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CARD OF THANKS

WE WOULD LIKE to thank everyone for the great greeting we received for our 60th wedding anniversary!

Curtis and Janice Sombke

Friday

Basketball at Deuel (Clear Lake)

Girls JV at 4 p.m., Boys JV at 5 p.m.

Girls Varsity at 6:30 p.m.

Boys Varsity at 8:00 p.m.

Both varsity games will be carried live on GDILIVE.COM

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**

KIWANIS CLUB

Mike Ehreshmann introduced Dale Hunt and Brian Johnson, from the Aberdeen Salvation Army, to the Groton Kiwanis Club, on Wednesday's noon dinner meeting.

The work of the Salvation Army was told, emphasizing the December red kettle campaign, and their assistance at the hurricane scenes this past year.

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

NEW SIGN-ON BONUSES!

☆☆☆ **\$1,500 for CNAs** ☆☆☆

☆☆☆ **\$3,000 for LPNs** ☆☆☆

☆☆☆ **\$4,500 for RNs** ☆☆☆

Alzheimer's Care Unit Director Medication Aid

Contact Brynn Pickrel or Nellie Hatfield at 605-397-2365
or apply in person.



GROTON
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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")**

Anglers and Waterfowl Hunters Urged to Use Caution

PIERRE, S.D. - A strange beginning to the winter season has officials urging both waterfowl hunters and ice anglers to use caution when venturing out to hunt and fish.

"Even with this last blast of cold weather, there is still plenty of open water for duck hunting," said Joe Keeton, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) boating safety officer. "We often think of having enough life jackets during the summer boating months, but it can easily be forgotten during waterfowl seasons. When you are double checking your waterfowl gear; a lifejacket should be at the top of the list."

Keeton also reminds hunters to check their duck boats for weight capacity, as boats used for duck hunting are often smaller in size so they can be launched into a variety of different environments. These smaller boats will then be loaded with gear; all of which add weight to the vessel and can quickly exceed the maximum capacity of the vessel. Overloaded vessels can easily capsize and swamp; especially in rough weather.

Ice anglers need to remember that the rule of thumb is it takes at least two inches of ice to support an angler, at least six inches to support an ice shack and over a foot for a vehicle, but that applies to strong, clear ice. Dark or cloudy ice is not as strong as clear ice.

If a person is going to venture out, they should also test ice conditions as they proceed. "Just because an angler sees six inches near the shore, doesn't mean it will be six inches across the lake. Springs, current, wind or ice heaves all impact the formation of ice and can make ice very dangerous," Keeton said.

Anglers are reminded to drill test holes to measure the thickness of the ice they are traveling on, have flotation devices available and tell someone where they are going.

"Let someone know what your hunting or angling plan is, and stick to your plan. If you don't return within a certain time, rescue will know where to look for you if you get into trouble," Keeton concluded.

Walleye Length Limit on Poinsett Removed

PIERRE, S.D. - Anglers may now begin to harvest walleyes under 15 inches on Lake Poinsett after a legislative committee approved a Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission rule change.

In November, the Commission voted to remove the length restriction for walleyes on Lake Poinsett. After the Commission sets a regulation, those rules have to go to a legislative committee that reviews rules to make sure they follow state law. That committee has approved the rule change, effective Dec. 4.

Anglers must still follow daily and possession limits and must still follow the one fish over 20 inch rule.

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GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

School Board Meeting

December 11, 2017 – 7:00 PM – GHS Conference Room

AGENDA:

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

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

1. Executive session pursuant SDCL 1-25-1(1) to interview prospective school board appointee Kara Pharis.

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of minutes of November 13, 2017 school board meeting as drafted or amended.

2. Approval of November 2017 Financial Report, Agency Accounts, and Investments

3. Approval of November 2017 School Transportation Report

4. Approval of November 2017 School Lunch Report

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

6. Approval of November District bills for payment.

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

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

2. Re-appointment of school board committees.

3. School Board Committee Reports:

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

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

c. Negotiations: Steve Smith

4. Consideration of Change Orders.

a. CCO#020: Paint Credit for Fire Extinguishers

b. CCO#002: Credit for Eliminating Sound Baffles in AHU Fan Sections

c. CCO#005: CE #051 – Cold Water Expansion Tank

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

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Approve utilization of Title I flexibility provisions to seek school wide Title I status for Groton Area Elementary for the 2018-2019 school year.

