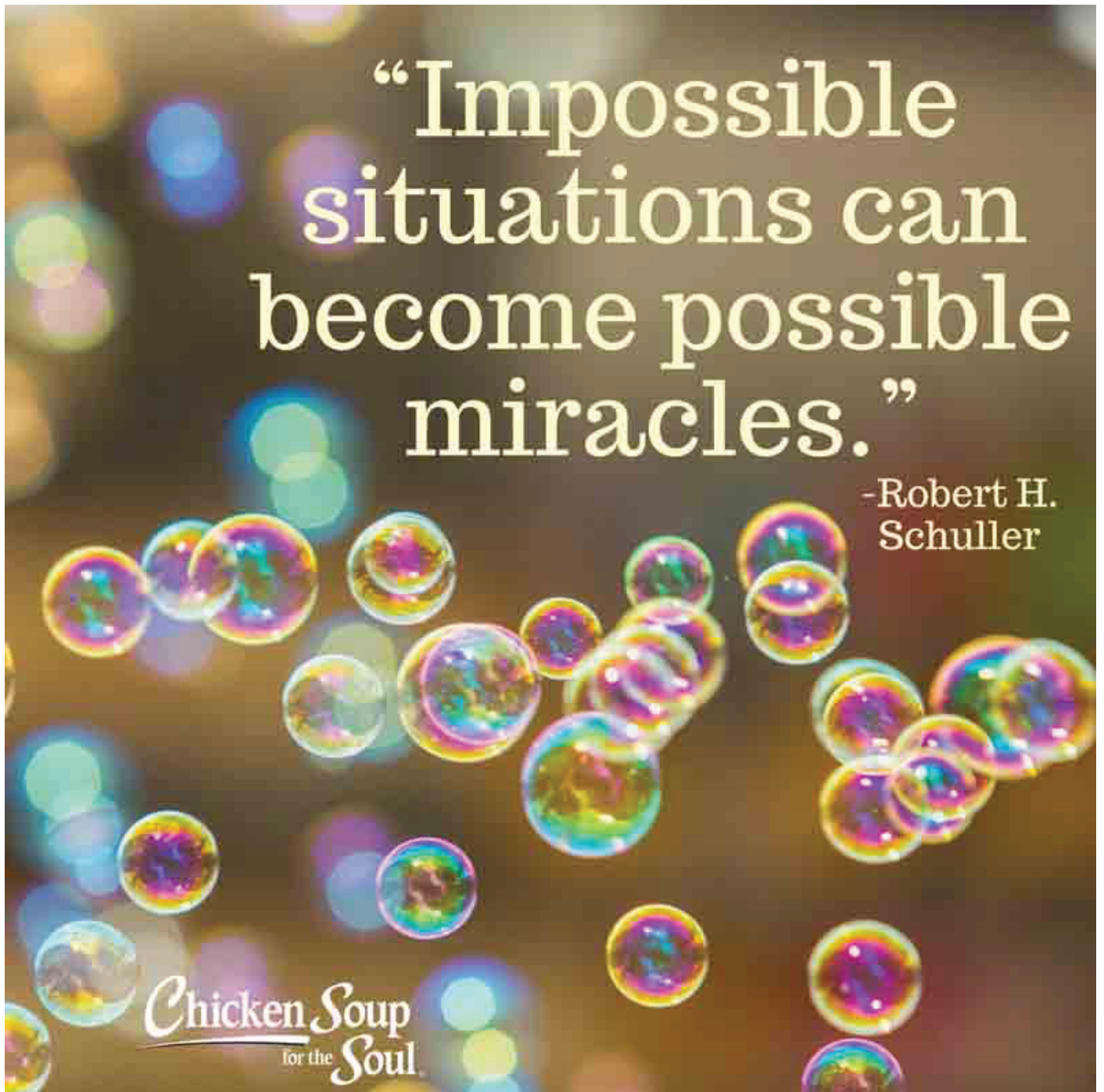
www.harrmotors.com

605-225-3078 ~ 1-800-658-3463

“Impossible situations can become possible miracles.”

-Robert H. Schuller

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
Housekeeping.

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

0913.1006

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Quarterfinal Football Games set for Oct. 26th

11AAA											
Seed	School	Record	Points	@	Seed	School	Record	Points	Time	Location	Official
#8	RC Central	2-7	38.111	@	#1	SF Washington	9-0	46.667			
#7	Watertown	3-6	38.333	@	#2	SF Roosevelt	8-1	44.444			
#6	RC Stevens	5-4	40.778	@	#3	Brandon Valley	7-2	43.222			
#5	Aberdeen Central	5-4	41.444	@	#4	SF O'Gorman	6-3	42.667			
11AA											
Seed	School	Record	Points	@	Seed	School	Record	Points	Time	Location	Official
#8	Brookings	2-7	36.444	@	#1	Pierre TF Riggs	6-3	42.000			
#7	Sturgis Brown	3-6	37.667	@	#2	Mitchell	6-3	41.333			
#6	Huron	3-6	38.000	@	#3	Harrisburg	5-4	40.444			
#5	Yankton	3-6	38.333	@	#4	Douglas	5-4	40.111			
11A											
Seed	School	Record	Points	@	Seed	School	Record	Points	Time	Location	Official
#8	Tea Area	5-4	42.111	@	#1	Madison	9-0	46.667			
#7	Pine Ridge	7-2	42.222	@	#2	Dakota Valley	9-0	46.667			
#6	St. Thomas More	7-2	42.222	@	#3	Dell Rapids	7-2	43.222			
#5	Milbank	6-3	42.333	@	#4	Todd Co.	7-2	42.556			
11B											
Seed	School	Record	Points	@	Seed	School	Record	Points	Time	Location	Official
#8	Aberdeen Roncalli	5-4	40.750	@	#1	Sioux Valley	9-0	46.125			
#7	Groton Area	6-3	41.000	@	#2	Sioux Falls Christian	8-1	45.250			
#6	Red Cloud	7-2	42.750	@	#3	WWSSC	8-1	44.500			
#5	Bridgewater-Emery/Ethan	7-2	43.500	@	#4	Winner	7-2	43.875			
9AA											
Seed	School	Record	Points	@	Seed	School	Record	Points	Time	Location	Official
#8	Wolsey-Wessington	5-4	40.750	@	#1	Gregory	9-0	47.250			
#7	Kimball/White Lake	5-4	41.125	@	#2	Bon Homme	7-2	44.625			
#6	Garretson	7-2	42.375	@	#3	Irene-Wakonda	8-1	43.750			
#5	Arlington/Lake Preston	7-2	42.750	@	#4	Miller/Highmore-Harold	7-2	43.125			
9A											
Seed	School	Record	Points	@	Seed	School	Record	Points	Time	Location	Official
#8	Timber Lake	6-3	41.375	@	#1	Corsica-Stickney	9-0	46.875			
#7	Lyman	6-3	41.750	@	#2	Warner	7-2	44.250			
#6	Canistota/Freeman	6-3	42.125	@	#3	Britton-Hecla	8-1	43.750			
#5	Avon	7-2	43.125	@	#4	Howard	8-1	43.750			
9B											
Seed	School	Record	Points	@	Seed	School	Record	Points	Time	Location	Official
#8	Burke/South Central	5-4	40.750	@	#1	Sully Buttes	9-0	48.375			
#7	Faulkton Area	6-3	42.125	@	#2	Colman-Egan	9-0	46.500			
#6	Castlewood	8-1	44.125	@	#3	Wall	9-0	45.750			
#5	Colome	8-1	44.500	@	#4	Harding Co.	9-0	45.375			

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We'll have the story and photos in tomorrow's edition.

Meanwhile here are the stats from the game.

We had over 1,300 viewers watching/listening to the game on GDILIVE.COM

Groton Area "Tigers" Football Stats

Groton Area vs. Bennett County at Groton on 10-19-17
 Quarter Scores: Groton Area 24 24 8 X 1 56
 Bennett County 6 0 0 X 1 6

Groton Area

First Downs: 20
 Rushing: Carries: 30
 Yards: 308

Individual Rushing Leaders:

2TD's Marshall Lane 12 for 137 Yds.
 2TD's Lucas Hinnaw 10 for 114 Yds.
 1TD Darion Shabazz 6 for 39 Yds.
Serie Shabazz 2 for 18 Yds.
 _____ for _____ Yds.

Team Passing: 1TD
 Completed 4 of 7 for 51 Yds.

Individual Passing: Marshall Lane All
 Completed _____ of _____ for _____ Yds.

Individual Passing:
 Completed _____ of _____ for _____ Yds.

Individual Passing:
 Completed _____ of _____ for _____ Yds.

Fumbles: Had 2, Lost 0
 Penalties: 7 for 65 Yds.

Pass Receiving Leaders:

(1TD punt ret) Andy Rintala 2 for 44 Yds.
 1TD - Serie Shabazz 1 for 12 Yds.
Brandon Keith 1 for -5 Yds.

Defensive Leaders: (Tackles, sacks, fumble rec., Ints)

Brandon Keith 5
Luke Thorsen 4

Season Record: 6-3 ~~Comp~~ H or (A)

Bennett County

First Downs: 2
 Rushing: Carries: 9
 Yards: -5

Individual Rushing Leaders:

Tee Allen 5 for 0 Yds.
Weston Ireland 2 for -2 Yds.
Daniel Winsal 2 for -3 Yds.
 _____ for _____ Yds.
 _____ for _____ Yds.

Team Passing:

Completed 4 of 11 for 96 Yds. 1TD 2 Int

Individual Passing: Tee Allen 1TD 1Int
 Completed 4 of 10 for 96 Yds.

Individual Passing: Tyler Byrne 1Int
 Completed 0 of 1 for _____ Yds.

Individual Passing:
 Completed _____ of _____ for _____ Yds.

Fumbles: Had 0, Lost 0
 Penalties: 4 for 21 Yds.

Pass Receiving Leaders:

Isajah Johnson 1 for 79 Yds. 1TD
Daniel Winsal 2 for -8 Yds.
Seth Livermont 1 for 25 Yds.

Defensive Leaders: (Tackles, sacks, fumble rec., Ints)

Shawn Saxton 6
Isajah Johnson 6
Tyler Byrne 6

Season Record: 4-5 ~~Comp~~
 Next Game: Season Over H or A

ROSLYN, SOUTH DAKOTA

4-PLEX FOR SALE

The following real estate is for sale:

Lots Seven (7), Eight (8) and Nine (9), Block Twenty-two (22), Original Plat, Roslyn, Day County, South Dakota;

A/k/a 716 1st Street, Roslyn, South Dakota; st Consisting of lots and 4-plex apartment house, currently unoccupied and has been for five (5) years. Property is to be sold "AS IS". Apartment units have electric baseboard heat and electric hot water heaters. Apartment units also include electric ranges, refrigerators, and washers/dryers.

No warranties are being offered on the appliances ("AS IS").

Interested parties should submit sealed bids to Law Office of Danny R. Smeins, P.C., 506 Main Street, Webster, SD 57274, or hand delivered to the same address prior to 5:00 p.m. on the 14th day of November, 2017. Bids will be opened after the bid deadline, and Seller will identify the bidders that will be invited to raise their bid on the 17 day of November, 2017 at 3:00 p.m. at the Law Office of Danny R. Smeins, P.C. in Webster, South Dakota. Not all bidders will be invited to raise their bid.

Successful bidder will be required to execute a standard Purchase Agreement and make an earnest money deposit.

SELLER RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL BIDS.

Direct all inquiries, questions or requests for real estate information to Danny R. Smeins, Attorney at Law, at (605) 345-4875 or (605) 448-5964 or Ray Lardy, Roslyn Homes, Inc., at (605) 228-1597 or Richard Galbraith at (605) 229-0180

2 day Day Dog Obedience Training



Seminar

**Friday October 27th 6-pm -9p.m.
Saturday October 28th 9am -11 am**

Held at (A & S Hardware Hank and Rental)

Junction Hwy 12-25 in Webster, SD

K-9 Classics Dog Obedience hosting

Friday: Basic: Sit, Stay, Come & Down.

Saturday: Behavioral Issues

Why does my dog do that?

Q&A

Great information, Great fun

\$100 per dog

Pre register-A&S Hardware Hank and Rental

345-3821 K-9 Classics 880-1779

The Life of Lyle Walter Fritz

Funeral services for Lyle Walter Fritz, 90, Bath, SD, will be 10:00am, Saturday, October 21, 2017 at Spitzer-Miller Funeral Home, 1111 South Main Street, with Loren Siefken officiating. Burial at Bath Memorial Cemetery. Lyle died Wednesday, October 18, at Groton Care and Rehabilitation Center.

Visitation: 1:00-7:00pm, Friday, with family present 5:00-7:00pm at the fellowship hall directly east of Spitzer-Miller Funeral Home.

Lyle was born on October 7, 1927 in Bath SD on the family farm, to William and Mae (Plummer) Fritz. He was the third of four children. Lyle attended Bath Public Grade School and graduated from Bath High School in 1945. He met the love of his life Mildred Stahl in high school. They were married on July 20, 1949 at Bath Methodist Church. They were blessed with 5 children, 13 grandchildren and many great-grandchildren.

Lyle then began farming with his dad and continued farming until 1987. Lyle then began working for the US Post Office as the Bath rural route mail carrier. He delivered mail to his friends and neighbors until he retired in 1995.

Lyle's favorite part of farming was raising livestock. He began with Chester White pigs, which he showed and won many competitions at county, state and regional fairs. He also competed in the Chicago National Livestock Fair. In his later years of farming he moved to raising purebred Black Angus Cattle. He sold many bulls and heifers to cow-calf producers around the state of South Dakota.

Lyle loved his family dearly and enjoyed spending time with them. During the 1960's he spent many great summer weekends at the family cabin on Roy Lake. As the family grew with grandchildren he loved the holidays when all of them would come home to the farm to celebrate, filling the house with love and noise.

Lyle had a very generous heart and was willing to help anyone in need. He loved to visit and could strike up a conversation with anyone he met. Lyle had a very gentle soul and would not hurt anyone or anything. He was a great husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather.

Lyle will be missed by all. May God Bless.

Grateful for having shared Lyle's life are his wife, Mildred Fritz, Bath, children, Terry (Carol) Fritz, Connie Larson (Carl Abbott), Susan (Dale) Locken, Doug (Cindi) Fritz and Linda (Bill) Schlosser, grandchildren, Scott (Jami), Laura (Nathan), Jonathan, Jennifer (Mike), Sarah (Jon Paul), Becky (Dan), Nathan (Beth), Michael (Nicole), Bradley (Bailey), Shannon (Marty), Jason (Nicole), Jessica (Curt) and Bryce (Colleen), two step grandchildren, Dar (Pat) and Penny (Tim) twenty-eight great grandchildren, seven step great-grandchildren.

Preceding Lyle in death are his parents, William and Mae Fritz, siblings, Marge McKiver, Marland Fritz and Georgia Ann Fritz.



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.

La Nina Watch Hints at Winter Season Climate Outlook

BROOKINGS, S.D. - A La Nina climate pattern is more likely than not, according to a recent forecast from the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Climate Prediction Center.

"Currently, La Nina is 55 to 65 percent likely to affect our climate in the 2017-18 winter season," said Laura Edwards, SDSU Extension State Climatologist.

Historically, La Nina climate patterns have often meant colder than average winter temperatures in the Dakotas. However, Edwards explained, this is not consistent, as La Nina events, since 1985, have not been as cold as those between 1950 and 1985.

"For the Northern Plains region there is no correlation between La Nina and winter season precipitation, and as a result it is challenging to forecast winter snowfall," she said.

Both of these historical patterns are reflected in the NOAA climate outlook released October 19, 2017.

For the months of December through February, much of the northern tier states are more likely to be colder than average, including northern South Dakota.

As far as precipitation, Edwards said there is a slightly increased chance of wetter than average conditions in western South Dakota.

"The fall season is often a season of transition," Edwards said. "This year is no exception as there have been both warm and cool periods with the western region remaining largely drier than average this season and the eastern region has had above average rainfall."

Drier weather has combines rolling

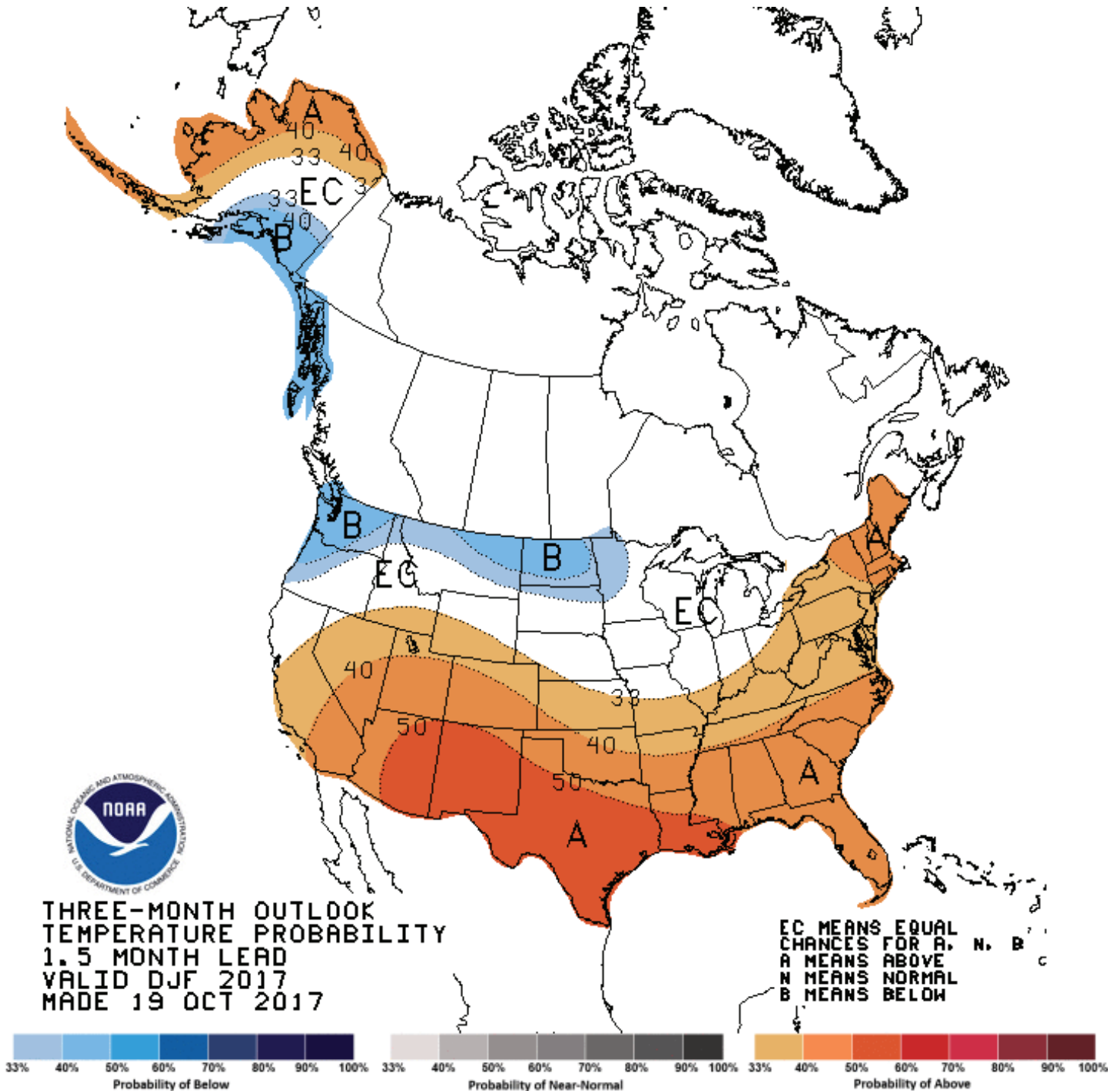
Soybean harvest is nearing completion in South Dakota's northern tier counties, which have been drier overall in recent weeks. Harvest is now underway in southern counties as drier weather has arrived and soil moisture has reduced.

Drought conditions continue to hold steady in the west. Some vegetation in drought-stricken areas did begin to green up after receiving rainfall in September.

"This does not help grazing this year but indicates that there is some hope for pasture recovery next spring if climate conditions are favorable after this year's drought," Edwards said.

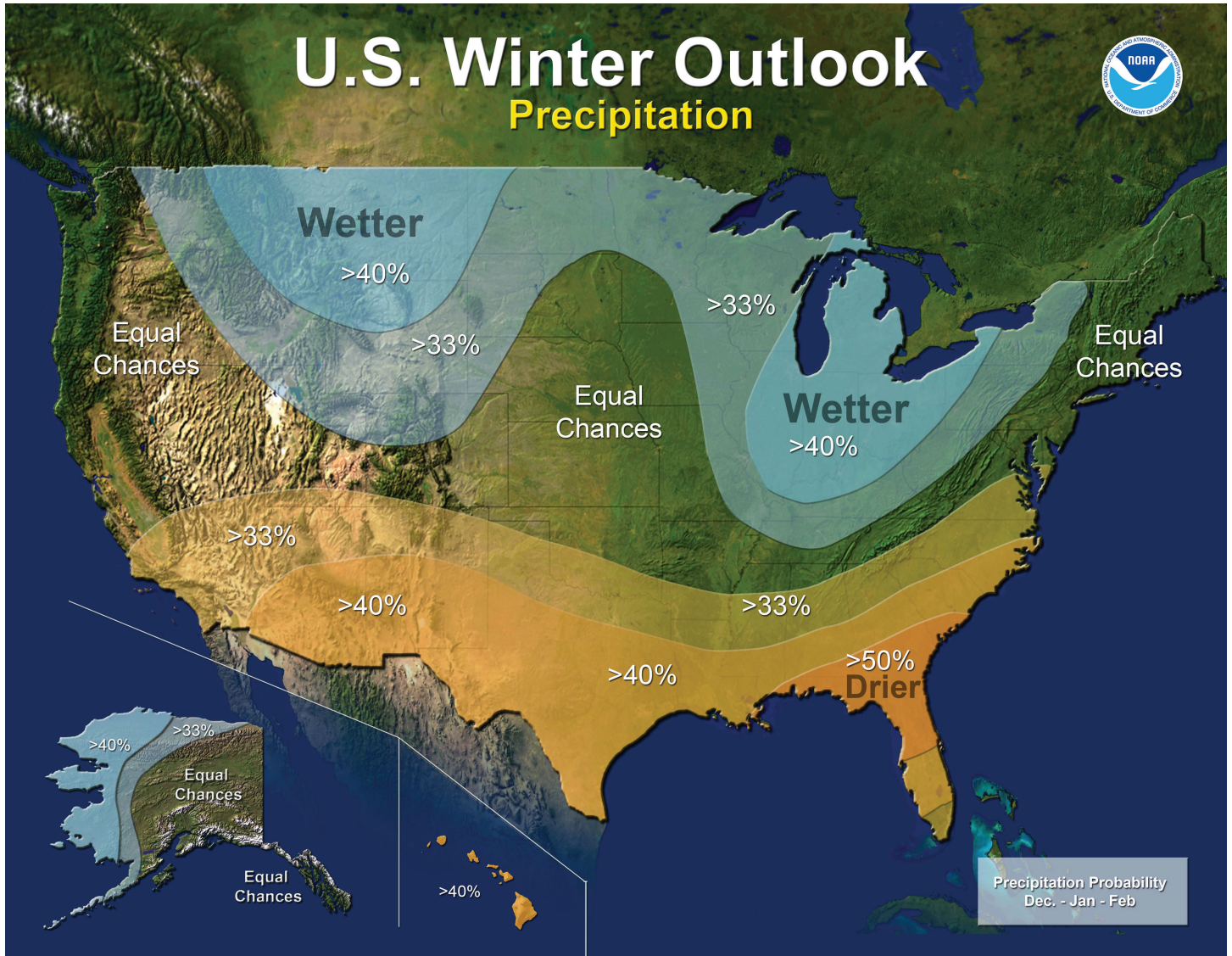
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SCHOOL SURPLUS AUCTION

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 ft. 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.



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Today in Weather History

October 20, 1936: Heavy snow across the region brought snowfall totals upwards of 5 inches in Newcastle and Sundance with 5.5 inches reported in Dupree and 10 inches in Faith. Aberdeen saw 2 inches, while Mobridge had three inches from this event.

1770: An exceedingly great storm struck eastern New England causing extensive coastal damage from Massachusetts to Maine, and the highest tide in 47 years.

1956: While not a record, Esperanza Base in Antarctic warmed to 57.2 degrees on this date. The all-time warmest day at this base occurred on March 24, 2015, when the temperature reached 63.5 degrees. As of now, the 63.5 degrees has not been verified to be the warmest temperature recorded on the continent of Antarctica.

1983: Remnants of Pacific Hurricane Tico caused extensive flooding in central and south central Oklahoma. Oklahoma City set daily rainfall records with 1.45 inch on the 19th, and 6.28 inches on the 20th.

1987 - Cold arctic air invaded the Upper Midwest, and squalls in the Lake Superior snowbelt produced heavy snow in eastern Ashland County and northern Iron County of Wisconsin. Totals ranged up to 18 inches at Mellen. In the western U.S., the record high of 69 degrees at Seattle WA was their twenty-fifth of the year, their highest number of record highs for any given year. Bakersfield CA reported a record 146 days in a row with daily highs 80 degrees or above. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)








1988 - Unseasonably warm weather continued in the western U.S. In California, afternoon highs of 96 degrees at Redding and Red Bluff were records for the date. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Forty-nine cities reported record low temperatures for the date as readings dipped into the 20s and 30s across much of the south central and southeastern U.S. Lows of 32 degrees at Lake Charles LA and 42 degrees at Lakeland FL were records for October, and Little Rock AR reported their earliest freeze of record. Snow blanketed the higher elevations of Georgia and the Carolinas. Melbourne FL dipped to 47 degrees shortly before midnight to surpass the record low established that morning. Showers and thunderstorms brought heavy rain to parts of the northeastern U.S. Autumn leaves on the ground clogged drains and ditches causing flooding. Up to 4.10 inches of rain soaked southern Vermont in three days. Flood waters washed 600 feet of railroad track, resulting in a train derailment. (The National Weather Summary)(Storm Data)

2004: Typhoon Tokage blasting across Japan triggers flash floods that wash away entire hillsides, killing 55 people and leaving at least 24 people missing.

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Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
						
Sunny and Breezy	Partly Cloudy and Breezy	Chance Showers	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny then Slight Chance Rain and Breezy
High: 77 °F	Low: 53 °F	High: 61 °F	Low: 35 °F	High: 66 °F	Low: 46 °F	High: 63 °F

Very Warm Today!

Breezy through Saturday, then each afternoon Sunday through Tuesday



Today

75 to 84°

Breezy!

South winds gusting 30 to near 40 mph



Saturday

near 60°

light rain diminishing west to east during the day



Graphic Created 10/20/2017 5:48 AM



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

Published on: 10/20/2017 at 5:50AM

Very Warm & Breezy Today! Temperatures will top out in the upper 70s to mid 80s. The warmest temperatures, and driest weather will be west of the Missouri River, while the strongest winds will be mainly east. Winds will gust out of the south around 30 to near 40 mph this afternoon. A cold front will cross the Dakotas overnight tonight into Saturday morning. This will bring a chance of light showers, and another round of breezy winds out of the west to northwest. Temperatures will top out around 60 Saturday.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 74.8

Low Outside Temp: 36.7

High Gust: 31

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 87° in 1947

Record Low: 12° in 1930

Average High: 56°F

Average Low: 31°F

Average Precip in Oct: 1.43

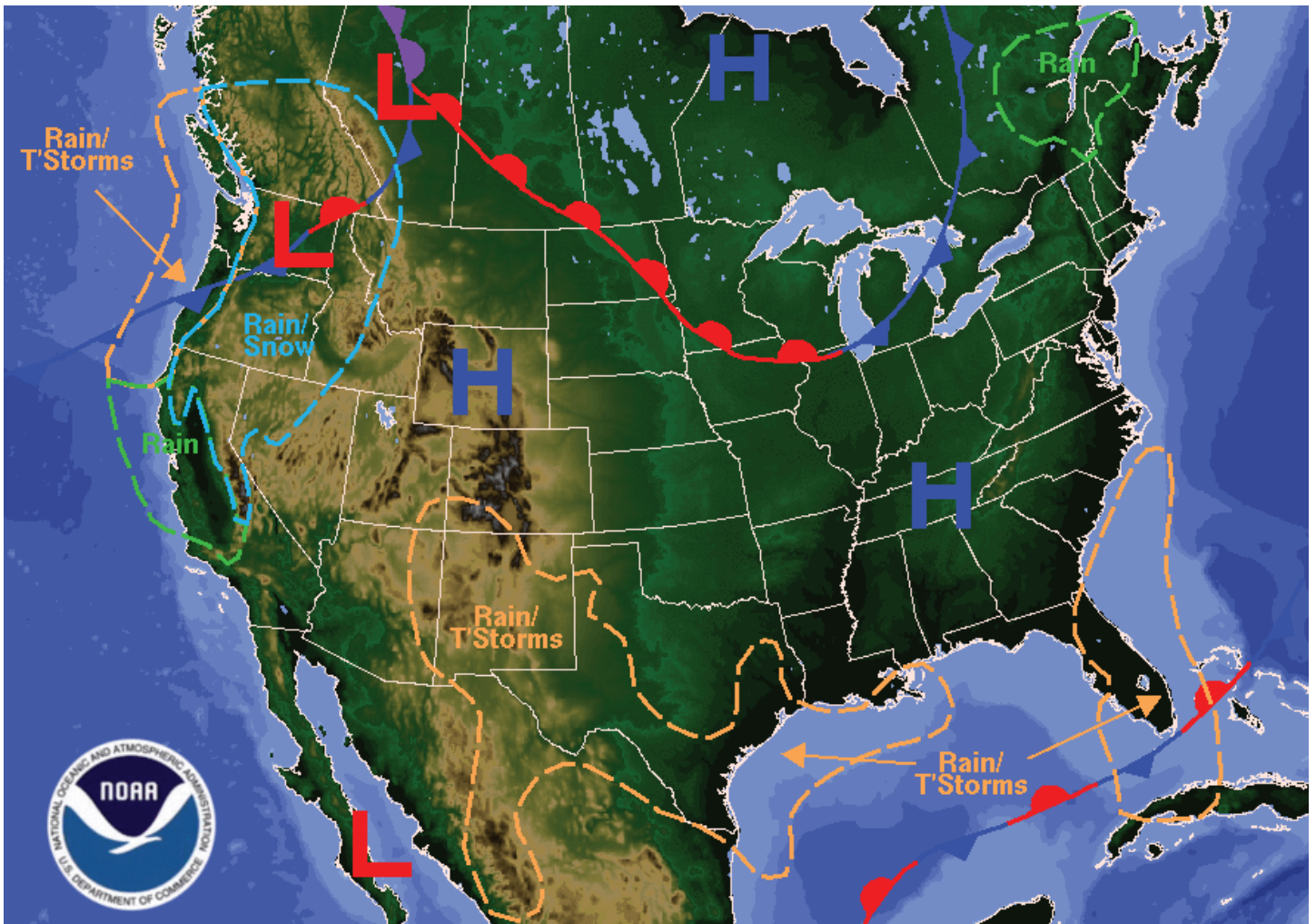
Precip to date in Oct: 0.67

Average Precip to date: 19.91

Precip Year to Date: 13.47

Sunset Tonight: 6:39 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:58 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Thu, Oct 19, 2017, issued 5:05 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain

Rain and T'Storms

Rain and Snow

Snow

Flash Flooding Possible (hatched)

Severe T'Storms Possible (hatched)

Freezing Rain Possible (hatched)

Heavy Snow Possible (hatched)

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BASIC LEADERSHIP

"There's no shortage of writings on the subject of leadership," said the author of an article in a business magazine. Perhaps it is because we are facing so much political, economic and financial insecurity. Everyone is looking for a way to reorganize their thinking about how we can recover what we have lost.

Another wrote, "The increasing rate of change is causing people a lot of fear. Facing the rapid rate of change in world markets is causing uncertainty and fear and people don't know what to believe."

"People need something that will give them safety and answer their questions about what is going to happen next," said a professor of economics.

"Leaders and managers are looking for the 'silver bullet' to solve their problems, but there is none available," said a consultant.

One leader sounded foolish, even silly. He wrote, "Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I." But he, of all of the leaders who have taken their places in history, knew exactly what he was talking about.

From his experience as a shepherd and a king, a warrior and a parent, he had discovered that the Lord alone was able to lead him, to give him answers, provide solutions to his problems and enable him to make good decisions. He looked to his Leader, the Lord God of Israel who had led His people into paths of prosperity and peace. He looked to the ultimate Leader who had proven Himself "right" since the beginning of time. Who are you following?

Prayer: Lord, we look to You as our leader because You have never failed us, forsaken us or led us astray. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 61:2c From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

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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

Thursday's Scores By The Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL

Aberdeen Central 13, Pierre 10
Brandon Valley 42, Sioux Falls O'Gorman 30
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 58, Standing Rock, N.D. 0
Dakota Valley 35, Tea Area 6
Douglas 46, Belle Fourche 14
Huron 12, Brookings 0
Madison 38, Dell Rapids 21
Milbank 13, Tri-Valley 0
Mitchell 41, Spearfish 0
Pine Ridge 44, Little Wound 8
Rapid City Stevens 41, Rapid City Central 7
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 58, Watertown 16
Sioux Falls Washington 64, Sioux Falls Lincoln 7
St. Thomas More 70, Todd County 32
Sturgis Brown 33, Hot Springs 7
Vermillion 62, St. Francis Indian 0
West Central 45, Lennox 21
Yankton 34, Harrisburg 7

Class 9AA

First Round
Region 1
Miller/Highmore-Harrold 50, Webster 26
Wolsey-Wessington 52, Eureka/Bowdle 14

Region 2

Arlington/Lake Preston 18, Baltic 0
Garretson 34, Hamlin 6

Region 3

Bon Homme 50, Deuel 0
Irene-Wakonda 35, Parkston 12

Region 4

Gregory 60, Elkton-Lake Benton 22
Kimball/White Lake 54, Rapid City Christian 0

Class 9A

First Round
Region 1
Britton-Hecla 34, Clark/Willow Lake 12
Warner 55, Potter County 0

Region 2

Canistota 36, DeSmet 22
Howard 42, Chester 15

Region 3

Avon 56, Alcester-Hudson 6
Corsica/Stickney 56, Herreid/Selby Area 6

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Region 4

Lyman 30, Philip 14

Timber Lake 27, New Underwood 8

Class 9B

First Round

Region 1

Faulkton 28, Langford 0

Sully Buttes 50, Hitchcock-Tulare 0

Region 2

Castlewood 48, Waverly-South Shore 3

Colman-Egan 52, Northwestern 6

Region 3

Burke/South Central 40, Scotland 18

Colome 60, Sunshine Bible Academy 8

Region 4

Harding County 40, Kadoka Area 6

Wall 59, Bison 6

Class 11B

First Round

Region 1

Aberdeen Roncalli 27, Mobridge-Pollock 9

Groton Area 56, Bennett County 6

Region 2

Sioux Falls Christian 28, Canton 22, OT

Sioux Valley 51, Elk Point-Jefferson 0

Region 3

Bridgewater-Emery/Ethan 42, McCook Central/Montrose 0

Woonsocket/Wessington Springs/Sanborn Central 13, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 10

Region 4

Red Cloud 40, Lead-Deadwood 7

Winner 54, Stanley County 0

Blue Ridge Parkway expects this weekend to be busiest

ASHEVILLE, N.C. (AP) — Drivers seeking fall-colored leaves should expect this weekend to be the busiest on a scenic road that runs through the Appalachian Mountains from North Carolina to Virginia.

The Asheville Citizen-Times quotes Blue Ridge Parkway spokeswoman Caitlin Worth in a Thursday report as saying "traditionally the third week in October is the busiest." Staff members also remind drivers to keep watching the road.

Worth says distracted driving is the main cause of crashes, especially during fall's pretty views and weather.

There have been 24 accidents on the parkway this month while October 2016 had 51. The parkway's highest posted speed limit is 45 mph (70 kph).

The parkway is the most visited unit of the National Park Service, with more than 15 million visitors last year and 2 million that October.

Information from: The Asheville Citizen-Times, <http://www.citizen-times.com>

Orange is the new white? Unique amber wine creates buzz

By MICHAEL HILL, Associated Press

BURDETT, N.Y. (AP) — The sloping vineyards of New York's Finger Lakes region known for producing golden-hued rieslings and chardonnays also are offering a splash of orange wine.

The color comes not from citrus fruit, but by fermenting white wine grapes with their skins on before pressing — a practice that mirrors the way red wines are made. Lighter than reds and earthier than whites, orange wines have created a buzz in trendier quarters. And winemakers reviving the ancient practice like how the "skin-fermented" wines introduce more complex flavors to the bottle.

"Pretty outgoing characteristics. Very spicy, peppery. A lot of tea flavors, too, come through," winemaker Vinny Aliperti said, taking a break from harvest duties at Atwater Estate Vineyards on Seneca Lake. "They're more thoughtful wines. They're more meditative."

Atwater is among a few wineries encircling these glacier-carved lakes that have added orange to their mix of whites and reds. The practice dates back thousands of years, when winemakers in the Caucasus, a region located at the border of Europe and Asia, would ferment wine in buried clay jars. It has been revitalized in recent decades by vintners in Italy, California and elsewhere looking to connect wine to its roots or to conjure new tastes from the grapes. Or both. Clay jars are optional.

Aliperti has been experimenting with skin fermenting for years, first by blending a bit into traditional chardonnays to change up the flavor and more recently with full-on orange wines. This fall, he fermented Vignoles grapes with their skins in a stainless steel vat for a couple of weeks before pressing and then aging them in oak barrels.

Orange wines account for "far less than 1 percent" of what is handled by Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits, the nation's largest distributor with about a quarter of the market, according to Eric Hemer, senior vice president and corporate director of wine education.

Hemer expects orange wines to remain a niche variety due to small-scale production, higher retail prices — up to \$200 for a premium bottle — and the nature of the wine.

"It's not a wine that's going to appeal to the novice consumer or the mainstream wine drinker," Hemer said. "It really takes a little bit more of, I think, a sophisticated palate."

The wines have caught on in recent years among connoisseurs who like the depth of flavors, sommeliers who can regale customers with tales of ancient techniques and drinkers looking for something different. Christopher Nicolson, managing winemaker at Red Hook Winery in Brooklyn, said the wines hit their "crest of hipness" a couple of years ago, though they remain popular.

"I think they're viewed by these younger drinkers as, 'Oh, this is something new and fresh. And they're breaking the rules of these Van Dyke-wearing, monocled ... fusty old wine appreciators,'" Nicolson said.

It's not for everyone. The rich flavors can come at the expense of the light, fruity feel that some white wine drinkers crave. And first-time drinkers can be thrown by seeing an orange chardonnay in their glasses.

"Actually I wasn't sure because of the color, but it has a really nice flavor," said Debbie Morris, of Chandler, Arizona, who tried a sip recently at Atwater's tasting room. "I'm not a chardonnay person normally, but I would drink this."

Backers of oil terminal pour money into Washington port race

By PHUONG LE, Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Developers of a proposed oil-by-rail terminal that would be the largest in the nation have poured big money into a port commissioner race in Washington state that may shape the project's future.

Backers of the Vancouver Energy project have given \$370,000 in cash to support Kris Greene, who has expressed support for the terminal proposed at the Port of Vancouver, according to filings with the Washington Public Disclosure Commission.

That represents the bulk of the cash he has raised in the Vancouver port commissioner's race.

His opponent Don Orange is against the proposed \$210 million terminal that would handle about 360,000 barrels of crude oil a day. Orange said he would work to end the project's lease at the port.

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The terminal has been the subject of heated debate in the Northwest. Project developers see it as an opportunity to link domestic crude oil from the Midwest to a West Coast port and bring jobs and money to the region.

Critics say it poses too great a risk to people and the environment, and the dangers extend well beyond the facility to include communities along rail lines.

Tesoro Corp. and Savage Cos., operating as Vancouver Energy, have a 10-year lease at the deep-water port about 100 river miles (160.93 river kilometers) from the Pacific Ocean. The proposed terminal would receive an average of four 1½-mile long crude oil trains a day. Oil would be stored on site then loaded onto tankers and ships bound for West Coast refineries.

Vancouver Energy said it supports Greene as the candidate with the right experience to lead the port.

Company spokesman Jeff Hymas wrote in an email that Greene understands the importance of creating jobs and economic growth in the region.

A state energy panel is currently reviewing the project. It will make a recommendation to Gov. Jay Inslee, who will have the final say.

The lease between Vancouver Energy and the port allows for changes by either party every 90 days, port spokeswoman Abbi Russell said.

People on both sides of the issue see the port commissioner's race as a way to cement support or opposition involving the project.

"This race is fundamentally about the terminal," said Mark Stephan, a political science professor at Washington State University Vancouver. "There are a lot of people watching."

He called the amount of money in the campaign unusual.

"This is a small race among local races. It's not one that gets a lot of attention. This is a significant amount of money," he added.

Orange has raised \$98,000 in cash, but has also benefited from \$297,000 in in-kind contributions, the bulk of which has come from the Washington Conservation Voters Action Fund for voter outreach and staff time.

Greene has received \$408,000 in cash and benefited from about \$181,000 in in-kind contributions, some from Enterprise Washington Jobs, a political action committee whose top donors include Tesoro and BNSF Railway.

"Big oil is trying to buy the race. We're trying to protect the river and we're trying to protect clean 21st century jobs," Orange said. "My intent is to do everything legally possible to stop Vancouver from becoming an oil town."

Greene sent an email late Thursday saying that "the optics of large contributions is not good — and a challenge for my campaign."

He wrote that his opponent was running solely to oppose the terminal before the state energy panel, called the Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council, completes its review and he disagreed with that.

He also noted that if the panel determines the project "is environmentally safe — then I am FOR the project and the economic benefits it will produce for us. If (the panel) determines that the project is environmentally unsafe — then I am against the project."

Hundreds turn out for Presho fire chief's funeral

PRESHO, S.D. (AP) — Hundreds of community members and firefighters have said goodbye to Presho's fire chief.

Mourners crowded the Lyman School District's gym in Presho on Thursday for the funeral of 54-year-old Donny Manger. Manger suffered a medical condition at the scene of a fire over the weekend, collapsed and died.

The Rev. Travis Krogman told the crowd that Manger "saved people's lives, that he changed people's lives and his life touched many people."

Manger was Presho's fire chief for 23 years. The Daily Republic reports representatives from the South

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Dakota Firefighters Association and more than 50 state fire departments were among those attending his funeral. After the service, dozens of fire departments lined the streets with more than 100 firetrucks and equipment, and people bordered the roads leading to the cemetery.

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

Federal officials target harassment in Arizona Tribes

By CLARICE SILBER, Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — A scathing new report released this week by the U.S. Department of Interior casts a critical light on the Bureau of Indian Affairs response to sexual harassment complaints by Colorado River Indian Tribes workers and members involving a bureau employee.

The department's Office of Inspector General report states BIA officials took insufficient action after an employee sent Tribes workers and members sexually explicit text and Facebook messages.

Officials released the summary of the report, which highlights the BIA officials' lack of response among supervisors, managers and human resources regarding the employee's actions. They have not released the name of the employee or the full report to the public.

Several women reported being sexually harassed by the BIA employee over a period of two years.

But the federal report states under human resource officials' guidance, BIA supervisors didn't discipline the employee even though they knew about his actions.

The Colorado River Indian Tribes confirmed in a statement Thursday that the issues were reported to the BIA over a number of years.

"They failed to address those issues until raised by the Tribal Council with higher level officials within the Bureau of Indian Affairs. We appreciate the efforts of the OIG and hope the results of their report will effectuate real change within the BIA," the Colorado River Indian Tribes said.

A human resources official "advised that the employee could not be disciplined because the complainants were not government employees and the harassment did not appear to be connected to the workplace," according to the report.

That employee admitted to sending both online and handwritten sexually explicit notes and resigned in May. The person sent some of the messages while on duty, according to the department's Office of Inspector General.

"We found that little to no effort was made by BIA supervisors, management, or HR officials to investigate the veracity of the allegations or determine the extent of the problem," the report said.

BIA spokeswoman Nedra Darling said the appropriate actions are being taken by the bureau.

The report comes after a survey of National Park Service employees found widespread complaints of harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke told employees during a visit to the Grand Canyon last Friday that he would hold people accountable for behavior that has killed morale within the Park Service.

Zinke urged employees to report misconduct and keep going up the chain of command if their complaints go unanswered.

Husband charged with killing wife by stuffing sock in mouth

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota man has been charged with manslaughter in the suffocation of his wife who prosecutors say died after her husband stuffed a sock in her mouth, fastened a belt around her head and went to sleep.

Thirty-nine-year-old James Brinker was charged Thursday in the death of 36-year-old Marie Brinker.

Court documents say Brinker awoke Tuesday to find his wife cold. Prosecutors say he left to pick up their three children, returned and had two sons go inside to call 911. He then left.

Prosecutors say Brinker wrapped his wife in a blanket, but it wasn't clear how she was otherwise restrained.

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The Daily Republic reported Brinker's past included five arrests for domestic assault. Brinker's attorney, Chris Nipe, said he had not seen reports and could not immediately comment.

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

Funding to trap wolves preying on livestock extended

By STEVE KARNOWSKI, Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The U.S. Department of Agriculture said Thursday that it has come up with money to trap wolves that prey on livestock through the end of the year, a week after federal money ran out for helping Minnesota farmers and ranchers control wolves.

Members of Minnesota's congressional delegation wrote to U.S. Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue this week, asking him to make emergency funding available. Signing the letter were Sens. Al Franken and Amy Klobuchar, and Reps. Collin Peterson, Rick Nolan, Tom Emmer and Tim Walz. They heard back late Wednesday that the agency has found the money.

"I wanted to let you all know that we have agreed to fund control activities for the remainder of the year," Chris Needham, a USDA congressional relations specialist, wrote to them. "We are also providing the yearly funding for control efforts for the next year."

In their letter, the lawmakers cited Minnesota's growing wolf population, which rose to an estimated 2,900 last winter, an increase of 25 percent in one year.

The federal government provides trapping services for farmers and ranchers facing problem wolves, which remain classified as a threatened species in the western Great Lakes region even though their populations have rebounded. Courts have repeatedly blocked efforts by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to take wolves in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan off the endangered list, so it remains illegal for farmers and hunters to shoot them except to protect human life.

While Minnesota's wolf population is up, there hasn't been a surge in complaints about attacks, said Gary Nohrenberg, state director for USDA Wildlife Services. The 10-year average is about 175 complaints a year, he said. There were 157 last year, he said, and this year's total will be a little below the average.