2. Review SD Department of Health Food Service Inspection conducted on 11/21/17.

3. Consider request from United Methodist/Emmanuel Lutheran Youth Groups for use of school busses.

4. Approve SDSU Student Teaching Agreement.

5. Appoint member to ASBSD Legislative Action Network.

6. Acknowledge receipt of public school exemption notification #18-12.

ADJOURN

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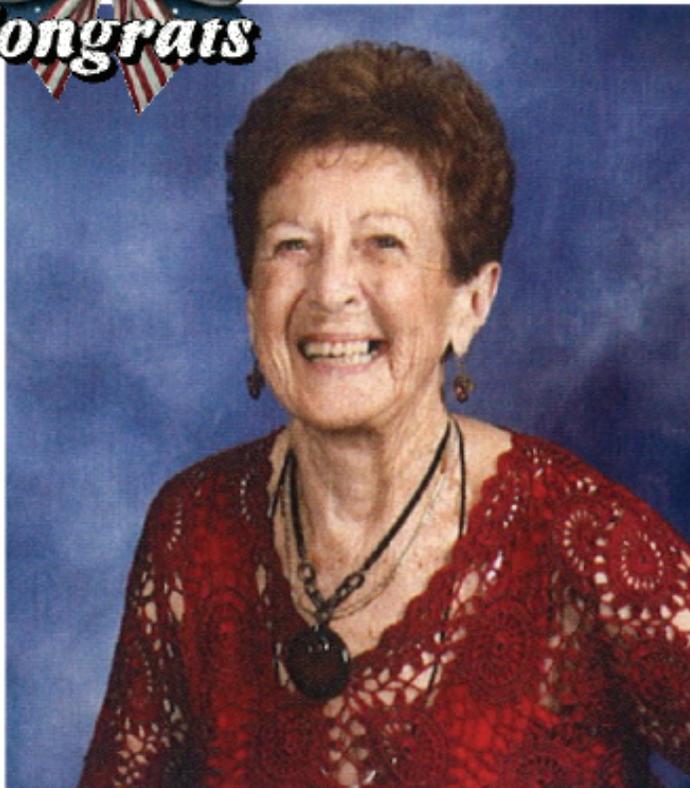
Florence Krege recognized

Article from the SD Legionette

Right Photo: Cara Dennert is pictured with Florence Krege



A Special Member to Remember



Our Auxiliary Unit - Roy L. Hall Post #58 from Columbia would like to nominate Florence Krege as "A Member to Remember".

Florence has been a member of the Legion Auxiliary for 61 years - since 1956! She has been a vital part of our organization from the start.

She has willingly given of her time and efforts to the benefit of everyone in our community.

She is very approachable and loves to help out the youth in our area.

When it comes to events in our Legion, she is the first to show and the last to go! Florence is a very dedicated member of our Auxiliary.

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Today in Weather History

December 8, 1995: A powerful Arctic front moved across west central Minnesota and central, north central, and northeast South Dakota throughout the day with winds of 30 to 60 mph. With temperatures falling and one to four inches of snowfall in the morning and afternoon, the high winds produced blizzard conditions with blowing snow and extreme wind chills of 40 to 70 below zero. Many schools, college classes, and activities were canceled for the day. Travel was also significantly affected.

1892 - A tremendous ice fall occurred at Gay Hill, TX. Ice averaged four to six inches in diameter. (David Ludlum)

December 8, 1935: From the Monthly Weather Review for December 1935, "The outstanding flood of December 1935 was the record-breaking overflow of Buffalo and White Oak Bayous at Houston, Texas on the 8 and 9th. This destructive flood was caused by excessive rainfall over Harris County, Texas during a 42 hour period on the 6th, 7th, 8th, with amounts ranging from 5.50 inches at Houston" to 16.49 inches at the Humble Oil Company in the northwestern part of Harris County.

1938 - The temperature at La Mesa, CA, soared to 108 degrees to set a U.S. record for the month of December. (The Weather Channel)