Federal trappers in Minnesota kill an average of 179 wolves annually. Last year they removed 183. This year they've killed 197 as of last week, he said. But he said the higher figure this year isn't necessarily why the money ran out. Sometimes a wolf is relatively easy to trap, he said, but catching wolves that have learned they're being targeted can require more work.

Predation has been a particular problem lately in Roseau and Kittson counties of northwestern Minnesota and Carlton and northern Pine counties in northeastern Minnesota, said Thom Petersen, director of government relations for the Minnesota Farmers Union, who worked with the delegation to pressure the USDA. "Hopefully in the next day or two trappers will be back on the job," he said.

Wolf advocates have urged an emphasis on nonlethal means of protecting livestock, saying the species' recovery remains fragile. This week the Minnesota Department of Agriculture started taking applications for \$120,000 in grants to help producers prevent wolf attacks without killing them. The money can be used for guard animals, fencing, lights, alarms and other measures for reducing conflicts.

Attorney general says deputy-involved shooting justified

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota attorney general says a deputy-involved shooting in Sioux Falls was justified.

The Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office asked the state Division of Criminal Investigation to review the September shooting of Christopher Sanftleben.

The division's Thursday report says that Deputy Taylor Court fired six rounds, hitting Sanftleben once. He survived the injuries.

Court responded to a Sept. 23 call that a woman's husband was intoxicated and being abusive. Court

told investigators that he shot after Sanftleben pointed what appeared to be a hunting rifle at him. Authorities say Sanftleben had a blood alcohol level of .233. Attorney General Marty Jackley says Court was justified in firing his weapon and using deadly force.

Wisconsin agency settles suit over dairy industry regulation

By TODD RICHMOND, Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Wisconsin environmental officials have agreed to settle a dairy industry lawsuit alleging the agency is over-regulating large livestock farms.

The Dairy Business Association filed the lawsuit in Green Bay in July. It alleged the state Department of Natural Resources has stopped allowing concentrated animal feeding operations to pass runoff through vegetation patches to filter pollution without going through the administrative rule-making process.

The department also had assumed oversight of calf hutches — where baby calves are housed on dairy farms — without going through the rule-making steps and has been illegally requiring the operations to get pollution discharge permits regardless of whether they actually pollute Wisconsin waters. That requirement violates state statutes which declare state pollution rules can't be tougher than federal law, which requires a permit only for actual pollution, according to the lawsuit.

Under a settlement reached Wednesday, the state agency agreed that vegetation patches are valid pollution control-systems and to stop regulating calf hutches. In exchange the dairy association agreed to drop its claim that the department is illegally requiring pollution permits.

DNR spokesman James Dick said Thursday that the settlement doesn't change any current environmental protections. Pollution that makes it through the vegetation patches into navigable waters will still be regulated under state and federal law and comply with state water quality and groundwater standards, he said. The settlement also reaffirms the DNR has the authority to regulate concentrated feeding operations, he said.

"The DNR feels the settlement is an efficient and balanced resolution of (a) complicated case," he said.

The dairy association, which represents dairy farmers, milk processors, vendors and supporting businesses in the dairy industry, issued a news release Thursday declaring the organization won on its central claims that the state agency illegally changed the rules for managing pollution from rainwater.

"The DNR or other state agencies can't make up the rules as they go along," the organization's president, Mike North, said in the release. "Farmers' investments will be protected by this victory."

The lawsuit comes as conservationists are calling for tougher pollution standards for concentrated feeding operations.

State auditors last year found that the department wasn't following its own policies for policing pollution from large livestock farms and wastewater treatment plants. The audit also found a permit backlog for large farms as state employees didn't have enough time to closely monitor the farms' operations.

The settlement marks the first major action by new DNR Secretary Dan Meyer. Republican Gov. Scott Walker appointed Meyer, a former GOP legislator who served with Walker in the state Assembly, to replace Cathy Stepp last month.

Stepp left the post to join the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under President Donald Trump's administration.

Follow Todd Richmond on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/trichmond1>

Sex shop owner tries to appeal denial of Rapid City store

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A longtime sex shop owner is asking a federal judge to overturn a Rapid City Council decision barring him from opening a store within city limits.

The council voted last month to deny David Eliason a conditional use permit to open a sex shop called Dick and Jane's Naughty Spot because no locations complied with zoning requirements, the Argus Leader

reported. Eliason filed a complaint asking a judge for an injunction on the council ruling, saying it violates his First and 14th Amendment rights.

Eliason currently owns a store in Sturgis and used to own sex shops in Sioux Falls and Tea. He has faced similar restrictions before. A federal judge ruled against the city of Sturgis in 2013 when it attempted to force Eliason's store out of its location.

Eliason initially expected to win approval to open a location in Rapid City. He met with city officials in May to discuss opening a store at the Deadwood Avenue Business Park, a location that would comply with setback distances the city requires for sex shops. The Rapid City Planning Commission approved the location in August.

But the owner of a nearby taekwondo studio appealed the decision, arguing his business was entitled to a setback because the studio qualifies as an "education facility." The City Council agreed, voting down the conditional use permit.

Eliason tried to find another Rapid City location, but officials determined that no other spot within city boundaries complied with zoning restrictions.

"Neither Eliason, nor any reasonably intelligent person, can identify the line triggering sexually-oriented business status or how a person may operate a business in Rapid City stocking some regulated items without being deemed a sexually-oriented business by the city," the complaint said.

Eliason's lawyer didn't immediately return a message seeking comment.

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

Scientists: Big changes coming for 1 of most important fish

By PATRICK WHITTLE, Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — Changes in the way some small fish are managed could have major implications for the ocean ecosystem and marine industries on the East Coast, according to conservationists, fishing groups and scientists.

Interstate regulators are considering altering the way they manage menhaden to better account for its role as one of the most important fish in the sea.

The schooling fish makes up a key piece of the Atlantic Ocean's food web, as important prey for whales, seabirds and large fish. Menhaden is also used in products such as aquaculture feed and fish oil supplements.

The U.S. commercial fishermen catch more than a billion pounds (0.45 billion kilograms) of the fish per year.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is considering new management tools crafted with an eye toward menhaden's key environmental role, which could involve reducing the amount of the fish that can be caught by commercial fishermen.

The regulation changes could also impact the size and distribution of the fishing fleet, as well as the kind of gear that is used, said Tina Berger, a spokeswoman for the Atlantic States.

The possibility of changing how menhaden are managed reflects a movement to begin looking at them not just as a single species, but in terms of "how we can leave enough menhaden in the water for the predatory species that rely on them," Berger said.

An arm of the commission is bringing the subject up for a key vote on Nov. 13 in Linthicum, Maryland. It's accepting public comments on the subject until Oct. 24 and has received about 11,000 so far.

The proposal has galvanized environmentalists and some scientists, who say the commission should do everything in its power to protect the fish.

"There's a lot of science that says these fish are very important to the health of the ocean," said Ellen Pikitch, a marine fisheries scientist with Stony Brook University in New York. "There's every reason to move forward right now, and not wait."

But some commercial harvesters of the fish said cutting the amount of menhaden they take wouldn't be

an evidence-based move. Scientific stock assessments have shown that menhaden are not being over-fished, said Ben Landry, a spokesman for Houston-based Omega Protein, which is the largest harvester of menhaden in the Atlantic.

"That's what your scientists are spending all this time doing. It's kind of a slap in the face to the harvesters," Landry said.

Menhaden are fished commercially up and down the East Coast, and are also used as bait in important fisheries, including those for lobster. They are also well known to recreational fishermen, who call them "pogy" and "bunker" and use them to catch larger fish like striped bass and bluefish.

Native American leaders seek federal climate change action

MILWAUKEE (AP) — Native American leaders are asking the Trump administration to do more to combat climate change.

Tribal leaders attending this week's National Congress of American Indians in Milwaukee told Wisconsin Public Radio that recent wildfires and hurricanes are a sign of rising global temperatures. They said the federal government needs to take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Their call for action came shortly after President Donald Trump's administration signed a rule that would roll back the Clean Power Plan. The administration also announced months ago that it would withdraw the U.S. from the Paris Climate Agreement, an international agreement aimed at reducing pollutants.

Some tribes aren't waiting for federal action. The Forest County Potawatomi are trying to use solar energy in order to lower their carbon energy usage.

"They have 30 kilowatts of solar on top of their tribal building. They're adding 5 megawatts of power to power their casino. And they're piping in the biogas generation plant heat back into their water system to do their laundry," said Jodi Gillette, former senior policy advisor for Native American Affairs in the Obama administration.

The Oneida, Ho-Chunk and Menominee tribes are also working to reduce carbon emissions.

Federal agencies are working to understand the science behind climate change, said John Tahsuda, an Interior Department official.

"What is the science of it, what's going on, because if we don't understand the science, then we don't know how to address it adequately," Tahsuda said.

The convention began Oct. 15 and runs until Oct. 20.

Information from: Wisconsin Public Radio, <http://www.wpr.org>

No bids for shuttered juvenile detention center

CUSTER, S.D. (AP) — No one has expressed interest in buying a former juvenile detention center on the auction block in Custer County.

The STAR Academy closed in April 2016. The Legislature approved a plan to sell the 173-acre parcel with 11 residences, a barn, gym and buildings for housing, administration and maintenance. The asking price is \$2.3 million.

State School and Public Lands Commissioner Ryan Brunner says a number of potential buyers toured the facility in recent weeks. The governor's office says it costs taxpayers \$500,000 annually to maintain the property.

The Rapid City Journal says three registered bidders were among the throng of state legislators, elected county officials, representatives of the governor's office and interested local residents who attended Wednesday's auction at the courthouse.

Calls for bids were met with silence.

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

Rural survey: Farm foreclosures over next 5 years a concern

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A new report is highlighting growing concerns that farm foreclosures will be the greatest challenge to rural banks in parts of 10 Plains and Midwestern states over the next five years.

The Rural Mainstreet Index for the region rose slightly to 45.3 in October from 39.6 in September. The index released Thursday ranges between 0 and 100, with any number under 50 indicating a shrinking economy.

Creighton University economist Ernie Goss, who oversees the survey of bankers, says about 10 percent of bank CEOs surveyed expect their operations to be hit hard by farm foreclosures in the next five years. Goss blamed the concern on weak farm income and low commodity prices.

Bankers from Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming were surveyed.

Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press

Rapid City Journal, Rapid City, Oct. 19

Sturgis, school officials took the right steps

Good can come from bad when the behavior is addressed with clarity, speed and resolve.

While objective observers can agree that Sturgis Brown High School students made poor decisions when they spray-painted "Go back to the Rez" on a car being smashed with sledgehammers and then posted a photo of the misdeed on social media with a profanity preceding Pine Ridge, it's another thing to confront it in the public eye.

The spectacle came to the attention of school and city officials on the Thursday before homecoming and Friday's football game between Sturgis and Pine Ridge — from the reservation. The students involved were bashing a donated vehicle as part of the week's unofficial festivities.

Since the school no longer sanctions the activity and it was held on private property, community leaders had wiggle room and could have dismissed it as simply a few kids acting badly. It happens, right?

But they didn't waffle, wall up or lash out at reporters who called for a reaction to an incident that merited coverage after it ignited the explosive topic of race and relations with Native Americans.

Instead, they sent a clear and forceful message that the behavior was unacceptable and wouldn't be tolerated.

"This is not what western South Dakota or Sturgis is about," Superintendent Don Kirkegaard told the Journal. "I can't defend those actions, but I can try my best to make sure they never happen again."

"Our community does not treat people this way," Sturgis Mayor Mark Carstensen added.

Throughout the day words were converted into action with the school board eventually voting 8-0 to cancel homecoming — no parade, no football game and no dance. The vast majority of students and their families would pay a heavy price for the actions of a few.

Those who thought the punishment too severe and sweeping and thus unfair are not seeing the bigger picture that Kirkegaard addressed — serious offenses can have serious and wide-ranging consequences. This is especially the case now when even the slightest indiscretion can go viral and ruin one's reputation. More importantly, however, America is changing and for the better. It is no longer the 18th, 19th or even 20th century. No one should be disparaged because of their race, nationality, gender or beliefs.

So, instead of memories of marching in a parade, dancing in prom attire or playing in a big game, Sturgis Brown students will have to be satisfied with a life lesson. Even if the car-smashing was just a display of the normal hubris of youth, those actions were wrong, offensive and hurt others who did them no harm.

It certainly had to be a gut-wrenching decision to cancel homecoming for the superintendent and school board. Nobody wants to deny students their homecoming. It would have been easier — in the short term, at least — to move into damage-control mode, which happens far too often when self-preserving elected

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and public officials are confronted with issues they hope just go away.

But the school district's leadership didn't choose the route too often taken. Instead, they did what was best for the students in the long run by making clear that racist remarks won't be tolerated. It was the right thing to do.

American News, Aberdeen, Oct. 14

In face of mass violence, Thune and Washington unable or unwilling to help

John and Linda Roehrlich did not need to be told to run.

When the shots rang out, they held hands and tried to escape.

They did not need to be told to duck behind a car, where they watched other concert-goers gunned down in their tracks, people lying bloody on the ground.

They did not need to be told to pray or hide or help.

The Aberdeen couple survived the Oct. 1 mass shooting at the Route 91 Harvest Festival in Las Vegas. But in just 10 minutes, fifty-eight people were killed and 489 others injured by a single gunman on the 32nd floor of a hotel nearly 500 yards away.

The Roehrlichs do not need to be told they are blessed, fortunate or lucky.

And in those frightening moments, they did not need to be told to "get small."

But that is all South Dakota's senior senator and the No. 3 Republican in the Senate is able to muster in a time of crisis: Advice.

"I think that all of us want to do everything we can to prevent tragedies like that from happening again," Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., told reporter Hallie Jackson of NBC News on Oct. 3. "You know — it's an open society. And when somebody does what he wants to do — it's going to be hard to prevent anything. But I think people are going to have to take steps in their own lives to take precautions. To protect themselves. And in situations like that, you know, try to stay safe. As somebody said — get small."

The comment is, at best, thoughtless and tone-deaf; at worst, it's an admission that Thune is without power, without ideas and without the guts to do anything about a national crisis.

"Get small."

Today, we direct our anger toward Thune, though he could represent any member of the Congress, most of whom seem incapable or unwilling to address this recurring domestic threat in any meaningful way.

Thune, in a year's time, has not learned much.

His statements after these escalating killings serve as a bookend to his thought process, and that of his colleagues.

On June 12, 2016, just hours after 49 people were killed and 58 others wounded by a lone gunman at the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Fla., Thune tweeted: "Unthinkable tragedy in Orlando. Joining entire nation in mourning the loss of so many lives. Praying for their loved ones & the community."

This editorial board was surprised by the tweet — not the condolences, or the sadness. We truly believe Thune is a good man, hurt by the slaughter, and sincere in his empathy with the victims and their families.

But an "unthinkable tragedy"?

On June 15, 2016, we referenced Thune — not by name — and other officials in Our Voice: "It is also sad to hear some of our politicians these days use words such as 'unimaginable,' 'unthinkable' or 'incomprehensible' when it comes to these shootings. How could any national leader say such shootings are inconceivable?"

In the past year, we have waited for our leaders to go back to Washington and start imagining the unimaginable.

27 . 32 . 49 . 58 .

Follow the dots . it's there, in black and white.

Why is this so easy for average Americans to imagine, but impossible for our elected officials?

Thune used the tired "taken out of context" defense in a statement to the Mitchell Daily Republic, telling the paper that he was referencing San Antonio, Texas, Police Chief William McManus' advice to "get small"

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during an attack such as the one in Las Vegas.

Here's the difference: Police are in charge of public safety — senators are in charge of public policy.

In the Cold War '80s, when the country was concerned about the nuclear arms race and the threat of war, President Ronald Reagan did not say, "Well . as somebody said, take cover under your desk."

No, he went to work.

Admittedly, Reagan was dealing with a foreign threat from a nation state whose objectives were clear and with whom we had diplomatic relations.

When dealing with mass shootings as a domestic threat, our enemy is unknown. But, that shouldn't halt our desire to imagine and explore a comprehensive policy to, perhaps not solve, but certainly mitigate the threat. Americans are scared.

Unlike that police chief, Thune and his colleagues can actually enact public policy that would keep people a little safer. Why aren't they?

To begin, both Republicans and Democrats seem to be holding their breath because we have heard all the arguments, all the ideas, all the talk in regard to gun control. It's my right to bear arms! The Second Amendment is not unlimited! Gun control penalizes the law abiding! It's too easy for bad people to get guns!

This talk, though impassioned, is so broad and so polarized.

The words "gun control" immediately stir up emotion and argument. But Thune and colleagues are also not addressing mental wellness, education, or any of the kinds of things that lead every day Americans to try to kill as many of their neighbors as they can.

Let's talk about imagination.

There was a time when terrorist attacks on American soil were unimaginable. But that changed on 9/11. Since then, through a comprehensive strategy, the implementation of new ideas and policy, our country has been able to stop a number of terrorist attacks.

It's time for us to stop thinking mass shootings are unimaginable.

Twenty-seven killed at an elementary school. Thirty-two killed on a college campus. Forty-nine killed at a nightclub. Fifty-eight killed at a concert.

Thoughts, prayers, but no action.

And though we are critical of the "get small" response, maybe this part of Thune's quote should hang heavier over Washington, D.C.:

"I think that all of us want to do everything we can to prevent tragedies like that from happening again." Then do it.

The Public Opinion, Watertown, Oct. 18

Congress' new tax code must make sense

Congress will soon begin working on a major revision of the federal tax code. We applaud those efforts, but only if they are done in a thoughtful manner that encourages economic growth.

After all, shouldn't that be the goal of any tax code rewrite?

Apparently not. Especially in today's environment of get it done now vs. get it done thoughtfully and carefully.

You would think the Republican majority would recognize the error of rushing a major bill through Congress onto the president's desk. After all, it is the Republicans, rightly so, who remind us of what Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), who was the then Speaker of the House, quipped, let's pass this (Obamacare) bill so we can read it and find out what's in it after it passes!

Is that what the new Republican majority is attempting to do with a rewrite of the tax code?

Congressional leaders and the Trump administration want to reduce the top corporate income tax from 35 percent to 20 percent. They are also after simplification. Both are worthy goals, that we can support. But to do so without exploding the already-dangerous federal deficit will require other ways of collecting revenue.

One tax code change aimed at raising revenue under consideration is an economic disaster. It is known as the "ad tax," and it's one very bad idea.

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Advertising has always been one of many costs of doing business. For more than 100 years, companies in the U.S. have been properly allowed to deduct those expenses, like any other business expenses, to produce a finished product or service, which then is taxed.

But some in Congress are considering ending the long-held practice of allowing businesses to deduct this expense every year.

Thus, an "ad tax."

Why would Congress want to differentiate advertising costs from other "cost of doing business" expenses? Changing current tax laws to single out advertising could possibly encourage businesses to make poor decisions based on tax reasons. And will all know there is too much of that behavior underway today with our terribly inefficient and out-of-control tax laws.

The prospect of treating advertising expenses, a component of selling a finished product or service, differently from other expenses simply makes no economic sense.

According to statistics from the National Newspaper Association, advertising generates 22 million U.S. jobs and produces more than \$37 trillion in economic activity. Most of that finished activity is included in the tax code.

Economic analyst IHS Economics and Country Risk Solutions estimates that every dollar spent on advertising leads to \$19 in sales activity, so any tax on advertising would have a negative effect on businesses AND a negative effect on the tax revenue generated on those finished products and services.

IHS also says every \$1 million spent on advertising supports 67 jobs. And each advertising job supports 34 other jobs across other economic sectors.

The change also would impact local newspapers, radio and TV stations that depend on advertising. It's those advertising dollars that support news coverage of local politics, area schools, youth sports, churches and civic activities. South Dakota newspapers recently marked Newspaper Week by asking readers to "Imagine a day without news." A government-spawned reduction in advertising income would go a long way toward making that a possibility.

U.S. Rep. Kristi Noem is on the powerful House Ways and Means Committee, which will be charged with crafting the new tax code. She gave up her spot on the Agriculture Committee because, she said, she could do so many more good things on Ways and Means.

We hope she realizes the folly of the tax on advertising, but just in case, join us in giving her a call, or send her a note, telling her what a bad idea the ad tax would be.

Minot deciding whether to allow chickens and snakes in town

MINOT, N.D. (AP) — Minot officials are debating whether residents should be allowed to raise chickens and keep snakes.

The Daily News reports that one proposed ordinance would permit chickens within city limits. Proponents say larger cities like Fargo and Sioux Falls, South Dakota, allow backyard hens and there have been few complaints. Opponents are worried the chickens would attract feral cats, weasels, hawks and fox.

Another proposal would lift a ban on all snakes except those that are poisonous or dangerous, such as rattlesnakes, boa constrictors and pit vipers. Minot resident Merle Baisch argued against the idea and said if people want snakes they should move out of town.

The city's animal ordinance committee recommended that the city council lift the ban on snakes. The group did not vote on the chicken proposal.

Information from: Minot Daily News, <http://www.minotdailynews.com>

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State fair attendance up slightly

HURON, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota State Fair organizers say attendance at this year's five-day event was up slightly from last year and was the highest since 1996 when the fair was seven days.

Fair manager Peggy Besch says nearly 212,000 people visited this year, with nearly 2,000 campers. Besch says a solid grandstand lineup and an increased number of campers helped fuel attendance.

Sales of grandstand shows increased 20 percent, Carnival sales were up nearly 5 percent and revenue overall increased by about \$200,000.

Fair organizers say youth participation, 4-H exhibits and Future Farmers of America entries also increased slightly.

Next year's fair is scheduled for Thursday, Aug. 30 to Monday, Sept. 3.

Pipeline protest charges dismissed against journalist

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — Obstruction and disorderly conduct charges have been dismissed against a photo journalist covering the Dakota Access Pipeline protest last year.

Sara Lafleur-Vetter was working for The Guardian, a London-based news outlet, when she was arrested Oct. 22 with 140 other people at the pipeline easement near state Highway 1806.

Defense attorney Amanda Harris argued there was no evidence against Lafleur-Vetter and that photos show she had cameras and equipment and was working. Harris says Lafleur-Vetter identified herself as a journalist when she was arrested.

Surrogate Judge Thomas Merrick dismissed the misdemeanor charges against Lafleur-Vetter Wednesday following testimony from several law enforcement officers who said they did not distinguish journalists from others during arrests. The Bismarck Tribune says four other defendants on trial with Lafleur-Vetter return to court Thursday.

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

Nebraska company to run Sioux Falls public golf courses

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Nebraska-based company is next in line to run Sioux Falls' municipal golf courses, but the decision didn't come without controversy.

Parks Director Don Kearney says a selection committee chose Lincoln, Nebraska-based Landscapes Unlimited to operate three public courses.

The city for nearly a quarter century had contracted with a local firm. Kearney says Landscapes Unlimited's large portfolio of courses throughout the region played in its favor. City officials hope to have a contract signed by the end of the year.

The Argus Leader reports City Councilwoman Theresa Stehly voiced concerns about the selection being made by a committee whose members weren't known until after the decision was made. She called it a "secret selection committee." City officials said the process needed to be closed to be fair and competitive.

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

Sisseton man sentenced to prison in grazing fraud scheme

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A Sisseton man has been sentenced to nearly four years in prison for his role in a cattle grazing fraud scheme.

Authorities say 49-year-old Keith Hagen and his former wife, Amanda Holy Bull, provided custom grazing services to ranchers on land they leased from the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs.

U.S. Attorney Randolph Seiler says the two entered into fraudulent contracts and pocketed the money, defrauding ranchers out of \$236,000.

Hagen was sentenced this week to 46 months in prison and ordered to pay back the money. The 33-year-old Holy Bull is to be sentenced Oct. 30.

Senate GOP backs budget, clears way for tax overhaul

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

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans must now shift their focus to enacting President Donald Trump's sweeping tax plan, a far heavier lift than the \$4 trillion budget plan they've muscled through the Senate to lay the groundwork for the first tax overhaul in three decades.

The GOP on Thursday narrowly backed the budget plan, a prerequisite to major tax legislation. The Senate methodically worked through a pack of amendments, with Republicans rebuffing Democrats' successive attempts to reshape the blueprint and derail the tax cuts in the Senate. The final vote was 51-49 with deficit hawk Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky the lone opposing GOP vote.

Republicans will have a far harder time approving a complex plan to bring steep tax cuts, especially for corporations, and overhaul the nation's tax system, which has sharply divided House Republicans on regional fault lines.

Trump, who made revamping the tax system a campaign pledge, told reporters Thursday that the budget "will be phase one of our massive tax cuts and reform."

In a post-midnight Twitter post, he hailed the vote as "Great news," saying that it is a "first step toward delivering MASSIVE tax cuts for the American people."

Enacting a tax overhaul by year's end is a prime goal of Trump and the Republicans, who are looking for accomplishments following an embarrassing drought of legislative achievements and the collapse of several Obamacare repeal attempts. Republican lawmakers publicly admit that failure on taxes would be politically devastating with control of the House and Senate at stake in next year's midterm elections.

"It would be a complete disaster," Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., said after the final budget vote.

The budget blueprint, using Congress' twisty rules, greases the wheels for the tax package by enabling the Senate Republicans to catapult it through without fear of a filibuster — a delaying tactic meant to kill legislation — by Democrats.

But the Republicans are split. A restive rump of House Republicans from high-tax states like New York, New Jersey, Illinois and California staunchly oppose the tax plan's proposed elimination of the federal deduction for state and local taxes. They maintain it would hurt low- to mid-income taxpayers and subject them to being taxed twice.

Their vocal opposition has led Republican leaders in Congress like House Speaker Paul Ryan and Rep. Kevin Brady, R-Texas, who heads the tax-writing Ways and Means Committee, to hear out the fractious GOP members and seek a compromise with them.

At the same time, the White House is making overtures to conservative Democrats in the House and Democratic senators from states that Trump won in the 2016 election. Most heavily courted have been Sens. Claire McCaskill of Missouri, Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota — the trio dined this week at the home of daughter Ivanka Trump and her husband, Jared Kushner, both top advisers to Trump.

"There are plenty of Democrats who would probably benefit from helping President Trump on tax cuts if they help working people," said Graham. He said he plans to propose an increase in the minimum wage as part of the legislation, something that could appeal to Democratic lawmakers.

But Manchin said after Thursday's vote, "I fear that passage of this budget today will make it difficult to pass bipartisan tax reform in the coming weeks." In his conversations with Trump, Manchin said, "we have discussed our shared goal of ensuring any tax-reform package passes with both Republican and Democratic votes, and focuses on providing tax relief for working Americans. The current tax-reform proposal ... does not reflect my conversations with the president."

The Democrats were excluded from the drafting of the tax blueprint, and they continue to demand that any tax-cutting plan not add to the mounting \$20 trillion national debt. The newly-adopted Senate budget plan provides for \$1.5 trillion over 10 years in debt-financed tax cuts, busting earlier Republican pledges of strict fiscal discipline.

The money would be used for the tax plan's cut in the corporate tax rate from 36 percent to 20 percent,

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reduced taxes for most individuals, and the repeal of inheritance taxes on multimillion-dollar estates. The standard deduction would be doubled, to \$12,000 for individuals and \$24,000 for families, the number of tax brackets would shrink from seven to three, and the child tax credit would be increased.

Trump and the Republicans pitch the plan as a boon to the middle class and a spark to economic growth and jobs. Democrats charge it mainly would benefit wealthy individuals — like Trump — and big corporations.

The bare-bones plan is still evolving with lawmakers left to fill in the details. There are too many gaps, such as the income levels that would correspond with each tax bracket, to know how the plan actually would affect individual taxpayers and families.

The Senate action on the budget Thursday followed House passage of its budget version last week. It calls for tax cuts that don't add to the deficit and would pair the tax rewrite measure with \$200 billion in spending cuts over the coming decade. Both plans seek to crack open a longstanding ban on oil and gas exploration in the pristine Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Under congressional rules, the nonbinding budget resolution is supposed to lay out a long-term fiscal framework for the government. This year's measure calls for \$473 billion in cuts from Medicare over 10 years and more than \$1 trillion from Medicaid. All told, Senate Republicans would cut spending by more than \$5 trillion over a decade, though they don't attempt to spell out where the cuts would come from.

In reality, Republicans aren't serious about implementing the measure's politically toxic proposals to cut Medicare, food and farm programs, housing subsidies, and transportation. In fact, lawmakers on both sides are pressing to break open the measure's tight spending "caps" on the Pentagon and domestic agency operations and pass tens of billions of dollars more in hurricane relief in coming days and weeks

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. IMPACTING THE POCKETBOOK

After approving the president's \$4 trillion budget plan, GOP senators begin efforts to enact the first tax overhaul in three decades by the end of the year.

2. CHIEF OF STAFF SHIELDS COMMANDER IN CHIEF

John Kelly speaks about the reality and pain of war sacrifice, praising those who serve and summoning the 2010 death of his own son to defend President Donald Trump against accusations of insensitive outreach to a grieving military family.

3. WHAT VIEW FROM ABOVE REVEALS OF SYRIAN CITY

Drone footage from Raqqa shows bombed-out shells of buildings and heaps of concrete slabs lying piled on streets littered with destroyed cars. Entire neighborhoods are seen turned to rubble, with little sign of civilian life.

4. WORSE THAN WAR AND VIOLENCE

Environmental pollution was the cause of one in six premature deaths in the world in 2015 — about 9 million — a new major study says.

5. MILLIONS AND MILLIONS

The number of U.S. adults without health insurance is up nearly 3.5 million this year, as rising premiums and political turmoil over "Obamacare" undermine coverage gains that drove the nation's uninsured rate to a historic low.

6. POTUS 44 BACK IN SPOTLIGHT

Former President Obama says Democrats should reject politics of "division" and "fear" as he drums up support for the party's gubernatorial candidates in Virginia and New Jersey.

7. THE SHOW MUST GO ON

Some survivors are ready for closure, but feel engulfed by anxiety and security fears as they attend a country music concert benefiting victims of the Las Vegas mass shooting, the deadliest in modern U.S. history.

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8. READYING FOR SEPARATION

Prototypes for President Donald Trump's proposed border wall, which must be completed by Oct. 28, are being built at a construction site in San Diego, just a few steps from homes in Tijuana, Mexico.

9. WON'T MARGARINE DO?

French pastries, and butter, have become so popular abroad that the increased demand has caused a mini shortage of the dairy product in French supermarkets.

10. DODGERS CRUSH CUBS

Enrique Hernandez hits three home runs as the Los Angeles Dodgers beat the Chicago Cubs 11-1 to reach the World Series for the first time since 1988.

Iraqi and Kurdish forces exchange fire at border

BALINT SZLANKO, Associated Press

ALTUN KUPRI, Iraq (AP) — Iraqi federal and Kurdish forces exchanged fire at their shared border on Friday, capping a dramatic week of maneuvers that saw the Kurds handover territory across north and east Iraq.

Iraq's anti-terrorism and federal police forces shelled Kurdish military positions north and south of Altun Kupri, just outside the country's autonomous Kurdish region, a day after Brig. Gen. Raad Baddai gave warning he was going to enter the town.

Kurdish forces, known as the peshmerga, responded with rocket fire.

Iraq's federal authority claims Altun Kupri for itself as it is part of the areas acquired by the Kurds in 2014, when Iraqi soldiers gave up their posts in the face of an Islamic State group advance.

Kurdish authorities have sent reinforcements to the front lines. An Associated Press team saw a convoy of 50 armored vehicles arriving at the Kurdish side of the front.

Thick black smoke rose from a checkpoint north of Altun Kupri after it was hit by a shell.

The peshmerga are vastly outmatched by Iraq's federal armed forces and the Iranian-sponsored militias that fight alongside them. Both the Kurds and the federal forces are accustomed to calling and receiving coalition air support as part of their shared war on the Islamic State group.

"There's nothing we can do about it, honestly. I'm urging the coalition forces to come and help us," said peshmerga fighter Ibrahim Mirza. "No doubt we have martyrs."

On Monday, Iraq's federal forces, supported by Iranian-sponsored militias, rolled into the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, forcing the peshmerga to withdraw after brief clashes.

Kirkuk was at the heart of the dispute over whether Kurdish authorities should return the territories it acquired during the war on IS. They have lost an important stream of oil revenues with the loss of Kirkuk, dealing a serious blow to aspirations for independence.

Kurdish leader Masoud Barzani championed a non-binding vote for independence in September. Baghdad condemned it and instead demanded the return of the disputed territories, precipitating the crisis.

Altun Kupri is 40 kilometers (25 miles) northwest of Kirkuk.

US-backed Syrian force declare victory over IS in Raqqa

By ZEINA KARAM, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — A U.S.-backed Syrian force declared victory over the Islamic State group in its former "capital" of Raqqa on Friday, declaring the northern Syrian city free of any extremist presence.

At a press conference held inside the city Friday, the Kurdish-led force known as the Syrian Democratic Forces formally handed over administration of the devastated northern city to a council made up of local officials and tribal leaders.

In a highly symbolic move, the press conference was held inside the city's sports stadium which Islamic State militants had turned into an arms depot and a huge prison where they incarcerated and tortured their opponents.

"Our victory is one against terrorism, and the liberation of Raqqa marks the latest chapter in the fight against terrorists in Syria," said Talal Sillo, a spokesman and senior SDF commander.

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Standing before a backdrop of shattered buildings, Sillo urged the international community and aid organizations to assist with the city's reconstruction.

Associated Press drone footage from Raqqa showed the extent of devastation caused by weeks of fighting between Kurdish-led forces and the Islamic State group and thousands of bombs dropped by the U.S.-led coalition.

Footage from Thursday shows the bombed-out shells of buildings and heaps of concrete slabs lay piled on streets littered with destroyed cars. Entire neighborhoods are seen turned to rubble, with little sign of civilian life.

The video showed entire blocks in the city as uninhabitable with knocked-out walls and blown-out windows and doors, while some buildings had several stories turned to piles of debris. The stadium that was used as an arms depot and prison by the extremists appears to have suffered less damage compared with surrounding buildings.

"We call upon all countries and peace-loving forces and all humanitarian organizations to participate in rebuilding the city and villages around it and help in removing the scars of war that were inflicted by the (IS) group," Sillo said.

Sillo said 655 local and international fighters lost their lives during the four-month battle for Raqqa.

Long before the ground offensive by the Syrian Democratic Forces began in Raqqa in early June, warplanes pounded the city for months.

The U.S.-backed Kurdish-led SDF announced Tuesday they have driven IS militants out of the city after weeks of fighting.

The fall of Raqqa marks a major defeat for IS, which has seen its territories steadily shrink since last year. IS took over Raqqa, located on the Euphrates River, in January 2014, and transformed it into the epicenter of its brutal rule.

Obama tells Democrats to reject politics of division, fear

By ALAN SUDERMAN and MICHAEL CATALINI, Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Former President Barack Obama called on fellow Democrats to reject politics of "division" and "fear" while rallying on Thursday with party's candidates for governors in Virginia and New Jersey.

"Why are we deliberately trying to misunderstand each other, and be cruel to each other and put each other down? That's not who we are," Obama said at the Virginia rally in front of several thousand supporters.

Stepping back into the political spotlight for the first time since leaving the White House in January, Obama did not mention President Donald Trump in his speeches at Richmond's convention center or at a Newark hotel. But he did tell crowds at both events that they could send a message to the rest of the country in the upcoming elections.

"Our democracy's at stake and it's at stake right here in Virginia," Obama said.

Virginia and New Jersey are the only two states electing new governors this year and those Nov. 7 races will be considered a bellwether of Democrats' strength in the face of Trump's victory last year.

New Jersey Democrat Phil Murphy, Obama's former ambassador to Germany, is facing Republican Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno. Virginia Lt. Gov. Ralph Northam, a Democrat, is running against Republican Ed Gillespie.

Obama's remarks came on the same day as Former President George W. Bush denounced bigotry in Trump-era American politics, warning that the rise of "nativism," isolationism and conspiracy theories have clouded the nation's true identity.

Obama bemoaned the rise of racial politics.

"Some of the politics we see now we thought we put that to bed," Obama said. "That's folks looking 50 years back. It's the 21st century, not the 19th century."

The first black president offered himself as proof that the country could move forward, telling the crowd in Richmond, the former Capitol of the Confederacy, that he is a distant relative to Confederate President Jefferson Davis on his mother's side.

"Think about that," Obama said. "I'll bet he's spinning in his grave."

Obama praised Northam, a pediatric neurologist, as a candidate who would well represent Virginia and accused Gillespie of running a fear-based campaign. A Gillespie said Obama's comments were not a "surprise" coming at a rally for Northam.

Guadagno's spokesman, Ricky Diaz, suggested it's Murphy and not Republicans who are divisive.

"Phil Murphy is the one who will divide New Jersey by raising taxes so high that only the über rich like him will be able to afford to live here," he said.

Obama's popularity is still undeniable. In an August NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll, 51 percent of Americans said they have a favorable opinion of Obama, while 35 percent had a negative opinion. In the same poll, 36 percent said they had a positive opinion of Trump and 52 percent had a negative opinion.

Obama never completely disappeared from public life, in part because of Trump's constant criticism and efforts to undo much of Obama's legacy after eight years in office. He has publicly defended his policies that Trump and the GOP-led Congress have set out to dismantle: the Affordable Care Act and the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA, which allowed immigrants brought into the country illegally as children to be temporarily shielded from deportation.

Obama was forced to return "pretty quickly," presidential historian Julian Zelizer of Princeton University said.

"The current president has changed all the conventional assumptions about what to do," Zelizer said. "There is a sense of urgency that makes this moment different than others and former President Obama has continued to be directly in Trump's line of fire — both his policies and his legacy."

Richmonder Les Kenney said Obama's speech was inspiring.

"It was great to see him again, he's an energizer," he said.

Associated Press writers Jesse J. Holland and Emily Swanson in Washington, D.C., contributed to this report.

Trump's border wall models take shape in San Diego

By ELLIOT SPAGAT, Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The last two of eight prototypes for President Donald Trump's proposed border wall took shape Thursday at a construction site in San Diego.

The prototypes form a tightly packed row of imposing concrete and metal panels, including one with sharp metal edges on top. Another has a surface resembling an expensive brick driveway.

Companies have until Oct. 26 to finish the models but Border Patrol spokesman Theron Francisco said the last two came into profile, with crews installing a corrugated metal surface on the eighth model on a dirt lot just a few steps from homes in Tijuana, Mexico.

As the crews worked, three men and two women from Nepal, ages 19 to 30, jumped a short rusted fence from Tijuana into the construction site and were immediately stopped by agents on horseback.

Francisco said there have been four or five other illegal crossing attempts at the site since work began Sept. 26.

The models, which cost the government up to \$500,000 each, were spaced 30 feet (9.1 meters) apart. Slopes, thickness and curves vary. One has two shades of blue with white trim. The others are gray, tan or brown — in sync with the desert.

Bidding guidelines call for the prototypes to stand between 18 and 30 feet (5.5 and 9.1 meters) high and be able to withstand at least an hour of punishment from a sledgehammer, pickaxe, torch, chisel or battery-operated tools.

Features also should prevent the use of climbing aids such as grappling hooks, and the segments must be "aesthetically pleasing" when viewed from the U.S. side.

The administration hasn't said how many winners it will pick or whether Trump will weigh in himself.

There is currently 654 miles (1,052 kilometers) of single-layer fence on the 1,954-mile (3,143-kilometer)

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border, plus 51 miles (82 kilometers) of double- and triple-layer fence.

"I'm sure they will engage in a lot of tests against these structures to see how they function with different challenges," U.S. Rep. Bob Goodlatte, a Virginia Republican who chairs the House Judiciary Committee, said Tuesday after touring the construction site.

Trump has asked Congress for \$1.6 billion to replace 14 miles of wall (22.4 kilometers) in San Diego and build 60 miles (96 kilometers) in Texas' Rio Grande Valley, the busiest corridor for illegal crossings.

Here's a rundown of companies building prototypes, their headquarters and value of their contract. Two are making one concrete prototype and another using other materials.

CADELL CONSTRUCTION CO., Montgomery, Alabama. (\$344,000 for concrete wall, \$320,000 for other wall)

Its tan concrete wall is thick at the bottom and narrows considerably toward the pointed top. The other, also tan, has metal poles on the bottom, a metal plate in the middle, and concrete block on top.

The general construction company founded in 1983 says its projects include U.S. embassies in Beijing and Kabul, Afghanistan, terminals at Houston's George Bush International Airport and renovations to the Denver Mint.

W.G. YATES & SONS CONSTRUCTION CO., Philadelphia, Mississippi. (\$453,548 for concrete wall, \$458,103 for other wall)

Its models are a darker brown than other prototypes and topped by round beams. Its concrete panel has a plain face; its metal one has a corrugated surface.

The 53-year-old company has worked in a wide range of projects, including a Toyota plant in Blue Springs, Mississippi, a county jail in Olmito, Texas, a marine terminal in Jacksonville, Florida, and a power plant near Panama City, Florida.

Two companies are building concrete walls.

FISHER SAND & GRAVEL CO., Tempe, Arizona. (\$365,000 contract)

It's the only prototype to be built entirely on site — as opposed to being hauled in. Its tan surface gradually narrows toward the top, like a long triangle.

Part of conglomerate Fisher Industries, the company produces sand, gravel and other products for roads, dams and large public works projects. The company is active in 12 western states.

TEXAS STERLING CONSTRUCTION CO., Houston. (\$470,000 contract)

The gray surface of the U.S. side is stamped with patterns of different-sized bricks, like a driveway or sidewalk at an upscale home. There is a steel plate on top with prongs that feature at three metal spikes, resembling an agave plant.

Parent company Sterling Construction Co., founded in 1991, specializes in water and transportation projects, including highways, bridges, ports, light rail, wastewater and storm drainage systems. It is active in Utah, Texas, Nevada, Colorado, Arizona, California and Hawaii.

Two companies were selected to build walls made of materials other than concrete.

KWR CONSTRUCTION INC., Sierra Vista, Arizona. (\$486,411 contract)

Its gray metal columns are topped with a large metal plate. The small, Hispanic-owned company counts the Homeland Security, Defense and Interior departments among its largest customers.

ELTA NORTH AMERICA INC., Annapolis Junction, Maryland. (\$406,319 contract)

Its solid metal wall features six light blue squares with white trim on the bottom third, topped by dark blue beams and metal plates.

ELTA is a large Israeli defense contractor owned by state-run Israel Aerospace Industries. The company, which makes radar and other gear, opened its new U.S. headquarters in Maryland in May.

Drone video shows devastation in Raqqa, Syria

RAQQA, Syria (AP) — Drone footage from the northern Syrian city of Raqqa shows the extent of devastation caused by weeks of fighting between Kurdish-led forces and the Islamic State group and thousands of bombs dropped by the U.S.-led coalition.

Footage from Thursday shows the bombed-out shells of buildings and heaps of concrete slabs lay piled on streets littered with destroyed cars. Entire neighborhoods are seen turned to rubble, with little sign of civilian life.

The video showed entire blocks in the city as uninhabitable with knocked-out walls and blown-out windows and doors, while some buildings had several stories turned to piles of debris. The stadium that was used as an arms depot and prison by the extremists appears to have suffered less damage compared with surrounding buildings.

Long before the ground offensive by the Syrian Democratic Forces began in Raqqa in early June, warplanes pounded the city for months.

The U.S.-backed Kurdish-led SDF announced Tuesday they have driven IS militants out of the city after weeks of fighting.

The SDF is scheduled to hold a news conference in Raqqa on Friday during which the city will be declared free of extremists for the first time in nearly four years. The SDF will likely hand over authority in the city to the Raqqa Civil Council, which is made up of local officials and tribal leaders and will be in charge of returning life to normal in the city.

Omar Alloush, a senior member of the Raqqa Civil Council, said the body has a quick-response plan that will begin with removing mines left behind by IS then move to removing debris and opening roads before fixing water and power stations.

An SDF commander, Brig. Gen. Talal Sillo, said residents will be allowed to start returning to the city once the mines and explosives are removed. In other cities that the extremists lost earlier, experts worked for weeks to remove booby traps and explosives that kept maiming and killing people long after IS left.

The U.N. and aid organizations estimate about 80 percent of the city is destroyed or uninhabitable.

The top U.S. envoy for the anti-IS coalition, Brett McGurk, tweeted this week that IS fighters placed 150 explosive devices in and around a water treatment plant near Raqqa, but said it has been cleared and is being restored.

The fall of Raqqa marks a major defeat for IS, which has seen its territory steadily shrink since last year. The group took over Raqqa, located on the Euphrates River, in January 2014 and transformed it into the epicenter of its brutal rule.

The spokesman for the coalition, Col. Ryan Dillon, tweeted Thursday that the SDF has cleared 98 percent of the city, adding that some militants remain holed up in a small pocket east of the stadium.

Emotional Hernandez has 3 HRs, lifts Dodgers to World Series

By JAY COHEN, AP Sports Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — When it was over, when Los Angeles had finally secured another trip to the World Series and Enrique Hernandez's three big swings had become a part of playoff lore, the emotional utilityman just wanted to give his dad a big hug.

It was one sweet performance for Hernandez, Clayton Kershaw and the rest of the Dodgers.

Hernandez homered three times and drove in a record seven runs, Kershaw breezed through six crisp innings and Los Angeles ended the Chicago Cubs' title defense with an 11-1 rout in Game 5 of the NL Championship Series.

"It was amazing," Hernandez said. "This team is awesome."

It sure is.

After years of playoff heartache, there was just no stopping these Dodgers after they led the majors with 104 wins during the regular season. With Kershaw firing away at the top of a deep pitching staff, and co-NLCS MVPs Justin Turner and Chris Taylor leading a tough lineup, one of baseball's most storied

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franchises captured its first pennant since Hall of Famer Tommy Lasorda managed Kirk Gibson, Orel Hersher and Co. to Los Angeles' last championship in 1988.

"Every night it is a different guy," Turner said.

It was Hernandez on Thursday.

The 26-year-old Hernandez connected on the first two pitches he saw, belting a solo drive in the second for his first career playoff homer and then a grand slam in the third against Hector Rondon. He added a two-run shot in the ninth against Mike Montgomery.

Hernandez became the fourth player with a three-homer game in an LCS, joining Bob Robertson (1971 NLCS), George Brett (1978 ALCS) and Adam Kennedy (2002 ALCS). Hernandez's seven RBIs tied a post-season record shared by four other players, who all did it in a Division Series.

Troy O'Leary was the previous player to have seven RBIs in a playoff game, for Boston at Cleveland in the 1999 ALDS.

It was a stunning display for a player with 28 career homers who remains concerned about his native Puerto Rico, which is recovering from a devastating hurricane. He delivered a historic performance in front of his father, Enrique Hernandez Sr., who was diagnosed with a blood cancer related to leukemia in December 2015, but got word last November that he was in remission.

"For me to be able to come here and do something like this is pretty special," said Hernandez, who also goes by Kiké. "My body's here, but my mind's kind of back home. It's hard being away from home with what's going on.