1963 - Lightning caused the crash of a jet airliner killing 81 persons at Elkton, MD. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1987 - A cold front crossing the northwestern U.S. continued to produce high winds along the coast, and heavy snow blanketed parts of the western U.S. Snowfall totals in the mountains of western Nevada ranged up to 18 inches at Heavenly Valley, and near the Boreal Ski Resort, and winds at Reno NV gusted to 56 mph. Thunderstorms over southern Florida deluged the Florida Keys with up to five inches of rain. Strong winds, gusting to 48 mph at Gage OK, ushered wintry weather into the Central High Plains. Goodland KS, which one day earlier was 63 degrees, was blanketed with two inches of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Santa Ana winds buffeted southern California, with gusts to 92 mph reported at Laguna Peak. The high winds unroofed buildings, and downed trees and power lines, igniting five major fires, and numerous smaller ones. Damage was estimated at 15 to 20 million dollars. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A winter storm spread snow and freezing rain across much of the Atlantic Coast Region, from Georgia to New Jersey. Snowfall totals ranged up to seven inches, at Stanton VA and Tobacco MD. Up to six inches of snow blanketed the mountains of northern Georgia. More than one hundred auto accidents were reported in Gwinnett County GA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
						
Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy then Mostly Cloudy and Blustery	Mostly Cloudy and Breezy
High: 34 °F	Low: 17 °F	High: 28 °F	Low: 22 °F	High: 42 °F	Low: 27 °F	High: 35 °F

Today

Highs 20s East, Around 40 South Central, Breezy West

Saturday

Highs 20s East, 40s West River

Sunday

Warmer, Highs Around 40 East, 50s Missouri valley.

Outlook for Next Week

*Chc Snow Monday & Thursday
Temperatures Near or Slightly Above Normal*





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



12/8/2017 4:37 AM

Published on: 12/08/2017 at 4:20AM

Mostly dry conditions are expected through the weekend, with near or above normal temperatures expected.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 25.3

Low Outside Temp: -3.1

High Gust: 17

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 57° in 1894

Record Low: -27° in 1927

Average High: 28°F

Average Low: 8°F

Average Precip in Dec: 0.14

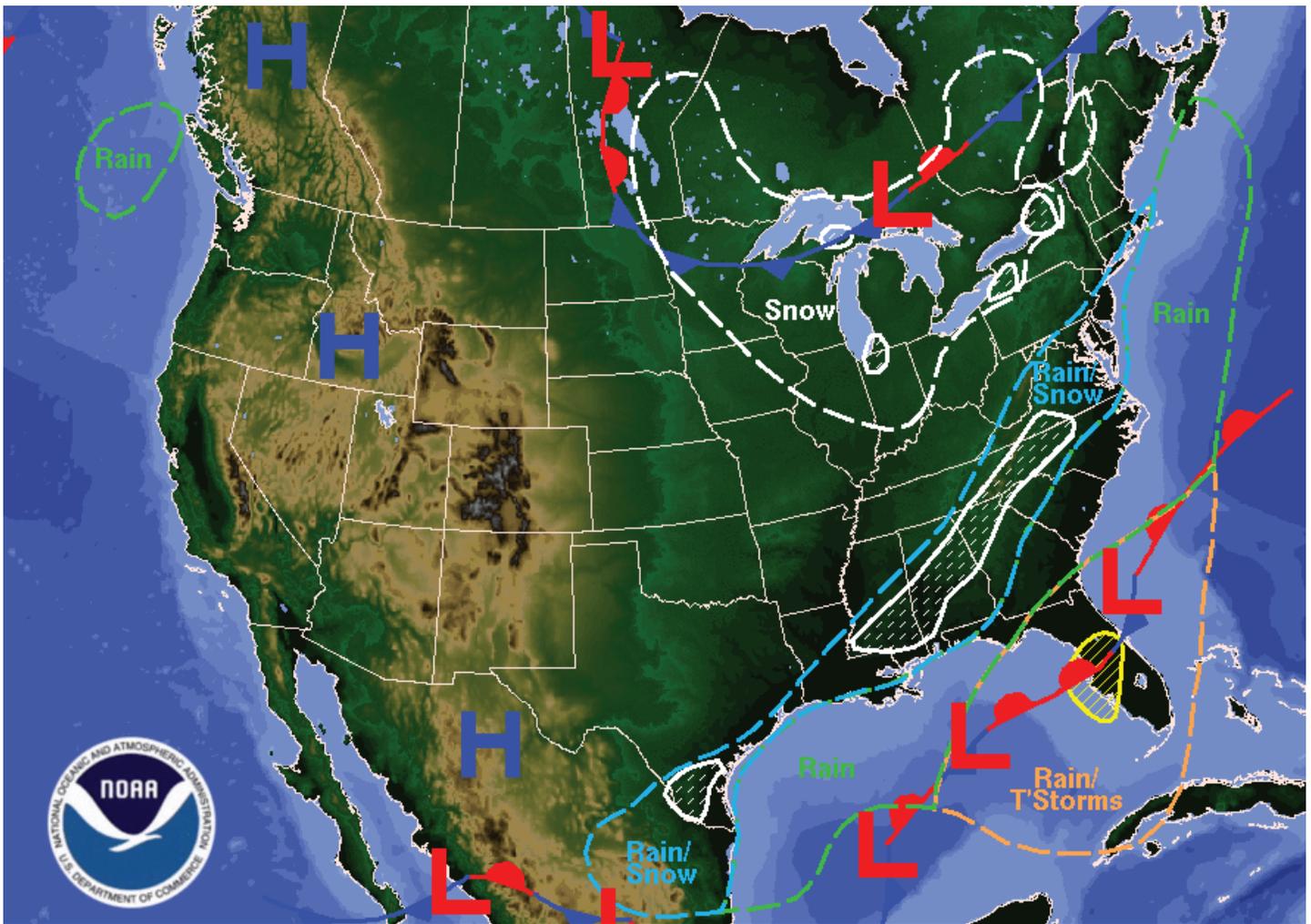
Precip to date in Dec: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 21.34

Precip Year to Date: 13.47

Sunset Tonight: 4:50 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:01 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Fri, Dec 08, 2017, issued 4:41 AM EST

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)



CAN YOU SEE HIM NOW?

It was the very first Christmas that Jo Ann's church had a Nativity scene on the front lawn. Working anxiously, she kept arranging, then rearranging, the figures to make certain they could all be seen.

Finally she sent her friend, Alice, to the edge of the lawn and asked, "How do they look?"

"Fine, they are all O.K.," came the answer.

Suddenly Jo Ann began to rearrange them once again. "What are you doing? I said they were fine," said Alice grumpily.

"Yes, I heard what you said," responded Jo Ann. "But I just want to make sure that Jesus is visible so all of the people can see Him!"

Often Santa gets more attention than our Savior does during these Holy Days. Children anxiously stand in line waiting their turn to ask for gifts and have their picture taken with him. Rarely, however, do children pose at the manger to have a picture taken with the Baby Jesus. Could it be that He is not visible to most people at Christmas? Do we make any effort at all to make Him visible?

Matthew wrote about a group of shepherds who said, "Let's go to Bethlehem...and see this wonderful thing that has happened which the Lord has told us about."

This "wonderful thing," Jesus, is what the world needs to see. Let's be certain He is always visible – especially in our lives!

Prayer: Lord, may we not allow Your Son to be hidden or to be placed behind the "false idols" that so many worship at Christmas. Let us make Him visible! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Luke 2:15 So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us."

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

BOYS BASKETBALL

Gillette Invitational

Rapid City Central 44, Cheyenne Central, Wyo. 42

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Gillette Invitational

Bismarck Legacy, N.D. 66, Rapid City Central 47

WRESTLING

Canton Triangular

Canton 62, Adrian 12

Adrian 54, Tri-Valley

Canton 74, Tri-Valley 6

Kingsbury County Quadrangular

Kingsbury 39, Warner/Northwestern 24

Kingsbury 42, Huron JV 21

Warner/Northwestern 40, Huron JV 18

Watertown JV 40, Kingsbury 24

Watertown JV 54, Huron JV 12

Watertown JV 54, Warner/Northwestern 18

South Dakota track may not host horse races in 2018

FORT PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A faint ray of hope has surfaced that a horse racing track in central South Dakota could hold races next year.

Stanley County Commissioner Dennis Booth announced two weeks ago that the Verendrye Benevolent Association wouldn't host horse races in Fort Pierre for the 2018 season. The statement cited a continued decline in funds provided by the South Dakota Commission on Gaming from taxes on pari-mutuel betting.

But during a commission meeting on Tuesday, Booth, who sits on the association's board, told Fairgrounds Manager Scott Deal that the future of the races is "not totally dead, yet," the Pierre Capital Journal reported.

Deal said he wouldn't make plans for the fairgrounds until it's certain that no horse races will be held at the track next year. The races date back more than half a century.

The South Dakota Commission on Gaming allocates funding for the state's two race tracks in Fort Pierre and Aberdeen. The association was allocated \$170,000 for the 2018 season, which is \$19,000 less funding than last year. The drop is part of a nationwide trend for pari-mutuel betting.

Five years ago, the newspaper reported, the association was allocated about \$300,000. According to Booth's statement, the association would face a shortfall of \$40,000 to \$50,000 if it were to host next year's races.