"All I want to do right now is go to my dad and give him a big hug."

Kershaw will be on the mound again when the Dodgers host the New York Yankees or Houston Astros in Game 1 of the World Series on Tuesday night. The Yankees have a 3-2 lead heading into Game 6 of the ALCS at Houston on Friday night, so one more New York win would set up another chapter in an old October rivalry between the Yankees and Dodgers. Los Angeles is 6-12 in the World Series, including one victory over New York while the team was still in Brooklyn.

Los Angeles made the playoffs eight times in the previous 13 seasons and came up short of its 22nd pennant each time, often with Kershaw shouldering much of the blame. The three-time NL Cy Young Award winner took the loss when his team was eliminated by the Cubs in Game 6 of last year's NLCS at Wrigley Field.

The ace left-hander was just OK during his first two starts in this year's postseason, but Los Angeles' offense picked him up each time. Backed by Hernandez's powerful show in Chicago, Kershaw turned in an efficient three-hit performance with five strikeouts and improved to 6-7 in the playoffs — matching Burt Hooton's club record for postseason wins.

"To get to be on the mound tonight and get to be going to the World Series on the same night, it's a special thing," Kershaw said. "Who knows how many times I'm going to get to go to the World Series? I know more than anybody how hard it is to get there. So, I'm definitely not taking this one for granted."

When Kenley Jansen retired Willson Contreras on a liner to shortstop for the final out, the party was on. The Dodgers poured out of the dugout and mobbed their dominant closer near the mound, and a small but vocal group of Los Angeles fans gathered behind the visitors' dugout and chanted "Let's go Dodgers! Let's go Dodgers!"

On the field, manager Dave Roberts hugged Lasorda and told the iconic skipper the win was for him.

"I bleed Dodger blue just like you," Roberts said. "Thank you, Tommy."

Kris Bryant homered for Chicago, but the NL Central champions finished with just four hits in another tough night at the plate. Each of their eight runs in the NLCS came via the long ball, and they batted just .156 for the series with 53 strikeouts.

Long playoff runs in each of the last two years and a grueling five-game Division Series against Washington seemed to sap Chicago of some energy, and its pitching faltered against sweet-swinging Los Angeles. Jose Quintana was pulled in the third inning of the final game, and the Cubs never recovered.

"They executed their plan," Bryant said. "They pitched great and the bullpen was lights out. That makes for a tough time scoring runs."

Turner and Taylor helped put it away for Los Angeles, contributing to a 16-hit outburst while closing out a pair of impressive performances.

Turner singled home Taylor in the Dodgers' five-run third, giving him seven RBIs in the series and 24 throughout his postseason career. Taylor finished with two hits and scored two runs as the Dodgers, who have won five straight NL West titles, improved to 7-1 in this postseason.

Taylor's versatility helped Los Angeles cover for the loss of All-Star shortstop Corey Seager, who missed the series with a back injury, but is expected to return in the next round. Coming off a breakout season, the 27-year-old Taylor hit .316 with two homers and scored five times against the Cubs.

"I couldn't be happier to be a part of this and be with these guys," Taylor said. "It's been an unbelievable year, and I'm just super excited."

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

Evoking slain son, Kelly defends Trump on condolence calls

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and CATHERINE LUCEY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — He started by describing the reverent handling of America's war dead, bodies packed in ice and shipped home in the dark to an Air Force base in Delaware.

From that opening, White House chief of staff John Kelly delivered a raw and searing monologue Thursday about the reality and pain of war sacrifice, praising those who serve and summoning the 2010 death of his own son to defend President Donald Trump against accusations of insensitive outreach to a grieving military family.

In an unannounced appearance at the White House, Kelly, a retired three-star general whose son was killed while serving in Afghanistan, dressed down the Democratic congresswoman who had criticized Trump for comments she said he had made in a condolence call to the pregnant widow of a Green Beret killed in Niger.

Kelly called Rep. Frederica Wilson of Florida an "empty barrel" who "makes noise," but he did not deny the lawmaker's account of the phone call, as the president had this week. Throughout his remarks, Kelly lamented what he said was lost respect for military service, women, authority and more.

"I was stunned when I came to work yesterday morning, and brokenhearted at what I saw a member of Congress doing," Kelly said. "Absolutely stuns me. And I thought at least that was sacred."

The remarkable scene underscored Kelly's singular role as an authoritative adviser and now spokesman for a president who is prone to false claims, exaggerations and misstatements. Kelly, who joined the White House to restore internal order, has increasingly become a public figure himself, employed to project calm and reassurance in times of crisis.

The uproar over Trump and how presidents should or shouldn't try to console families of the fallen has rattled the White House and overshadowed the rest of Trump's agenda in recent days.

Kelly personally absolved Trump of blame in his call to the family of Sgt. La David Johnson, a conversation that prompted Wilson to declare that the president had been disrespectful to the grieving family and couldn't remember Johnson's name.

"If you're not in the family, if you've never worn the uniform, if you've never been in combat, you can't even imagine how to make that call," Kelly said. "I think he very bravely does make those calls."

Trump — who has frequently struggled with showing empathy — has emphatically rejected claims that he was disrespectful. But he started the latest controversy this week when he boasted about his commitment to calling service members' next of kin and brought Kelly into the issue by wondering aloud if President Barack Obama had called the former Marine general after the death of Kelly's son.

Kelly confirmed Thursday that Obama had not called him, but he made clear "that was not a criticism."

"That's not a negative thing," he said. "I don't believe all presidents call. I believe they all write."

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In fact, the chief of staff said that when Trump took office, he advised him against making those calls: "I said to him, 'Sir there's nothing you can do to lighten the burden on these families.'"

But Trump wanted to make the calls, and asked Kelly for advice on what to say. In response, Kelly told him what General Joseph Dunford, now chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told him when Robert Kelly was killed. Kelly recalled that Dunford told him his son "was doing exactly what he wanted to do when he was killed. He knew what the possibilities were because we're at war."

And Kelly added that Dunford told him that "when he died, he was surrounded by the best men on this earth, his friends. That's what the president tried to say to four families the other day."

Kelly said the Defense Department is investigating the details of the Oct. 4 ambush that killed four American soldiers, including Johnson, in Niger.

Islamic militants on motorcycles brought rocket-propelled grenades and heavy machine guns, killing the four and wounding others after shattering the windows of unarmored U.S. trucks. The attack happened in a remote corner of Niger where Americans and local counterparts had been meeting with community leaders.

Kelly said Thursday that small groups of U.S. military personnel are being sent overseas, including to Niger, to help train local people to fight the IS group "so that we don't have to send large numbers of troops."

His speech was a rebuke to Wilson, who was in the car with the family of Johnson when Trump called on Tuesday. She said in an interview that Trump had told Johnson's widow that "you know that this could happen when you signed up for it ... but it still hurts." Johnson's aunt, who raised the soldier from a young age, said the family took that remark to be disrespectful.

The call came in as they drove to Miami's airport to receive the body. At the airport, widow Myeshia Johnson leaned in grief across the flag-draped coffin after a military guard received it.

A spokeswoman said Thursday that Wilson stood by her earlier comments. The congresswoman herself, asked by WSVN-TV in Florida about Kelly's remarks, replied only indirectly.

"Let me tell you what my mother told me when I was little," Wilson said. "She said, 'The dog can bark at the moon all night long, but it doesn't become an issue until the moon barks back.'"

Kelly also accused Wilson of grandstanding at the dedication of a Miami FBI office in 2015.

The White House chief of staff said he was so upset by her criticism of Trump's call that he went to walk "among the finest men and women on Earth" in a 90-minute visit to nearby Arlington National Cemetery, among the graves of service members, including some who died under his command.

Kelly began his remarks by recounting in painstaking detail what happens after a soldier is killed in overseas combat. The dead soldier's body is wrapped in a makeshift shroud by his colleagues, Kelly said, and then flown by helicopter to a nearby air base, where it is packed in ice. It is then flown to a second base, often in Europe, and put in more ice before it is transported to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware. The body is then embalmed and dressed in military uniform, complete with medals before heading home.

Kelly said the next of kin are notified by a casualty officer, who "proceeds to break the heart of a family member."

Robert Kelly, 29, was killed when he stepped on a land mine in Afghanistan's remote Helmand province. Kelly said his family got calls from Robert's friends in Afghanistan attesting to his character. Those calls, he said as he fought back tears, were the most important.

After his dramatic opening statement, Kelly then took questions from reporters, asking first if any of them were Gold Star parents or siblings, meaning relatives of slain service members. When no one raised a hand, Kelly then said he would take questions only from those who knew a Gold Star family.

Kelly, whose frustration with the distractions created by Trump on other subjects led him to deny last week that he was considering quitting, also bemoaned how the nation no longer held things sacred, from life to religion to women. He said the respect given to Gold Star families "left in the convention over the summer," an apparent reference to the bitter election exchanges between the Trump campaign and a family whose military son had been killed.

___ Lemire reported from New York. Associated Press writers Laurie Kellman in Washington and David Fischer in Miami contributed reporting.

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Senate GOP backs budget, clears way for tax overhaul

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

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans must now shift their focus to enacting President Donald Trump's sweeping tax plan, a far heavier lift than the \$4 trillion budget plan they've muscled through the Senate to lay the groundwork for the first tax overhaul in three decades.

The GOP on Thursday narrowly backed the budget plan, a prerequisite to major tax legislation. The Senate methodically worked through a pack of amendments, with Republicans rebuffing Democrats' successive attempts to reshape the blueprint and derail the tax cuts in the Senate. The final vote was 51-49 with deficit hawk Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky the lone opposing GOP vote.

Republicans will have a far harder time approving a complex plan to bring steep tax cuts, especially for corporations, and overhaul the nation's tax system, which has sharply divided House Republicans on regional fault lines.

Trump, who made revamping the tax system a campaign pledge, told reporters Thursday that the budget "will be phase one of our massive tax cuts and reform."

Enacting a tax overhaul by year's end is a prime goal of Trump and the Republicans, who are looking for accomplishments following an embarrassing drought of legislative achievements and the collapse of several Obamacare repeal attempts. Republican lawmakers publicly admit that failure on taxes would be politically devastating with control of the House and Senate at stake in next year's midterm elections.

"It would be a complete disaster," Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., said after the final budget vote.

The budget blueprint, using Congress' twisty rules, greases the wheels for the tax package by enabling the Senate Republicans to catapult it through without fear of a filibuster — a delaying tactic meant to kill legislation — by Democrats.

But the Republicans are split. A restive rump of House Republicans from high-tax states like New York, New Jersey, Illinois and California staunchly oppose the tax plan's proposed elimination of the federal deduction for state and local taxes. They maintain it would hurt low- to mid-income

New Battle of the Alamo is brewing over Texas shrine revamp

By **WILL WEISSERT**, Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Remember the Alamo? A new Texas battle is brewing over how best to do so.

Land Commissioner George P. Bush is overseeing a 7-year revamp of the shrine where 189 Texas independence fighters were killed by Mexican Gen. Santa Anna's troops in 1836. The site's size would quadruple after excavation and restoration of historical structures, the closing of nearby streets and the building of a more than 100,000-square foot museum to house artifacts and guide visitors through the Alamo's history.

The project has raised the ire of some conservatives, who worry that the Battle of the Alamo will be sanitized by "political correctness" at a time when Confederate monuments are being removed across the country. Even though the Alamo battle was well before the Civil War, some of the participants were slaveholders.

A flashpoint has been the fate of the Cenotaph, a 60-foot (18.29-meter) granite monument near the Alamo completed in 1940 and engraved with the names of those killed during the battle. The city of San Antonio wants to move it to a site somewhat farther away. But critics fear the Cenotaph will suffer the fate of some Confederate monuments and be banished.

Hundreds of protesters showed up at the Alamo last weekend, some wearing colonial costumes and holding signs reading "Leave the Alamo Alone."

The ruling Republican Party of Texas was so concerned that its executive committee voted 57-1 in September to urge Bush to keep the focus of the overhaul on the battle itself and calling for more transparency in how the effort is funded.

"This isn't just some memory that's popular in movies, these were living, breathing people," said Lee Spencer White, a descendant of Gordon C. Jennings, who at 56 was the oldest defender killed at the Alamo. "The Alamo's personal."

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The criticism from fellow Republicans has put the latest political star of the Bush family on the defensive. The 41-year-old son of former Florida governor and presidential candidate Jeb and Mexican-born mother Columba, Bush has used funds for his re-election bid next year on a website and radio ads defending his restoration.

"My focus isn't on the politics, it's on preserving the Alamo," Bush said via email. "I'm focused on telling the story of the heroic battle for freedom — proudly, purposefully and better than ever before."

Bush's critics say his Hispanic heritage isn't an issue, noting that many Tejanos — Texans of Hispanic descent — played prominent roles during the Battle of the Alamo. They included Gregorio Esparza, who was given the chance to flee beforehand but stayed and was killed in battle. Still, during the Cenotaph protest, one demonstrator bellowed: "Vote George P. Santa Anna Bush out of office" to applause.

During the war of independence from Mexico, Texas forces occupied the Alamo, which had been founded by Spaniards as a Franciscan mission in 1718 but was relocated to its current spot, now in the heart of San Antonio, America's seventh-largest city, in 1724. Though vastly outnumbered by Mexican soldiers, the defenders held out during a 13-day siege before being overrun on March 6, 1836. Their bravery became a rallying cry and Texas won independence the following month, then became part of the United States nine years later.

Supporters of the Alamo revamp emphasize that there is good reason to upgrade the site visited by 2.5-plus million people a year. The existing shrine is small and offers relatively little to see. Nearby is what some have called a "carnival" atmosphere, with Ripley's Believe It or Not!, and other buildings that are being bought up in the renovation.

Bush's office is working with a Philadelphia-based historic preservation and architecture firm with the goal of presenting the Alamo's full history. The site's public space would expand from around two acres to 9.5 acres, though public outcry already halted a proposal to build glass walls around the entire area. Santa Anna ordered the original walls around the Alamo torn down after the battle, but remnants remain underground and plans are to excavate and possibly place them under glass for visitors to view.

Pop icon Phil Collins, who spent decades collecting Alamo artifacts, has begun donating most of them to Texas, including a leather pouch belonging to slain defender Davey Crockett, as well as the knife of Jim Bowie, namesake of today's fixed blade Bowie knife. The renovation project calls for the artifacts to be displayed in the new museum.

Jerry Patterson, a Republican who was Bush's predecessor as land commissioner, said the issue of slave owners among the Alamo independence fighters is sure to be raised. Alamo commander William Travis owned slaves and Bowie, his co-commander, traded them.

"History's full of warts," Patterson said. "There are no men, icons of the past, that will stand up to modern scrutiny."

San Antonio has pledged \$38 million for the revamp and the Texas Legislature has approved \$106.5 million since 2015. The project's total cost could reach \$450 million, though much of that may be raised privately. State contracts suggest Bush's office paid nearly \$4.9 million on an Alamo renovation master plan, but Bush wouldn't say exactly how much has been spent so far.

Exactly what the new Alamo will look like also isn't clear. Artists' renderings were released previously, but Bush's office says those weren't official. Construction hasn't started but is scheduled to finish by 2024, when the Alamo turns 300 at its current location.

The controversy is lost on most Alamo tourists, including Sue and Dave Gay who visited recently from Rochester, New York.

"You can't change what it is," said Sue Gay, a 50-year-old nurse, said of the current Alamo site. "Just because it's small doesn't make it any less significant."

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Raiders score on final play to beat Chiefs 31-30

By JOSH DUBOW, AP Pro Football Writer

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Wins have been so hard to come by for the Oakland Raiders that it took three tries at the final play for them finally to pull this one out and possibly save their season.

Derek Carr threw a 2-yard touchdown pass to Michael Crabtree on the final play after the game was extended by two straight defensive holding calls and the Raiders snapped a four-game losing streak with a 31-30 victory over the Kansas City Chiefs on Thursday night.

"We didn't give up," Crabtree said. "We got a team full of fighters. We believe. ... No matter how hard the game was, we believed. We came out with the W and I'm excited. It's a good way to win, a great way to win."

With their season on the line following the recent slump, Carr led an 85-yard touchdown drive in the final 2:25 to give the Raiders (3-4) the thrilling comeback in a game they trailed by nine points heading into the fourth quarter.

Carr finished 29 for 52 for 417 yards and three touchdowns, with Amari Cooper catching 11 passes for 210 yards and two of the scores. The Raiders had struggled to get the ball downfield while being held to 17 or fewer points in four straight games but Carr repeatedly beat the Chiefs with deep passes.

"No. 4 kept making plays," coach Jack Del Rio said. "This is a special, special win."

Alex Smith threw for 342 yards and three touchdowns but it wasn't enough for the Chiefs (5-2). They lost consecutive games for the first time since Oct. 11-18, 2015, and had their 12-game winning streak in the AFC West snapped in a thrilling finish.

"I've never been part of a game that came down so dramatic," linebacker Derrick Johnson said. "But, still had a chance to win. Period. Just have to make a play. One play. One play."

The Raiders had an apparent go-ahead touchdown pass to Jared Cook with 18 seconds left overturned when replay ruled he was down at the 1. An offensive pass interference on Crabtree wiped out another touchdown on the next play.

But holding calls on Ron Parker and Eric Murray set the stage for the final play. Carr hit Crabtree in the front corner of the end zone to tie it at 30. Giorgio Tavecchio won it with the extra point, setting off a celebration on a wild night that included Oakland running back Marshawn Lynch getting ejected in the second quarter for shoving an official.

HOT TEMPERERS: The game took an odd turn midway through the second quarter after Kansas City's Marcus Peters hit Carr late, angering the Raiders. Offensive linemen Kelechi Osemele and Donald Penn confronted Peters and Lynch sprinted off the Oakland sideline to join the fray. Lynch, a close friend of Peters, ended up shoving line judge Julian Mapp and getting ejected. Peters also was called for a personal foul on the play. Lynch congratulated his teammates in the locker room after the game but didn't speak to reporters.

"I was disappointed he ran out because I knew we had a 15-yard penalty and we'd be in good shape," Del Rio said.

LONG DRIVE: After Marquette King pinned the Chiefs at their own 1 with a perfect punt early in the second quarter, Kansas City needed little time to turn the momentum. Smith hit Demarcus Robinson on a 33-yard pass on the first play of the drive. After a short run, Tyreek Hill beat David Amerson for a 64-yard touchdown pass that gave the Chiefs their first 99-yard drive since doing it Dec. 3, 2006, against Cleveland.

DEEP CONNECTION: Carr had not connected on a single deep ball to Amari Cooper all season before the two teamed twice for long TDs in the opening quarter. On the first, Cooper appeared to push Terrance Mitchell but the officials picked up the flag and gave Cooper the 38-yard TD. Later in the quarter Carr and Cooper connected on a 45-yard score, making Cooper the first Raiders receiver with two TD catches in the first quarter since Mervyn Fernandez in 1989.

KICKING WOES: The Raiders were hurt last week when a bad snap by Jon Condo led to a missed extra point by Giorgio Tavecchio in a 17-16 loss to the Chargers. That was Tavecchio's first missed kick of any kind this season but he then had a 53-yarder blocked and missed a 45-yarder wide left in the second quarter. Tavecchio also had a false start on an extra point in the third quarter.

UP NEXT

Chiefs: Host Denver on Oct. 30.

Raiders: Visit Buffalo on Oct. 29.

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

Senate backs GOP budget in step forward for tax revamp

By ANDREW TAYLOR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans on Thursday muscled a \$4 trillion budget through the Senate in a major step forward for President Donald Trump's ambitious promise of "massive tax cuts and reform."

The 51-49 vote sets the stage for debate later this year to dramatically overhaul the U.S. tax code for the first time in three decades, cutting rates for individuals and corporations while eliminating trillions of dollars of deductions and special interest tax breaks.

The tax cuts would add up to \$1.5 trillion to the deficit over the coming decade, however, as Republicans have shelved fears about the growing budget deficit in favor of a once-in-a-generation opportunity to rewrite tax laws.

"These are reforms that change incentives and drive growth, and we've never done that before," said Sen. Pat Toomey, R-Pa.

The White House hailed the bill's passage, saying it "creates a pathway to unleash the potential of the American economy through tax reform and tax cuts."

Divisions within the GOP indicate the process won't be easy despite the political imperative.

The upcoming tax measure, always a top item on the GOP agenda, has taken on even greater urgency with the failure of the party to carry out its longstanding promise to dismantle former President Barack Obama's signature health care law. Republicans have said failure on taxes would be politically devastating in next year's midterm elections, when control of the House and Senate are at stake.

When reconciled with the House budget plan, the nonbinding measure would set up special procedures to pass follow-up tax legislation without the threat of a filibuster by Senate Democrats. Pressure is mounting, however, on the House to simply adopt the Senate budget plan rather than risk lengthy negotiations that could delay the tax measure.

The House measure calls for a tax plan that wouldn't add to the deficit, as well as \$200 billion worth of cuts to benefit programs that the Senate has rejected.

Democrats blasted the GOP budget, warning voters that the upcoming tax measure will shower benefits on top-bracket earners, corporations, business partnerships and people inheriting multimillion-dollar estates. Trump promises that the tax plan — still under development — is aimed at the middle class, but previous versions have seen upper-income individuals benefiting the most.

"The bottom line on this budget is that it's a right-wing fantasy document that paves the way for a hyper-partisan process on tax reform and trillions of dollars in handouts to big corporations and the wealthy," said Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden, the top Democrat on the tax-writing Finance Committee.

"The more people learn about this tax bill, the less they will like it," said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y. "That's what led to the demise of health care, ultimately, is that it was unpopular with the American people."

Only one Republican, Rand Paul of Kentucky, voted against the budget. He said the measure permits too much spending and abandons the GOP drive to repeal the Obama health law. An amendment by Paul to revive the "Obamacare" repeal failed by a 2-to-1 margin.

"The American people are sick and tired of Congress spending recklessly with no end in sight," Paul said, adding that the GOP plan "simply didn't measure up and spent too much."

Under Capitol Hill's byzantine budget rules, the nonbinding budget resolution is supposed to lay out a long-term fiscal framework for the government. This year's measure calls for \$473 billion in cuts from

Medicare over 10 years and more than \$1 trillion from Medicaid. All told, Senate Republicans would cut spending by more than \$5 trillion over a decade, though they don't attempt to spell out where the cuts would come from.

Even so, the measure doesn't promise to balance the budget, projecting deficits that would never drop below \$400 billion. Republicans vow that the tax plan would result in a burst of economic growth that will add enough tax revenue to make up for the ambitious rate cuts. Most experts dismiss such promises, however, and Congress' official scorekeepers agree with them.

And Republicans have no plans to carry out the measure's politically toxic proposals to cut Medicare, food and farm programs, housing subsidies and transportation. Instead, work is under way to add tens of billions of dollars for both the Pentagon and domestic agency operations. And the Senate is poised to send Trump a \$36.5 billion hurricane relief bill Monday.

The budget measure also would revive long-moribund efforts to permit exploration for oil in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, permitting legislation opening up ANWR to drilling to catch a ride on the popular tax measure. Otherwise, it would be vulnerable to a filibuster by Democrats. An amendment to strip the drilling provision from the measure was rejected by a 52-48 vote, with moderate Republican Susan Collins of Maine joining with Democrats who oppose opening the refuge.

Witness: Workplace shooter was increasingly angry, hostile

By JULIET LINDERMAN, Associated Press

ABERDEEN, Md. (AP) — A witness to the deadly rampage inside a Maryland granite company said Thursday that the suspect, Radee Prince, had gathered a small group of his co-workers together by saying "come with me, I want to say something to everybody." Without another word, he opened fire.

The witness, a man who worked at the countertop making company for a year and a half, said when Prince arrived on Wednesday morning he responded to a polite greeting with harsh language describing Advanced Granite Solutions and its workers. Then he tried to talk individually to a few employees.

"He talked to me first," said the man, who spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because he was afraid of retaliation and worried about his family's immigration status. "Then I saw him talk to another friend. Nobody listened to him, because his reaction was to start a fight."

The employee said Prince had approached him a month ago and angrily accused him of gossiping. Since then, the man had been even more worried about Prince.

Prince had a history of violence with co-workers, especially when he believed people were talking behind his back, according to court documents. Authorities have not released a motive, but the witness said Prince's aggressiveness had been escalating recently.

Prince is accused of fatally shooting three colleagues and critically wounding two others. Authorities said he then drove to Wilmington, Delaware, and shot an acquaintance at a used car lot. He was captured after a 10-hour manhunt.

Prince faces charges of murder, attempted murder, assault and use of a firearm to commit a felony. At his arraignment Thursday in Delaware, he pleaded not guilty.

According to an affidavit, officers found a .380-caliber semi-automatic they saw Prince throw away while running from them, and they found the same size shells at the Wilmington shooting scene. Police think it's the same gun he used in the Maryland shooting.

The granite company employee said he worked on a small fabrication team, and that several of his colleagues had complained before Wednesday to supervisors about Prince's behavior.

Just before the shooting, Prince walked out to his SUV and put on a black jacket, the witness said. Then he walked back inside and stood near a machine with an odd look on his face. Prince then called the man's name, and asked him and his colleagues to come toward him.

"I was nervous," the witness said, adding that he believes he was the one Prince was trying to target.

The man said once the group gathered around, Prince shot Enis Mrvoljak, 48, of Dundalk. Then, Bayarsaikhan Tudev, 53, of Arlington, Virginia. He also killed Jose Hidalgo Romero, 34, of Aberdeen, authorities

said.

Tudev's widow told AP that her husband was so worried about Prince's temper that he prayed about him. "He was always angry," Gerelmaa Dolgorsuren said her husband told her about Prince.

Tudev, 53, was a native of Mongolia who came to the U.S. in 2005. He and his wife settled in Arlington, which has a large Mongolian-American community.

Prince also shot at the witness as he ran away; he lost a boot while trying to flee, he said.

Ron Cherry, an attorney for the company, said he could not answer questions about what happened.

But Cristie Kahler, a spokeswoman for the Harford County Sheriff's Office, confirmed that video surveillance footage at the company showed Prince seeming to call a meeting before the shooting. She could not provide further details.

Kahler also said that investigators were aware that employees had complained about Prince's behavior at Advanced Granite Solutions, as well as at prior workplaces.

Prince had 43 arrests in Delaware. He has faced charges of being a felon in possession of a gun, was habitually late paying his rent, was repeatedly cited for traffic violations, and was ordered to undergo drug and alcohol counseling in recent years.

He had at least two other violent run-ins with co-workers. In 2014, he put a colleague in a chokehold because he thought he was talking about Prince, a manager told police. Prince dragged the co-worker outside and slammed him to the ground, causing him to lose consciousness.

Prince was charged with offensive touching, but the case was dismissed last year. It's not clear why.

Earlier this year, Prince was fired from JPS Marble and Granite after he punched a co-worker and threatened other colleagues, according to court documents. His former boss became so scared of Prince after he was fired that he tried to take out a restraining order on him. A judge didn't grant it.

Late Thursday, authorities identified the wounded in Maryland as Enoc Villegas Sosa, 38, and Jose Roberto Flores Gillen, 37. They remain in critical condition.

Police in Delaware have not updated the condition of the victim there, but have said he is expected to survive. Prince was accused last year of punching that man and trying to rob him, said Nicole Magnusson, a spokeswoman for the Delaware Department of Justice.

He was charged with robbery and offensive touching, but that case was also dismissed. It's not clear why.

Associated Press writer Denise Lavoie in Richmond, Virginia, and Matthew Barakat in Arlington, Virginia, contributed to this report.

White nationalist Spencer drowned out by protesters

By JASON DEAREN, Associated Press

GAINESVILLE, Fla. (AP) — Counter demonstrators greatly outnumbered white nationalist Richard Spencer's supporters on Thursday at the University of Florida, their chants drowning Spencer out during his speech.

Outside, hundreds more people protested with signs and anti-Nazi chants alongside hundreds of police officers there to prevent violence.

Anti-Spencer protesters shouted, "Not in our town! Not in our state! We don't want your Nazi hate!" and "Let's go Gators" during his speech, frustrating the head of the National Policy Institute.

Three or four skirmishes occurred during the long afternoon after single Spencer supporters confronted the counter demonstrators, trying to speak and rile the crowds up. One man, wearing a white shirt with swastikas drawn on, was punched and chased out of the area. At least three others were quickly surrounded by crowds that shouted them down, chanting "Whose streets? Our streets!" and pushed them until they left the area or were chased behind police lines.

The Alachua County Sheriff said two people were arrested. Sean Brijmohan, 28, was charged with possession of a firearm on school property. The office said in a tweet that he had brought a gun onto the campus after being hired by a media organization as security. David Notte, 34, was charged with resisting an officer without violence.

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Five people had minor injuries and were immediately treated by fire rescue teams, authorities said. The school estimated it would spend \$600,000 on security to ensure no repeat of violent clashes connected to a white nationalist gathering in Charlottesville, Virginia, that left one dead in August. School officials cited the Charlottesville violence in rejecting an initial request from Spencer to speak at the university. They later relented on free speech grounds. Florida's governor had declared a state of emergency for the event.

AP photographer Chris O'Meara contributed to this report.

Follow Jason Dearen on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/JHDearen>

California fires cause \$1B in damage, burn 7,000 buildings

By JANIE HAR and MICHAEL R. BLOOD, Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The wildfires that have devastated Northern California this month caused at least \$1 billion in damage to insured property, officials said Thursday, as authorities increased the count of homes and other buildings destroyed to nearly 7,000.

Both numbers were expected to rise as crews continued assessing areas scorched by the blazes that killed 42 people, a total that makes it the deadliest series of fires in state history.

State Insurance Commissioner Dave Jones said the preliminary dollar valuation of losses came from claims filed with the eight largest insurance companies in the affected areas and did not include uninsured property.

The loss total was expected to climb "probably dramatically so," Jones told reporters, making it likely the fires also would become the costliest in California's history.

The initial insurance total covered 4,177 partial residential losses, 5,449 total residential losses, 35 rental and condominium losses, 601 commercial property losses, more than 3,000 vehicle losses, 150 farm or agricultural equipment losses, and 39 boats. Those figures included some fire losses in Southern California — several dozen structures were destroyed or damaged in an Orange County fire — though most were from the northern part of the state, agency officials said.

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's estimate of homes and structures destroyed was boosted to 6,900 from 5,700 as fire crews returned to hard-hit neighborhoods and assessed remote and rural areas they could not get to earlier, spokesman Daniel Berlant said.

He said most of the newly counted destroyed buildings burned on Oct. 8 and Oct. 9 — when the wildfires broke out in wine country north of San Francisco and other nearby areas.

"The estimates are in structures and are mostly homes, but also includes commercial structures and outbuildings like barns and sheds," Berlant said.

Twenty-two of the 42 deaths in California's October fires happened in a Sonoma County wildfire, making it the third-deadliest in California history. A 1933 Los Angeles fire that killed 29 people was the deadliest, followed by the 1991 Oakland Hills fire killed 25.

When adjusted for inflation, the Oakland Hills fire is believed the costliest fire in California history at \$2.8 billion. It destroyed about half as many homes and other buildings as the current series of fires.

California Gov. Jerry Brown late Wednesday issued an executive order to speed up recovery efforts as fire authorities say they've stopped the progress of wildfires.

More than 15,000 people remain evacuated Thursday, down from a high of 100,000 last Saturday. Brown's order also allowed disrupted wineries to relocate tasting rooms and suspended state fees for mobile home parks and manufactured homes.

The order extends the state's prohibition on price gouging during emergencies until April 2018 and expedites hiring of personnel for emergency and recovery operations.

In Los Angeles County, authorities said a charred body was found on Mount Wilson, where crews were trying to surround a smoldering wildfire in steep terrain.

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The male body discovered late Wednesday was recovered by the coroner's office, which will try to identify it, Sheriff's Sgt. Vincent Plair said.

California firefighters were also battling a blaze that sent smoke billowing into the college beach town of Santa Cruz.

The wildfire in steep and rugged terrain had grown to nearly half a square mile (1.3 square kilometers) and the number of houses threatened by the fire had doubled to 300.

Several firefighters suffered minor injuries.

Blood reported from Los Angeles. Associated Press writers John Antczak and Christopher Weber contributed from Los Angeles.

Pentagon faces demands for details on deadly attack in Niger

By ROBERT BURNS, AP National Security Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Members of Congress demanded answers Thursday two weeks after an ambush in the African nation of Niger killed four U.S. soldiers, with one top lawmaker even threatening subpoenas. The White House defended the slow pace of information, saying an investigation would eventually offer clarity about a tragedy that has morphed into a political dispute in the United States.

Among the unresolved inquiries: Why were the Americans apparently caught by surprise? Why did it take two additional days to recover one of the four bodies after the shooting stopped? Was the Islamic State responsible?

The confusion over what happened in a remote corner of Niger, where few Americans travel, has increasingly dogged President Donald Trump, who was silent about the deaths for more than a week.

Asked why, Trump on Monday turned the topic into a political tussle by crediting himself with doing more to honor the dead and console their families than any of his predecessors. His subsequent boast that he reaches out personally to all families of the fallen was contradicted by interviews with family members, some of whom had not heard from Trump at all.

And then the aunt of an Army sergeant killed in Niger, who raised the soldier as her son, said Wednesday that Trump had shown "disrespect" to the soldier's loved ones as he telephoned to extend condolences while they were driving to the Miami airport to receive his body. Sgt. La David Johnson was one of the four Americans killed Oct. 4 in southwest Niger; Trump called the families of all four Tuesday.

In an extraordinary White House briefing, John Kelly, the former Marine general who is Trump's chief of staff, described himself as "stunned" and "brokenhearted" by the criticism of Trump. He also invoked his son serving in Iraq to explain why American soldiers operate in dangerous parts of the world, saying their efforts to train local forces mean the U.S. doesn't have to undertake large-scale invasions of its own. Kelly's other son, Robert, was killed in combat in Afghanistan seven years ago.

The deadly ambush in Niger occurred as Islamic militants on motorcycles, toting rocket-propelled grenades and heavy machine guns, seized on a U.S. convoy and shattered the windows of their unarmored trucks. In addition to those killed, two Americans were wounded. No extremist group has claimed responsibility.

The attack is under official military investigation, as is normal for a deadly incident.

What is abnormal, according to Sen. John McCain, the Republican chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, is the Trump administration's slow response to requests for information. He said Thursday it may take a subpoena to shake loose more information.

"They are not forthcoming with that information," McCain told reporters.

Sen. Bob Corker, the Tennessee Republican who chairs the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said members of Congress have been provided with some information about the attack, "but not what we should."

At the Pentagon, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis pushed back, saying it naturally takes time to verify information about a combat engagement. He promised to provide accurate information as soon as it's available, but offered no timetable.

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"The loss of our troops is under investigation," he said. "We in the Department of Defense like to know what we're talking about before we talk."

Mattis did not offer details about the circumstances under which the Americans were traveling but said contact with hostile forces had been "considered unlikely."

That would explain why the Americans, who were traveling in unarmored vehicles with Nigerien counterparts, lacked access to medical support and had no immediate air cover, although Mattis said French aircraft were called to the scene quickly. He said contract aircraft flew out the bodies of three Americans shortly after the firefight. Local Nigeriens found Johnson's body and returned it Oct. 6.

It's not clear why Johnson was not found with the three others Oct. 4.

Dana W. White, a spokeswoman for Mattis, said Johnson had become "separated." Speaking at a news conference with her, Lt. Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, director of the Joint Staff, said he knew more about what had happened to Johnson but was not willing to share it. He said U.S., Nigerien and French forces remained in the area searching for Johnson until he was found, so it would be wrong to say he was "left behind."

Mattis said the U.S. has about 1,000 troops in that part of Africa to support a French-led mission to disrupt and destroy extremist elements. He said the U.S. provides aerial refueling, intelligence and reconnaissance support, and ground troops to engage with local leaders.

"In this specific case, contact (with hostile forces) was considered unlikely, but the reason we had U.S. Army soldiers there and not the Peace Corps, it's because we carry guns."

McKenzie said last week that U.S. troops in that area had done 29 similar missions over the previous six months without encountering enemy forces.

Underlining how the attack and its response have rattled the White House this week, Trump's national security adviser, Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster, also joined the defense. He said Thursday that it would be wrong for the Pentagon to provide details of the tragedy before it had fully verified them in the course of an in-depth investigation.

"Answers that are provided, oftentimes, short of that full investigation, turn out in retrospect to have been inaccurate and just cause more confusion," McMaster said.

Mattis described the mission being performed by the U.S. troops in Niger as a classic example of training that Army Green Berets have performed worldwide for decades, usually with no publicity. Known in military parlance as "foreign internal defense," the mission is to help local militaries improve their fighting skills and techniques. It requires a cultural acuity for which U.S. special operations troops are known.

Senators push for more online transparency in elections

By MARY CLARE JALONICK, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senators are moving to boost transparency for online political ads, unveiling on Thursday what could be the first of several pieces of legislation to try to lessen influence from Russia or other foreign actors on U.S. elections.

The bill by Democratic Sens. Mark Warner of Virginia and Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota would require social media companies like Facebook and Twitter to keep public files of election ads and meet the same disclaimer requirements as political broadcast and print advertising. Federal regulations now require television and radio stations to make publicly available the details of political ads they air. That includes who runs the ad, when it runs and how much it costs.

The bill also would require companies to "make reasonable efforts" to ensure that election ads are not purchased directly or indirectly by a foreign national. The move comes after Facebook revealed that ads that ran on the company's social media platform and have been linked to a Russian internet agency were seen by an estimated 10 million people before and after the 2016 election.

Warner is the top Democrat on the Senate intelligence committee, which is investigating Russian meddling in the 2016 race, and Klobuchar is the top Democrat on the Senate Rules Committee, which oversees

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elections. The legislation also has support from Republican Sen. John McCain of Arizona, who is the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Lawmakers on the Senate intelligence panel and other committees investigating Russian influence have said one of the main roles of Congress will be to pass legislation to try to stop the foreign meddling. That's in contrast to special counsel Robert Mueller, who is also investigating and has the ability to prosecute if he finds any criminal wrongdoing.

Other lawmakers are working on legislation to help states detect if foreign actors are trying to hack into their systems. That's after the Department of Homeland Security said that 21 states had their election systems targeted by Russian government hackers.

But it's unclear if Congress will be able to agree on any such legislation amid heightened partisan tensions. Warner and Klobuchar are still trying to woo additional Senate and House Republicans, who have spent much of the year rolling back federal regulations they see as burdensome.

McCain, who has for years broken with many of his GOP colleagues on campaign finance laws, said in a statement that he has "long fought to increase transparency and end the corrupting influence of special interests in political campaigns, and I am confident this legislation will modernize existing law to safeguard the integrity of our election system."

Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Richard Burr, R-N.C., has said he wants to wait until after an upcoming hearing with social media executives from Facebook, Twitter and Google before weighing in on the legislation. Late last month, after Warner first floated the bill, Burr said it was too soon to discuss legislation and that the hearing will "explore for the first time any holes that might exist in social media platform regulation or campaign law."

Another Republican member of the intelligence panel, Oklahoma Sen. James Lankford, said he has concerns about the bill, including that "there is a difference between the public airwaves and privately held fiber, basically, and how it's managed."

He said the "idea isn't bad," but he wants to look at the technical issues.

Lankford said he believes there will be several pieces of legislation coming out of the Russia probe, but "whether that's the first or not, I don't know."

Announcing the legislation at a news conference, the two Democrats framed the issue as a matter of national security.

"Russia attacked us and will continue to use different tactics to undermine our democracy and divide our country, including by purchasing disruptive online political ads," Klobuchar said. "We have to secure our election systems and we have to do it now."

Warner, who has worked closely with Burr on the intelligence panel, has said repeatedly that he hopes the social media companies will work with them on the legislation, which he calls "the lightest touch possible."

The companies have said very little publicly about the bill or the prospect of regulation. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg has said his company will now require political ads to disclose who is paying for them, a move that Warner and Klobuchar said their bill would "formalize and expand."

"We stand with lawmakers in their effort to achieve transparency in political advertising," Erin Egan, Facebook vice president for United States public policy, said in a statement after Warner and Klobuchar introduced their bill. "We have already announced the steps Facebook will take on our own and we look forward to continuing the conversation with lawmakers as we work toward a legislative solution."

Google also said it supports efforts to "improve transparency, enhance disclosures, and reduce foreign abuse." The company said it is evaluating steps it can take.

Twitter would only stay in a statement that "we look forward to engaging with Congress and the FEC on these issues." The Federal Election Commission regulates campaign finance laws.

Lawrence Noble, general counsel for the Campaign Legal Center, a nonpartisan election advocacy group, said that some foreign entities could potentially get around the legislation if it were passed, but it would make it harder for them and put more responsibility on the companies.

"There is a difference between them saying they will do something and the law saying they have to do something," Noble said.

Associated Press writers Barbara Ortutay in New York and Ryan Nakashima in Menlo Park, Calif. contributed to this report.

Trump kicks issues to Congress, is erratic negotiator

By CATHERINE LUCEY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is proving to be an erratic negotiating partner as he punts policy issues to Congress and then sends conflicting signals about what he really wants.

His rapid backpedal this week on a short-term health care is the latest example, and it's left Republicans and Democrats scratching their heads.

"The president has had six positions on our bill," an exasperated Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., said Wednesday after Trump offered multiple reads on a bipartisan plan to keep health insurance markets in business. Trump ultimately ended with a thumbs-down.

Nine months into office, Trump has shown a preference for delegating to lawmakers on everything from health care and immigration to foreign policy. Sometimes he creates situations that demand a congressional solution. In other cases, he sets difficult-to-achieve broad policy goals and expects lawmakers to fill in the fine print.

Along the way, he's proved to be an unpredictable force. He encouraged Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., to work with Murray on a bipartisan solution on insurer payments, only to announce after some wavering that he wouldn't support it.

Republican Sen. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin took Trump to task on Thursday, saying: "It's always best for the president to be completely consistent in terms of what he's supporting or not supporting. And let's face it, he's not been particularly consistent here."

Trump was tweaking Congress again Thursday, calling a Senate GOP budget plan the "first step toward massive tax cuts" but suggesting there was uncertainty about the votes. "I think we have the votes, but who knows?" he tweeted.

Yet Republican leaders were moving forward with a degree of certainty as only one GOP senator, Rand Paul of Kentucky, has expressed opposition.

Despite controlling both chambers of Congress and the White House, Republicans have achieved no major legislative successes this year. Their efforts on health care have ended in failure, leaving tax overhaul legislation as their only hope for a major win.

Some Republicans have grown resentful, and they're looking ahead to the 2018 elections with apprehension.

Most shy away from public criticism, arguing that the president is simply looking to Congress to do its job and pass legislation. If the work is piling up, they say, it's because former President Barack Obama took executive steps that were actually in Congress' domain, and now Trump needs congressional help to unwind them.

They point to immigration, where Obama acted unilaterally to extend protections to immigrants who were brought to the country illegally as children, and the Iran nuclear deal, where Trump's decision not to certify Tehran compliance kicks the future of U.S. participation to Congress.

"Look, our job is our job and it's our responsibility, it's our job to get this done," said Sen. Cory Gardner, R-Colo. "I'm not going to try to lay the blame at somebody else."

Trump doesn't have any such hesitation.

"I have great relationships with actually many senators, but in particular with most Republican senators. But we're not getting the job done," the president said this week. "And I'm not going to blame myself, I'll be honest. They are not getting the job done."

Trump's unpredictability makes it hard for lawmakers to keep up with his latest positions.

"I hadn't heard that. I thought yesterday he was liking it," Sen. David Perdue, R-Ga., remarked in surprise on Wednesday when asked about Trump's opposition to the insurer payments deal Alexander crafted

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with Murray. Indeed, Trump had spoken favorably about the deal around midday Tuesday, only to reverse course by the time evening rolled around.

On immigration, Trump at different times in recent weeks has offered to work with Democrats to protect young immigrants from deportation, denied such a deal is in the offing and suggested he could step in and craft a fix of his own.

Trump's allies argue he is just pushing lawmakers to enact the agenda they were elected on. A newcomer to legislative politics, Trump also brings a business and showman's perspective to negotiations, relishing drama and surprise.

Critics say Trump is comfortable making Congress the fall guy.

"He sees Congress's public approval ratings lower than his. So he feels he has an advantage over Congress," said Douglas Brinkley, a presidential historian at Rice University. "Whenever there's a policy issue that's thorny or undoable, he boots it to Congress to figure it out.

Brinkley added: "It's the opposite of a buck-stops-here approach with Harry Truman."

Sen. Bob Corker, R-Tenn., who's announced plans to retire and recently has been critical of Trump, says the president takes a different approach than past leaders.

"The more standard route is for the administration to lay out, for instance on health care ... a series of bullet points at the minimum, or a full bill. That's typically the way things would work. So, yeah, it's a very different way of governing and I think it's one of the reasons you've seen the results to be what they are."

Democrats are more pointed. Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York said Trump is making everyone's job harder.

"This seems to be his M.O.," Schumer said. "He throws red meat to his right-wing base, whether it's on health care, immigration, Iran, disaster aid, and then he says to Congress, 'You fix it up.' That's not the way to lead. That's following."

AP Congressional Correspondent Erica Werner contributed to this report.

Trump thrusts Kelly's private tragedy into public spotlight

By LAURIE KELLMAN and ROBERT BURNS, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Enraged and rattled by the political brawl over military mourning, White House Chief of Staff John Kelly returned this week to the one place he could go clear his head — Section 60 of Arlington National Cemetery, some of the saddest ground in America. There, amid the memorials to the recent war dead is Grave 9480, the final resting place of Kelly's son, Robert, a Marine killed in 2010 in Afghanistan.

"The only thing I could do to collect my thoughts was to go and walk among the finest men and women on this Earth," Kelly told reporters Thursday, as he mounted a vigorous defense of President Donald Trump's handling of the "sacred" job of consoling families of fallen soldiers.

Kelly's remarks invoking his son and his personal grief was a startling shift for the reserved, retired Marine general who has largely recoiled at injecting his family's loss into the political arena. Since the younger Kelly was killed by a land mine in remote Helmand province, his father has labored to keep Robert's death out of the spotlight — no easy task as the highest ranking military official to lose a child in the wars. Kelly only occasionally references his son in remarks, often growing emotional as he recounts the heartbreaking events or is asked to describe Robert.

"Finest man I ever knew," Kelly said on Fox & Friends in May.

On Memorial Day, he and Trump visited Robert's grave at Arlington.

"We grieve with you. We honor you. And we pledge to you that we will always remember Robert and what he did for all of us," Trump said, singling out the Kelly family during his remarks to the nation that day. Turning to Robert's father, then the secretary of homeland security, Trump added, "Thank you, John."

But Trump this week pushed Kelly into new terrain.

Seeking to defend his record of outreach to Gold Star families, Trump suggested former President Barack

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Obama should have called Kelly after Robert's death but didn't.

"You could ask Gen. Kelly, did he get a call from Obama?" Trump said in an interview on Fox News Radio.

Trump's willingness to raise the tragedy set many in the military community seething.

"If there is one sacred ground in politics it should be the ultimate sacrifices made by our military," wrote Chuck Hagel, a defense secretary under Obama and before that, a Republican U.S. senator. In an email to The Associated Press, Hagel added: "To use General Kelly and his family in this disgusting political way is sickening and beneath every shred of decency of presidential leadership."

"I would be surprised if he comes in and starts allowing people to use his family as a tool," said Charles C. Krulak, a former Marine Corps commandant who has known John Kelly since the mid-1990s.

The public controversy this week clearly was painful for Kelly, whose son had been awarded the Purple Heart. Kelly knew in 2010 that his son was patrolling with his men through mine-filled battlefields and had just days earlier warned the family of the potential danger, according to a report in The Washington Post. When Gen. Joseph Dunford Jr. rang the elder Kelly's doorbell at 6:10 a.m. on November 9, 2010, John Kelly knew Robert was dead. Dunford, Kelly told reporters Thursday, said Robert "was where he wanted to be exactly, what he wanted to be with exactly the people he wanted to be with."

"Hours after my son was killed his friends were calling us from Afghanistan telling us how great a guy he was. Those are the only phone calls that really matter," Kelly said Thursday. But, he allowed, there's "not really much that can take the edge off" such a loss.

In March 2011, Kelly accompanied his boss, Defense Secretary Bob Gates, on a visit to the Sangin district, in Helmand province — the scene of some of the most intense fighting of the war and where Robert Kelly had been killed.

As Gates' senior military assistant, Kelly stood silently among young Marines gathering under a harsh sun as Gates applauded what they had accomplished.

"Your success, obviously, has come at an extraordinary price," Gates said without mentioning names.

Asked to elaborate on Robert in the Fox interview, Kelly hesitated at first — then it came tumbling out.

"Finest guy. Wonderful guy. Wonderful husband, wonderful son, wonderful brother. Brave beyond all get out. His men still correspond with us. They still mourn him as we do."

Follow Kellman and Burns on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/APLaurieKellman> and <http://www.twitter.com/RobertBurnsAP> .

Associated Press writer Rhonda Shafner contributed to this report.

Experts: Hard for jurors to convict when cops are on trial

By JUSTIN JUOZAPAVICIUS, Associated Press

TULSA, Okla. (AP) — The hard-won conviction of a white former Oklahoma police officer who fatally shot his daughter's unarmed black boyfriend shows the difficulty prosecutors have in convincing jurors to put someone who carries a badge and a gun behind bars, legal experts said Thursday.

A fourth jury convicted 57-year-old ex-Tulsa officer Shannon Kepler late Wednesday of first-degree manslaughter in the 2014 off-duty fatal shooting of 19-year-old Jeremy Lake, who had just started dating Kepler's then-18-year-old daughter, Lisa.

The lesser charge carries a minimum sentence of four years in prison but sets no maximum term, leaving it up to the judge to decide. The jury recommended that Kepler get 15 years behind bars when he's sentenced Nov. 20.

Jurors in the first three trials deadlocked 11-1, 10-2 and 6-6, leading the judge to declare mistrials. Tulsa County District Attorney Steve Kunzweiler said Thursday that it illustrates the immense challenge prosecutors have in winning the conviction of a police officer.

"In the first trial, we learned from that and realized it's a very difficult case," he said. "The question with these jurors is ... can you put a police officer in prison?"

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"We recognize immediately that for the most part, people have a great respect for law enforcement officers, but there are cases when good people make poor decisions," he said.

The first jury convicted Kepler of recklessly using his firearm, but it and the second jury couldn't agree on the first-degree murder charge and didn't have the option of the lesser charge of manslaughter. The third jury did have the manslaughter option but found itself evenly deadlocked.

There also was a racial undercurrent to the trials. Kepler killed Lake days before the fatal shooting of an unarmed black 18-year-old by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, fanned the debate over the treatment of minorities by law enforcement.

A single black juror was seated for each of Kepler's four trials, and civil rights activists accused Kepler's lawyers of purposely trying to exclude potential black candidates, which they denied.

The combination of race and the police, coupled with the case being set in a part of the country where many revere law enforcement officers, likely made jury deliberations all the more difficult, said Johnny Nhan, associate professor of criminal justice at Texas Christian University.

"In this case, you have a high level of respect for the police in a place like Tulsa, there is a daughter (Kepler) is trying to protect. It's hard to separate jury emotion and personal feelings.

"The legal system advertises itself as a science, but it's more like an art," he said Thursday.

Kepler's lawyers said the 24-year police veteran was trying to protect his daughter because she had run away from home and was living in a crime-ridden neighborhood.

Attorney Richard O'Carroll, who didn't return several messages seeking comment on the verdict, said Lisa had been in and out of a homeless shelter before the shooting after her father forbade her from bringing men into the family's house.

Kepler, who retired from the force after he was charged, told investigators that Lake was armed and that he had shot him in self-defense, but police didn't find a weapon on Lake or at the scene, and several neighbors testified they didn't see a gun, either.

At his trial this week, Kepler testified that Lake made a move toward his waistband, leading him to believe he was going for a gun.

"He's bringing it, I'm bringing it," Kepler said. "It was either him or me. I'm not going to stand there and get shot."

Prosecutors said Kepler first watched his daughter and Lake from his SUV before approaching them on the street. Lake's aunt disputed Kepler's self-defense account and has said her nephew was reaching out to shake Kepler's hand to introduce himself when Kepler fired.

Even though Kepler was convicted on a lesser charge, Heather Winters, the mother of Lake's young son, told The Associated Press Thursday that the verdict will help her and the boy move on.

"I am beyond happy," Winters said. "I cried tears of joy when I found out."

Trump on his Puerto Rico response: 'I'd say it was a 10'

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump gave himself a "10" on Thursday for his response to the widespread devastation Puerto Rico suffered after back-to-back hurricanes created a situation that the island's governor described as "catastrophic" as he met with Trump at the White House.

More than 80 percent of households in Puerto Rico remain without electricity about a month after Hurricane Maria, the second storm, dealt the island a severe blow. Asked when the 3.4 million U.S. citizens living there could expect power to be fully restored, Trump replied: "It's a very, very good question, actually."

Trump said it will take "a while" to build a new power plant or substantially renovate what was damaged by the storms. The president said most of the power that exists is being supplied by the "massive numbers" of generators he sent to the island.

"There's never been a case where power plants were gone," Trump said, seated alongside Gov. Ricardo Rossello in the Oval Office. "So it's going to be a period of time before the electric is restored."

Trump was also asked by a reporter to rate, on a scale of 1 to 10, the White House response to Puerto

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Rico.

"I'd say it was a 10," Trump said. "I'd say it was probably the most difficult -- when you talk about relief, when you talk about search, when you talk about all the different levels, and even when you talk about lives saved, you look at the number -- I mean, this was -- I think it was worse than Katrina, it was, in many ways, worse than anything people have ever seen."

Trump said the administration had personnel nearby before the storm hit, ready to go afterward, and that a "fantastic job" was done under the circumstances.

"I would give a 10," he repeated.

During a visit to Puerto Rico earlier this month to survey damage, Trump compared what happened there to a "real catastrophe" like Hurricane Katrina, which struck New Orleans in 2005, killing hundreds when levees broke and flooded the city. Trump's comment was interpreted by some as minimizing Puerto Rico's suffering at a time when residents were struggling to get food and clean drinking water, and coping without electricity.

Seated beside Trump, Rossello tried to strike an upbeat note despite saying "it's a catastrophic situation" in Puerto Rico. But he said, "We are going to beat this. We know we're going to build better than before," he said.

Rossello has been supportive of Trump, saying again Thursday that every request he's made of the president has been answered. The governor, who also met with key lawmakers on Capitol Hill, said Trump "has been clear that no U.S. citizen will be left behind."

Members of Congress from both parties have criticized the response to Puerto Rico as lackluster compared to the administration's reaction after hurricanes in Houston and parts of Louisiana, and later in Florida.

The mayor of San Juan has also been a vocal critic of the response and of some of Trump's comments on Twitter.

Trump said he has given his "blessing" to Congress for a funding plan to help the debt-ridden island pay for the new power station. The electrical grid was in poor shape long before the storm hit.

The president also sought to clarify a tweet from earlier this month that seemed to suggest he was ready to cut off federal assistance to the U.S. territory, saying FEMA, the military and first responders can't stay "in P.R. forever!"

Trump said Thursday that "at a certain point," FEMA and other agencies have to leave the locations where the U.S. goes to help.

"I think the governor understands that FEMA, the military, the first responders cannot be there forever," he said. "And no matter where you go, they cannot be there forever."

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

US tourist fears he was hit in Cuba, years before diplomats

By JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) — Chris Allen's phone started buzzing as word broke that invisible attacks in Cuba had hit a U.S. government worker at Havana's Hotel Capri. Allen's friends and family had heard an eerily similar story from him before.

The tourist from South Carolina had cut short his trip to Cuba two years earlier after numbness spread through all four of his limbs within minutes of climbing into bed at the same hotel where American government workers were later targeted. Those weren't the only parallels. Convinced the incidents must be related, Allen joined a growing list of private U.S. citizens asking the same alarming but unanswerable question: Were we victims, too?

It may be that Allen's unexplained illness, which lingered for months and bewildered a half-dozen neurologists in the United States, bears no connection to whatever has harmed at least 22 American diplomats, intelligence agents and their spouses over the last year. But for Cuba and the U.S., it matters all the same.

It is cases like Allen's that illustrate the essential paradox of Havana's mystery: If you can't say what the

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attacks are, how can you say what they're not?

With no answers about the weapon, culprit or motive, the U.S. and Cuba have been unable to prevent the attacks from becoming a runaway crisis. As the United States warns its citizens to stay away from Cuba, there are signs that spring breakers, adventure-seekers and retirees already are reconsidering trips to the island. After years of cautious progress, U.S.-Cuban relations are now at risk of collapsing entirely.

That delicate rapprochement hadn't even started to take hold in April 2014 when Allen felt numbness overtake his body on his first night in the Havana hotel.

"It was so noticeable and it happened so quickly that it was all I could focus on and it really, really frightened me," said Allen, a 37-year-old who works in finance.

The Associated Press reviewed more than 30 pages of Allen's medical records, lab results, travel agency records and contemporaneous emails, some sent from Havana. They tell the story of an American tourist who fell ill under baffling circumstances in the Cuban capital, left abruptly, then spent months and thousands of dollars undergoing medical tests as his symptoms continued to recur.

One troubling fact is true for tourists and embassy workers alike: There's no test to definitively say who was attacked with a mysterious, unseen weapon and whose symptoms might be entirely unrelated. The United States hasn't disclosed what criteria prove its assertion that 22 embassy workers and their spouses are "medically confirmed" victims.

So it's no surprise that even the U.S. government has struggled to sort through confusing signs of possible attacks, odd symptoms, and incidents that could easily be interpreted as coincidences.

The AP has learned that an FBI agent sent down to Cuba this year was alarmed enough by an unexplained sound in his hotel that he sought medical testing to see whether he was the latest victim of what some U.S. officials suspect are "sonic attacks." Whether the FBI agent was really affected is disputed.

But there's no dispute that a U.S. government doctor was hit in Havana, half a dozen U.S. officials said.

Dispatched to the island earlier this year to test and treat Americans at the embassy, the physician became the latest victim himself. How badly he was hurt varies from telling to telling. All officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss the sensitive investigation. The FBI and the State Department declined to comment.

While the U.S. hasn't blamed anyone for perpetrating the attacks, President Donald Trump said this week he holds Cuba "responsible."

Cuba's government, which declined to comment for this story, vehemently denies involvement or knowledge of the attacks. Miguel Diaz-Canel, Cuba's first vice president and presumably its next leader, last week called the allegations "bizarre nonsense without the slightest evidence, with the perverse intention of discrediting Cuba's impeccable behavior."

When Allen visited Havana three years ago, the sicknesses and political drama were all still in the distant future.

After spending his first day walking the city, he checked into room 1414 of the recently refurbished Hotel Capri. Within minutes of going to bed, he started losing feeling.

The tingling originated in his toes, like that prickly feeling when your foot falls asleep. It spread into his ankles and calves, then to his fingertips. He got up to investigate, and the sensation went away. He got back in bed. The tingling returned, reaching his hands, forearms, ears, cheek and neck.

Allen assumed he'd never identify the cause of all his trouble. Then in September, the AP revealed the hotel where he stayed was the site of other puzzling events — later declared "attacks" by U.S. officials — that left embassy staffers with their own set of varying and seemingly inscrutable symptoms.

"I wanted to wave a flag and be like, I know this, I know what it is like to stay there and have something weird happen to your body and not be able to explain it," Allen said in an hour-long interview in his office in Charleston.

While the State Department says it's not aware of any tourists being attacked, it has given credence to the notion that the unidentifiable danger could potentially ensnare any American who sets foot on the island. Its extraordinary warnings last month noted that assaults have occurred at popular tourist hotels,

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including the Capri, and that the U.S. is in no position to guarantee anyone's safety.

Among the hundreds of thousands of Americans who've thronged to Cuba in recent years, Allen isn't the only tourist who believes he was attacked.

The State Department has received reports of several citizens who visited Cuba and say they've developed symptoms similar to what embassy victims experienced. The government says it can't verify their accounts, but hasn't indicated it's trying hard to do so. Asked if anyone is investigating such reports, the State Department said its advice to concerned tourists is to "consult a medical professional."

Since the AP began reporting on the Cuba attacks, roughly three dozen American citizens have contacted the news agency to say they believe they may have been affected by the same or related phenomena. The AP has not published those accounts, because closer examination gave ample reason to doubt their situations were connected.

Allen's case is different.

He stayed on the 14th floor of the same Havana hotel where U.S. government workers have been attacked, including on an upper floor. He described sudden-onset symptoms that began in his hotel bed, but disappeared in other parts of the room — similar to accounts given by U.S. government workers who described attacks narrowly confined to just parts of rooms. They also spoke of being hit at night, in bed.

And medical records show Allen conveyed consistent, detailed descriptions of what he experienced to at least six physicians — almost two years before the public knew anything about the attacks.

Still, other parts of Allen's story don't neatly align with what embassy workers have reported.

The U.S. has said the attacks started in 2016, two years after Allen's Cuba visit.

His primary complaints of numbness and tingling aren't known to have been reported by the government victims, though their symptoms, too, have varied widely and included many neurological problems.

Allen also didn't recount hearing the blaring, agonizing sound — a recording of which the AP published last week — that led investigators to suspect a sonic weapon. Then again, neither did many of the 22 "medically confirmed" government victims.

When Allen traveled to Havana for a long weekend of sightseeing, Americans were still prohibited from visiting under U.S. travel restrictions that were later eased. He booked flights through Mexico using a Canadian travel company that specifically recommended he stay at Capri, travel records show.

Whatever happened on his first night in Havana, it came back the next evening. Again the numbness set in within minutes of getting into bed, this time stronger and in more parts of his body. It didn't go away.

So the next morning Allen rushed to the airport and took the first available flight off the island.

But the numbness stayed with him to varying degrees for six months. In that time, he saw an urgent care doctor, then his family physician, and then one neurologist after another at the Medical University of South Carolina.

Every time the numbness seemed to ease, it would return without explanation. Specialists performed nerve conduction tests, full blood workups, exams to check muscle function, a CT of the head, an MRI of the spine, a sonogram of the heart. Doctors considered infections, tumors, the temporarily paralyzing Guillain-Barre syndrome, poisoning from heavy metal contamination and even ciguatoxin, contained in some Caribbean fish.

"When you have these vague symptoms, sometimes all you can do is prove what it's not," said Dr. George Durst, Allen's longtime physician. "No one's smart enough to figure out what it was."

Durst said Allen was right to be worried and didn't imagine his symptoms. He said Allen's loss of sensation on both sides of the body ruled out peripheral nerve damage, suggesting the problem was in his central nervous system instead.

Outside medical experts say it's difficult if not impossible to determine whether different symptoms experienced by different individuals in Cuba are causally connected. The U.S. has declined to say what criteria separate the medically confirmed victims from others who've reported concerns or symptoms.

"I am sure that between April 2014 and October 2017 there must have been a very large number of people who were in Cuba and who were affected by various symptoms. But that's not unusual," said Mario

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Svirsky, who teaches neuroscience at New York University School of Medicine.

If Allen was targeted by anyone, it's not clear why.

He would have been one of the first Americans to come through Hotel Capri after a major renovation. The iconic high-rise, known as a flashy mobster hangout before Cuba's 1959 revolution, had re-opened a few months earlier under a partnership between Cuba's state-run tourism company and a Spanish hotel chain. Hotel spokespeople declined to comment for this story.

To an outsider, Allen could have looked like a U.S. government agent, potentially even a spy.

A clean-cut 33-year-old at the time, he had worked for years in Republican politics, including on former Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman's 2012 presidential campaign. He also performed "advance" work in George W. Bush's administration that involved setting up logistics for official trips, a contract job that meant he briefly had an official passport.

Allen approached the AP after it reported on the Capri attacks to ask how he could contact investigators to volunteer information. He agreed to tell his story publicly once it became clear the U.S. government was not actively looking into cases of potentially affected tourists. Allen said he was uninterested in publicity, and declined AP's requests to be photographed and to tell his story on camera.

The harrowing symptoms aside, Allen said he doesn't regret visiting Cuba. Eight months after his trip, as former President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro announced they would restore diplomatic relations, Allen took to Instagram to reflect on "a few wonderful days wandering the streets and photographing the people of Havana."

"If the latest news makes it easier for you to visit, I encourage all of you to do so sooner than later," he wrote.

AP Medical Writer Luran Neergaard and news researcher Monika Mathur contributed to this report along with Matthew Lee and Bradley Klapper in Washington and Jake Pearson in New York.

Reach Josh Lederman on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/joshledermanAP>. Follow the AP's coverage of the Cuba attacks at <http://apnews.com/tag/CubaHealthMystery>.

CIA head: NKorea months from perfecting nuclear capabilities

By DEB RIECHMANN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — CIA Director Mike Pompeo said Thursday that North Korea is months away from perfecting its nuclear weapons capabilities.

"They are close enough now in their capabilities that from a U.S. policy perspective we ought to behave as if we are on the cusp of them achieving" their objective of being able to strike the United States, Pompeo told a national security forum in Washington.

But he said there's a difference between having the ability to fire a single nuclear missile and the capability of producing large amounts of fissile material and developing an arsenal of such weapons.

Speaking later at the same event, National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster said, "We are in a race to resolve this short of military action."

"We are not out of time," he told the forum, organized by the Foundation for Defense of Democracies think tank. "But we are running out of time."

North Korea, which started its nuclear program decades ago, has accelerated its weapons tests. Twice in July, it launched a long-range missile that could potentially reach the U.S. mainland. In September, it conducted its most powerful atomic explosion yet.

Dire threats traded by President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un have further stoked fears of war.

John Brennan, who was Pompeo's predecessor as CIA chief, voiced concern late Wednesday about Trump's tweets and said the prospects of a military conflict on the Korean Peninsula "are greater than they have been in several decades."

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"I don't think it's likely or probable, but if it's a 1-in-4 or 1-in-5 chance, that's too high," Brennan said at Fordham University in New York.

Both of the Trump administration officials stressed that while military force was a last resort, the president was prepared to use it if necessary to ensure Kim is not able to put America at risk with a nuclear weapon.

Independent experts differ on just how advanced Pyongyang's program is in miniaturizing a nuclear warhead to fit on a missile and in mastering how to make a missile re-enter the Earth's atmosphere and strike a target.

Pompeo said intelligence on North Korea and the current state of its weapons capabilities is imperfect, and "when you're now talking about months, our capacity to understand that at a detailed level is in some sense irrelevant."

"We are at a time where the president has concluded that we need a global effort to ensure Kim Jong Un doesn't have that capacity," Pompeo said.

With tough international sanctions now in place, Pompeo said China has done more than expected to reduce trade with its wayward ally but can do more. Beijing has also communicated around the world it is intent on helping the U.S. resolve the issue, he said.

McMaster said China has the vast majority of economic power over North Korea, controlling 90 percent of its external trade, but Russia has considerable influence too.

He urged Moscow to use that influence to convince Kim to move toward denuclearization "as a last chance to avoid severe consequences" against the North.

Associated Press writer Matthew Pennington contributed to this report.

Spain set to strip Catalonia of powers over independence bid

By ARITZ PARRA and CIARAN GILES, Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — The crisis over Catalonia's quest for independence escalated Thursday, as Spain's central government prepared the unprecedented step of stripping the wealthy region of some of its self-governing powers after its leader refused to abandon secession.

In his latest display of brinkmanship, Catalan President Carles Puigdemont sent a letter to Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy just minutes before a deadline set by Madrid for him to backtrack on his calls to secede.

Puigdemont didn't back down, however, and threatened to go ahead with a unilateral proclamation of independence if the government refuses to negotiate.

"If the State Government persists in blocking dialogue and the repression continues, the Parliament of Catalonia will proceed, if deemed appropriate, to vote on the formal declaration of independence," Puigdemont's letter said in an English translation provided by the Catalan regional government.

Spain's government responded by calling a special Cabinet session for Saturday when it will set in motion Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution. That article allows for central authorities to take over all or some of the powers of any of the country's 17 autonomous regions.

Regarded as the "nuclear option," such a punitive measure takes the standoff to another level. It probably will trigger outrage in Catalonia and could backfire by fostering sympathy for the independence movement, which polls suggest is supported only by about half of Catalans.

With a mood of defiance hardening in the Catalan capital of Barcelona and the Madrid-based government adamant that the constitution doesn't allow for the breakup of Spain, there seems to be no end in sight for one of Europe's long-simmering disputes.

The standoff has intensified since Oct. 1, when Catalan authorities held an independence referendum that Spain's Constitutional Court declared illegal. The national government sent thousands of police to enforce a court order disallowing the balloting, bringing violent clashes that further soured relations.

The dispute is increasingly encroaching on the European Union's political agenda. Catalonia wasn't officially to be discussed at an EU summit starting Thursday in Brussels, but leaders offered their views. French President Emmanuel Macron reiterated his recent support for Rajoy, saying that the summit would

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be "marked by a message of unity around member states amid the crises they could face, unity around Spain."

European Council President Donald Tusk ruled out any EU role in the dispute, telling reporters on the sidelines of the summit that "there is no room, no space for any kind of mediation, or international initiatives or action."

While polls indicate that Catalonia's 7.5 million residents are roughly divided over independence, an overwhelming majority wants to settle the issue in a binding legal referendum. Many Catalans have long stressed the region's differences from the rest of Spain. The latest surge for independence began in 2010, when the Constitutional Court struck down key parts of a groundbreaking charter that would have granted greater autonomy for Catalonia and recognized it as a nation within Spain.

Article 155 has never been used in the four decades since democracy was restored after the dictatorship of Gen. Francisco Franco. The article leaves it up to the national government to decide what specific measures to take. Officials say Madrid will almost certainly seize control of Catalonia's regional police to ensure law and order is maintained, along with tightening its grip on the region's finances.

Other measures being mulled are removing Puigdemont's presidential powers, rescinding regional control over education and schools, calling fresh elections that would dissolve the regional parliament, and taking control of public media that are seen as mouthpieces for Catalonia's pro-independence ruling coalition.

Puigdemont claims the referendum gave him a mandate to declare independence. His government says more than 40 percent of 5.5 million eligible voters cast ballots, with most favoring independence.

So far, however, Puigdemont has only called for negotiations with Spain and international mediators.

Andrew Dowling, an expert in Catalan history at Cardiff University in Wales, said any declaration of independence in the Catalan parliament would be merely symbolic without border and institutional controls.

Such a unilateral declaration "will see (a) fracture between hard-liners and the pragmatic people in Catalonia, who are already seeing economic fallout," Dowling said.

Spain's Association of Commercial Registers said Thursday that 971 companies, including Catalan banks, multinationals and midsized businesses, have moved their registered addresses out of the troubled region because of concerns about its future.

Giles reported from Madrid. Associated Press writers Frank Griffiths in London, Lorne Cook in Brussels and Angela Charlton in Paris contributed.

Bush condemns Trump-era America: 'Bigotry seems emboldened'

By STEVE PEOPLES, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Former President George W. Bush on Thursday denounced bigotry in Trump-era American politics, warning that the rise of "nativism," isolationism and conspiracy theories have clouded the nation's true identity.

The comments, delivered at a New York City conference hosted by the George W. Bush Institute, amounted to an indirect critique from a former Republican president who has remained largely silent during President Donald Trump's unlikely rise to power. The 43rd president did not name Trump on Thursday, but he attacked some of the principles that define the 45th president's political brand.

"We've seen nationalism distorted into nativism, forgotten the dynamism that immigration has always brought to America," Bush said. "We see a fading confidence in the value of free markets and international trade, forgetting that conflict, instability and poverty follow in the wake of protectionism. We've seen the return of isolation sentiments, forgetting that American security is directly threatened by the chaos and despair of distant places."

"We've seen our discourse degraded by casual cruelty," he continued. "Bigotry seems emboldened. Our politics seems more vulnerable to conspiracy theories and outright fabrication."

"We need to recall and recover our own identity," he continued. "To renew our country, we only need to remember our values."

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Asked about the speech, Trump said he hadn't seen it.

The comment about identity was one of several that warned of what Bush described as troubling political trends.

Bush noted Russia's meddling in the 2016 election and declared that "the Russian government has made a project of turning Americans against each other."

"Foreign aggressions, including cyberattacks, disinformation and financial influence, should never be downplayed or tolerated," Bush said.

Trump has expressed skepticism of Russia's involvement. A special prosecutor is currently investigating whether Trump and his campaign associates coordinated with Moscow in the effort to sway the election.

Bush is the brother of 2016 presidential hopeful Jeb Bush, the former Florida governor nicknamed, belittled and ultimately vanquished by Trump during the race for the Republican nomination. He joins a slowly growing list of prominent Republicans who have publicly defied Trump, including Republican Sens. John McCain, who delivered a similar speech this week. Sen. Bob Corker, the Tennessee Republican who has announced he's retiring, has denounced what he termed the "adult day care center" of the Trump White House.

But during the Bush event, a current Trump administration official also broke with Trump's dismissive tone on Russian interference. Nikki Haley, Trump's chief envoy to the United Nations, cast Russia's efforts to influence the 2016 election as "warfare" and efforts to "sow chaos" in elections across the world.

"The Russians, God bless them, they're saying, 'Why are Americans anti-Russian? And why have we done the sanctions?' Well, don't interfere in our elections and we won't be anti-Russian," Haley said. She added, "When a country can come and interfere in another country's elections, that is warfare."

Facebook recently provided three congressional committees with more than 3,000 ads they had traced to a Russian internet agency and told investigators of their contents. Twitter also briefed Congress last month and handed over to Senate investigators the profile names of 201 accounts linked to Russians.

Laurie Kellman contributed from Washington.

Follow Peoples and Kellman on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/sppeoples> and <http://www.twitter.com/APLaurieKellman>

2-story 'Star Wars' replica in yard for Halloween is big hit

By **DAKE KANG, Associated Press**

PARMA, Ohio (AP) — A two-story, "Star Wars"-inspired Halloween yard display in Ohio is enticing kids to get toy lightsabers and attracting hundreds of visitors from across the state.

Elevator mechanic Nick Meyer, 39, spent about \$1,500 and 10 hours a weekend for half a year to build a replica of the four-legged All Terrain Armored Transport, or AT-AT walker. He built it with his carpenter friend Anthony Paroda, and it's been such a success that spectators are donating money for them to build another display next year.

At 19 feet, the replica is nearly as tall as Meyer's home in Parma, a Cleveland suburb. The cockpit of the AT-AT walker is outfitted with lights that glow red at night, and a mannequin fashioned to resemble a "Star Wars" Stormtrooper soldier stands guard in front.

Meyer said he built it with plywood, hard foam and plastic barrels and based the design off a toy he bought online.

"We're both pretty crafty, but it's not rocket science," Meyer said. "You just gotta be willing to do it."

Local media attention catapulted the display into fame, drawing droves of visitors from dawn to dusk. At least three dozen spectators drove by to gawk and take selfies one Wednesday afternoon. Among them was Nicole Drake, 26, who was on her way home from work when the replica caught her eye.

"I just had to stop by," Drake said. "I was amazed. It's actually the size of their house."

Meyer said he has built attention-grabbing Halloween displays for six years running, from an Addams Family mausoleum to the stern of a pirate ship jutting out from his front porch. He tears them down in

November and drinks beers with a friend when dreaming up the next year's display.

Meyer and his wife, Becky, say Halloween is their favorite holiday.

"The creepiness, the decorating, being able to dress up and pretend to be a kid still — it keeps me young," Nick Meyer said.

"We like to do it up big if we can," his wife said. "I just so happened to find a husband that loves it too."

The Meyers bonded over a mutual love of horror movies, and their Halloween bash is their biggest family gathering of the year. Even during Christmas, they have an all-black tree decorated with bats and jack-o'-lanterns instead of a traditional tinsel-topped tree.

The Meyers say they're bigger fans of Halloween than "Star Wars." Still, they'll be dressing the part this year: Nick Meyer will dress as Princess Leia, while Becky Meyer will don a Darth Vader costume. It's inspired their next-door neighbor Brianna Johnson, 8, to start swinging her toy lightsaber near the AT-AT walker replica after school.

"I wish I could build this," Brianna said. "Star Wars' is pretty cool."

Another warm winter forecast for swath of US

By **SETH BORENSTEIN, AP Science Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Much of the U.S. should expect another warm winter, but not quite as toasty as the last two years, forecasters said.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on Thursday forecast a warmer winter from California through the Midwest to Maine. A colder than normal winter is predicted for southern Alaska, the Pacific Northwest and the Northern Tier states. Normal temperatures are forecast for a thin swath of states from Indiana to Idaho.

The big driver in the forecast is a La Nina weather event that is likely to develop next month. La Nina, the flip side of El Nino, is the periodic cooling of the central Pacific Ocean that affects weather patterns around the globe.

There was a La Nina for the early part of last winter. The 2015-2016 winter was record warm, about 4.55 degrees hotter than normal.

Mike Halpert, deputy director of NOAA's Climate Prediction Center, said it would be surprising if this winter is as warm.

Halpert said the southern U.S. is likely to be drier than normal, while the north from eastern Washington through the Great Lakes to upstate New York is likely to be wetter.

NOAA's winter outlook doesn't forecast snow or specific storms, but La Ninas tend to favor more storms coming from the west and north than from the Gulf of Mexico or the East Coast, he said.

The private weather firm AccuWeather — whose chief executive officer was just nominated to head NOAA — forecasts a quite colder, wilder winter. The company predicts a chilly winter with snow and ice from the Northeast to the Great Lakes with "Arctic cold blasts" in the Great Plains. It also predicts a milder and drier winter than last year for the Southern Plains, Southwest and California.

Follow Seth Borenstein on Twitter at @borenbears. His work can be found here.

British Film Institute strips Harvey Weinstein of high honor

LONDON (AP) — The British Film Institute stripped disgraced producer Harvey Weinstein of its highest honor Thursday, saying his alleged "appalling conduct" stands in opposition to the organization's values.

Weinstein was awarded a BFI Fellowship in 2002 for his contribution to British cinema.

In recent weeks, dozens of women have accused him of sexual assault and harassment. He has been fired by the film company he founded with his brother Bob and expelled from Hollywood's movie academy.

Weinstein denies having any non-consensual sexual activity.

The film institute said in a statement that "the serious and widespread allegations about Harvey Weinstein's appalling conduct are in direct opposition to the BFI's values."

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It said "sexual harassment, abuse and bullying is unacceptable under any circumstances."

"We wholeheartedly support those brave enough to come forward and speak out," the institute said. "The film industry needs more women represented on every level, on and off screen.

Several British lawmakers have also appealed for Weinstein to lose an honor he was granted by Queen Elizabeth II in 2004, when he was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire. The politicians have asked the Honors Forfeiture Committee to rescind the award, which is one notch below a knighthood.

Weinstein has backed many British movies, including "Shakespeare in Love" and "The King's Speech."

London police are investigating allegations of sexual assault against him made by two women.

In the U.S., the Directors Guild of America said Thursday its leaders will address the "very serious issue of sexual harassment in the industry" at its Saturday board meeting.

Weinstein has had his membership revoked by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Science, and the Producers Guild of America has voted unanimously to institute termination proceedings against him.

Trump's health subsidy shutdown could lead to free insurance

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — If President Donald Trump prevails in shutting down a major "Obamacare" health insurance subsidy, it would have the unintended consequence of making free basic coverage available to more people, and making upper-tier plans more affordable.

The unexpected assessment comes from consultants, policy experts, and state officials, who are trying to discern the potential fallout from a Washington health care debate that's becoming even more complicated and volatile.

What's driving the predictions? It's because another subsidy that's part of the health law would go up for people with low-to-moderate incomes, offsetting Trump's move.

"It's a kind of counter-intuitive result," said Kurt Giesa, a health insurance expert with the Oliver Wyman consulting firm.

Think of pushing down on one end of a see-saw and the other end goes up.

According to one estimate, more consumers would sign up for coverage next year even though Trump says the Affordable Care Act is "virtually dead."

On Thursday, the fate of the health law's subsidy for copays and deductibles remained unclear as a bipartisan congressional deal to continue payments faced political roadblocks. Separately, state attorneys general were seeking a federal court order to keep the money flowing.

Trump's attempt to shut off the subsidy for copays and deductibles would cause a different subsidy to jump up, the one for premiums.

The Obama-era health care law actually has two major subsidies that benefit consumers with low-to-moderate incomes. The one targeted by Trump reimburses insurers for reducing copays and deductibles, and is under a legal cloud. The other subsidy is a tax credit that reduces the premiums people pay, and it is not in jeopardy.

If the subsidy for copays and deductibles gets eliminated, insurers would raise premiums to recoup the money, since by law they have to keep offering reduced copays and deductibles to consumers with modest incomes.

The subsidy for premiums is designed to increase with the rising price of insurance. So government spending to subsidize premiums would jump.

"This is where the counting gets sort of weird," said Matthew Buettgens, a senior research analyst with the Urban Institute.

The nonpartisan policy research group has estimated that richer premium subsidies could entice up to 600,000 more people to sign up for health law coverage. That depends on how insurers and state regulators adjust, which isn't totally clear yet.

The group also found that the federal government would end up spending more overall on health insurance through higher premium subsidies.

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None of this would be any comfort to people who buy individual health insurance policies but aren't eligible for government subsidies. Many are still facing significant premium increases for 2018, aggravated by political turmoil that has made insurers fearful they'll lose more money.

Still, the potential for a subsidy windfall hasn't been lost on officials at the state level.

"It means many more Californians and people across the country will get a zero-premium bronze plan," said Peter Lee, executive director of Covered California, the health insurance marketplace in the nation's most populous state.

"Bronze" is the health law's basic coverage level. "Silver" is the mid-range standard plan and the most popular. "Gold" is close to employer health insurance in value.

In addition to free bronze plans, many consumers would be able to buy a gold plan for about the same monthly premium as silver coverage, Wyman and the Urban Institute concluded.

Other states where consumers could see zero-premium bronze plans include Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, Utah and Wyoming, according to an industry estimate.

It's complicated, but here's why:

— First, the subsidy for copays and deductibles is provided only if you have a silver plan.

— Next, the other subsidy, the one for premiums, is pegged to the cost of a lower-priced silver plan.

In California, regulators instructed insurers to increase premiums for silver plans sold on the public marketplace to account for the loss of the subsidy for copays and deductibles.

Premiums for bronze plans and gold plans were shielded from that increase.

But because the federal subsidy for premiums is tied to the cost of a silver plan, that subsidy will be higher for everybody whose income qualifies them for financial assistance.

So consumers can use their richer premium subsidy to get a bronze plan for no monthly cost or very little, or a gold plan for much less than they would pay now.

Lee, the California official, said he believes regulators in close to half the states have taken a similar approach.

Final premiums for 2018 have not been officially unveiled yet, and some states are still making adjustments. Sign-up season starts Nov. 1.

A few militants fight on in Philippine city ripped to shreds

By JIM GOMEZ, Associated Press

MARAWI, Philippines (AP) — Smoke wafted from the smoldering carcasses of buildings and houses, with the dome of a mosque blasted out with holes, as Philippine troops battled Thursday to defeat a final stand by the last dozens of pro-Islamic State group militants in a southern city.

The desolate war scene, witnessed by Associated Press journalists on board a navy patrol gunboat in Lake Lanao, could herald what the government hopes will be the end of a nearly five-month siege by the militants in Marawi city.

Filipino troops killed 13 more suspected militants Wednesday night, including one believed to be a top Malaysian terror suspect although his body hasn't been recovered yet, military officials said.

"Our troops are continuing their assault," army Col. Romeo Brawner said after his news conference in Marawi was disrupted by loud explosions reverberating from the final area of battle, about 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) away. About 20 to 30 militants continue to fight back, he said.

While troops pressed their assault with artillery and gunfire, officers used loudspeakers to ask the militants, many of them positioned in a bullet-pocked two-story building, to surrender. The building stands on a pier by the lake near a huge gunfire-scarred welcome sign that says "I (love) Marawi."

Sporadic fighting continued even after President Rodrigo Duterte visited the Islamic city on Tuesday and announced its liberation, sparking hopes that hundreds of thousands of residents could begin returning home. The speed of their return, however, will depend on how quickly the city is declared safe of militants and rebuilt.

Volunteers and displaced residents have begun a government-led cleanup in neighborhoods that were

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declared safe. Power has been restored in more than half of the lakeside city, along with water supply, officials said.

On Monday, the defense secretary and military chief of staff announced that two of the last leaders of the siege — Isnilon Hapilon, who is one of the FBI's most-wanted terror suspects, and Omarkhayam Maute — were killed in a gunbattle.

Their deaths were the turning point that partly convinced the president he could declare Marawi liberated from the gunmen, Brawner told the AP.

Military spokesman Maj. Gen. Restituto Padilla said Malaysian Mahmud bin Ahmad was believed among 13 militants killed overnight and another seven in the morning. Six soldiers were slightly wounded in the fighting.

Two civilian hostages — a mother and her teenage daughter — were also rescued, Padilla said.

The information about Mahmud was based on what the rescued mother and daughter told the military, Padilla said.

Mahmud, who uses nom de guerre Abu Handzalah, is a close associate of Hapilon. Military officials said he had linked up Hapilon with the Islamic State group and provided funding to bankroll the siege of Marawi.

Padilla said troops discovered that there may be more militant fighters remaining in a small battle area than earlier estimated.

Marawi, a mosque-studded center of Islamic faith in the predominantly Roman Catholic Philippines, has been devastated by the siege by the militants who waved IS-style black flags and hung them on buildings they had occupied in Marawi's business district and outlying areas, according to the military.

The insurrection prompted the military to launch a ground offensive and airstrikes, with the United States and Australia later backing the troops by deploying surveillance aircraft. Duterte declared martial law across the south, the homeland of minority Muslims and the scene of a decades-old separatist rebellion, to deal with the uprising and prevent other insurgents from waging attacks elsewhere and reinforcing the fighters in Marawi.

The surprise occupation of the city and the involvement of foreign fighters set off alarms in Southeast Asia. Analysts said parts of the southern Philippines were at risk of becoming a new base for IS as it lost territory to international forces in Iraq and Syria.

Some of the residents who returned to Marawi for the cleanup Thursday became emotional after seeing their devastated city and homes. Esnairah Macabunar saw weeds growing around her two-story house but became more stunned when she went inside and realized her home had been ransacked.

"Everything was stolen in my house," she said. "I am still shaken because I cannot accept what happened, my whole life savings are gone."

Associated Press writer Teresa Cerojano in Manila contributed to this report.

Asian shares rise as investors await Japan vote, Fed choice

By **KELVIN CHAN, AP Business Writer**

HONG KONG (AP) — Asian shares pushed higher on investor optimism over the global outlook despite uncertainties over the outcome of political events in China and Japan and speculation over Trump's choice for the next Fed chief.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 crept less than 0.1 percent higher to 21,451.78 and South Korea's Kospi added 0.4 percent to 2,483.08. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index rebounded 0.8 percent to 28,389.65 after a big selloff the day before while the Shanghai Composite in mainland China edged 0.1 percent higher to 3,371.87. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 was up 0.3 percent to 5,915.10.

CHINA CONGRESS: Markets are keeping an eye on the Chinese Communist Party's party congress, which wraps up next week, for any insights into financial or economic policies over the next five years. Official data showed quarterly growth in the world's No. 2 economy ticked lower but was relatively stable. Analysts focused on comments reportedly made on the meeting's sidelines by China's central bank governor Zhou Xiaochuan warning about a collapse in market values following a long bull run.

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JAPAN VOTES: Voters in Asia's second biggest economy are heading to the polls on Sunday for parliamentary elections. Investors don't expect big surprises as Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's party is expected to retain a comfortable lead thanks to "Abenomics" stimulus policies credited with shoring up economic growth while traditional opposition parties remain in disarray.

NEW ZEALAND ELECTION: The kiwi dollar was under pressure after Jacinda Ardern of the liberal Labour Party was finally chosen to lead a new coalition government in New Zealand after an election last month. Ardern takes over after nine years of rule by conservatives and wants to curb immigration, ban foreign speculators from buying homes and spend more money on health care and education.

FED CHAIR: Investor speculation is mounting over who President Donald Trump will pick as the next head of the U.S. Federal Reserve. He has promised to announce his decision before he leaves on an Asian trip Nov. 3 and some believe he'll make his pick as early as next week. He has already narrowed the shortlist to five candidates, including incumbent Janet Yellen.

MARKET VIEW: "Beyond short term uncertainties we remain in a sweet spot in the investment cycle — with okay valuations particularly outside of the U.S., solid global growth and improving profits but still benign monetary conditions," Shane Oliver of AMP Capital wrote in a commentary. "So we remain of the view that the broad trend in share markets will remain up."

WALL STREET: Major U.S. benchmarks were mostly higher, eking out tiny gains to extend the market's winning streak. The S&P 500 index rose less than 1 percent to close at 2,562.10 and the Dow Jones industrial average added less than 1 percent to 23,163.04. The Nasdaq composite slid less than 0.3 percent to 6,605.07.

ENERGY: Oil futures bounced. Benchmark U.S. crude rose 4 cents to \$51.55 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract lost 75 cents, or 1.4 percent, to settle at \$51.29 per barrel on Thursday. Brent crude, used to price international oils, added 2 cents to \$57.25 per barrel in London.

CURRENCIES: The dollar strengthened to 113.20 yen from 112.56 yen in late trading Thursday. The euro slipped to \$1.1809 from \$1.1851.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, Oct. 20, the 293rd day of 2017. There are 72 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Oct. 20, 1967, a jury in Meridian, Mississippi, convicted seven men of violating the civil rights of slain civil rights workers James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner; the seven received prison terms ranging from 3 to 10 years.

On this date:

In 1714, the coronation of Britain's King George I took place in Westminster Abbey.

In 1803, the U.S. Senate ratified the Louisiana Purchase.

In 1936, Helen Keller's teacher, Anne Sullivan Macy, died in Forest Hills, New York, at age 70.

In 1947, the House Un-American Activities Committee opened hearings into alleged Communist influence and infiltration in the U.S. motion picture industry.

In 1964, the 31st president of the United States, Herbert C. Hoover, died in New York at age 90.

In 1968, former first lady Jacqueline Kennedy married Greek shipping magnate Aristotle Onassis.

In 1973, in the so-called "Saturday Night Massacre," special Watergate prosecutor Archibald Cox was dismissed and Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson and Deputy Attorney General William B. Ruckelshaus resigned.

In 1976, 78 people were killed when the Norwegian tanker Frosta rammed the commuter ferry George Prince on the Mississippi River near New Orleans.

In 1977, three members of the rock group Lynyrd Skynyrd, including lead singer Ronnie Van Zant, were

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killed along with three others in the crash of a chartered plane near McComb, Mississippi.

In 1987, 10 people were killed when an Air Force jet crashed into a Ramada Inn hotel near Indianapolis International Airport after the pilot, who was trying to make an emergency landing, ejected safely.

In 1994, actor Burt Lancaster died in Los Angeles at age 80.

In 2011, Moammar Gadhafi, 69, Libya's dictator for 42 years, was killed as revolutionary fighters overwhelmed his hometown of Sirte (SURT) and captured the last major bastion of resistance two months after his regime fell.

Ten years ago: Republican Congressman Bobby Jindal, the U.S.-born son of Indian immigrants, was elected governor of Louisiana; he became the first non-white to hold the job since Reconstruction. Former Green Bay Packers receiver Max McGee died in Deephaven, Minnesota, at age 75. Peg Bracken, author of the "I Hate to Cook Book," died in Portland, Oregon, at age 89.

Five years ago: Heading into the campaign's final weeks, Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney upped his criticism of President Barack Obama's plans for a second term, accusing the Democrat of failing to tell Americans what he would do with four more years; the Obama campaign aggressively disputed the notion, claiming it was Romney who hadn't provided specific details to voters.

One year ago: President Barack Obama defended his health care program, long a target of Republicans and recently criticized by some Democrats, saying millions of Americans "now know the financial security of health insurance" because of the Affordable Care Act. The Chicago Cubs moved to within one win from their first World Series trip in 71 years by beating the Los Angeles Dodgers 8-4 in Game 5 of the NLCS. The Los Angeles Sparks defeated the defending champion Minnesota Lynx for their first title in 14 years in Game 5 of the WNBA Finals.

Today's Birthdays: Japan's Empress Michiko is 83. Rockabilly singer Wanda Jackson is 80. Former actress Rev. Mother Dolores Hart is 79. Actor William "Rusty" Russ is 67. Actress Melanie Mayron is 65. Retired MLB All-Star Keith Hernandez is 64. Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I., is 62. Movie director Danny Boyle is 61. Former Labor Secretary Hilda Solis is 60. Actor Viggo Mortensen is 59. Rock musician Jim Sonefeld (Hootie & The Blowfish) is 53. Rock musician David Ryan is 53. Rock musician Doug Eldridge (Oleander) is 50. Journalist Sunny Hostin (TV: "The View") is 49. Political commentator and blogger Michelle Malkin is 47. Actor Kenneth Choi is 46. Rapper Snoop Dogg is 46. Singer Dannii Minogue is 46. Singer Jimi Westbrook (country group Little Big Town) is 46. Country musician Jeff Loberg is 41. Actor Sam Witwer is 40. Actor John Krasinski is 38. Rock musician Daniel Tichenor (Cage the Elephant) is 38. Actress Katie Featherston is 35. Actress Jennifer Nicole Freeman is 32.

Thought for Today: "Everybody's private motto: It's better to be popular than right." — Mark Twain (1835-1910).