Booth said there are discussions taking place about raising the funds required to put on the races.

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

Regents approve \$26M plan renovation for aging DakotaDome

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A state board approved a \$26 million plan to renovate the aging DakotaDome at the University of South Dakota.

The state Board of Regents unanimously passed the DakotaDome renovation plan to send to the 2018 Legislature during a meeting in Sioux Falls on Wednesday, the Argus Leader reported .

"A lot of the improvements will be in upgrades that you can't see — things like the locker rooms and offices," said David Herbster, the university's athletic director. "But there will be a lot of things you will notice, too, like the sound system, the lighting and the renovation of the seating on the west side."

Other plans include additional restrooms, concession areas and infrastructure updates. A study of the facility in 2014 determined the need to make improvements for American with Disabilities Act standards, which would require upgrading restrooms, locker rooms, meeting rooms and other spaces.

The DakotaDome opened as a multi-sport venue nearly 40 years ago. The facility received a roof replacement in 2001 but has only received minor improvements since then.

Funding for the renovation will come from three sources. The university's foundation will finance \$14.5 million, and its local fund cash will cover \$6.4 million. The Board of Regents' annual maintenance and repair allocation will cover \$5.4 million.

The university expects to submit a request for proposal to architects by the end of the month.

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

Jury awards woman whose ex-husband accessed medical records

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A jury in South Dakota has awarded a woman \$30,000 after finding her ex-husband, a doctor, accessed her medical records without her permission.

Jacqueline Krouse filed a lawsuit in 2015 against Dr. Chris Krouse alleging he repeatedly violating her privacy rights by accessing her medical information. Her ex-husband works at Avera Queen of Peace in Mitchell, which was also named in the lawsuit.

The Argus Leader says a jury in Minnehaha County found in favor of Jacqueline Krouse, but decided the hospital was not liable. Avera argued Dr. Krouse accessed the records using the log-in credentials of other employees in violation of its policies.

Krouse's attorney sent a cease-and-desist letter to her ex-husband in March 2012. The lawsuit says he ignored the letter and accessed the records four more times after that.

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

Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press

Rapid City Journal, Rapid City, Dec. 7

Prescription drug costs hurting Americans

Finally, someone said it — prescription drug costs are crippling the U.S. economy. But that shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone who has found themselves swimming with the sharks of the health-care industry.

Last week, a national science panel consisting of corporate executives, health-care officials and academics urged the federal government in a 201-page report to rein in what they called out-of-control prescription drug costs. "Simply stated, the current system is not sustainable," said panel chairman Norman Augustine, the former chief executive of Lockheed Martin Corp.

Among the practices criticized are efforts by drug makers to delay or block the implementation of lower-priced generic drugs and prohibit foreign competition, which seems to undermine the foundation of capitalism.

While it has been politically popular to blame Obamacare for the cost of health insurance, lawmakers have

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failed to address a key culprit in what has become the most expensive health-care system in the world. According to IMS Institute for the Healthcare Informatics, pharmaceutical industry sales were \$424.8 billion in 2015, representing a 12.2 percent from 2014. In 2011, the industry's U.S. sales were \$328.3 million. The spike in revenue also comes as opioid sales surge, creating new and costly health-care problems nationwide.

As these companies compile record profits, they spend more than any other industry — \$240 million in 2015 — to lobby members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, who have treated the drug trade with kindness. For example, legislation passed in 2003 prevents the federal government from negotiating for lower drug prices for Medicare and Medicaid. Drug companies also oppose allowing Americans to purchase less expensive drugs from other countries.

After the Republican majority in the Senate and House recently approved their respective tax-cut packages, much was made of the fact that this will put more money into the pockets of the middle class.

The reality, however, is the rising cost of health care likely will nullify much of these meager gains as insurance rates, deductibles and out-of-pocket expenses rise. The skyrocketing cost of prescription drugs has a lot to do with it.

Remember the EpiPen price hike of 2016? The two-pack auto-injector, which can save a child's life after an allergic reaction to food, cost \$90 a decade ago. Now, the same device can cost as much as \$600 in the U.S. In Britain, it now costs \$70. Daraprim, a drug used by transplant patients, went from \$13.50 to \$750 per pill in 2015. A 30-day supply of Harvoni, a drug that treats hepatitis C, costs as much as \$87,800 for a 30-day supply — an increase of \$13,800 from 2016.

If lawmakers are serious about reinvigorating the economy, they must address the cost of health care or it will continue to bleed this nation's financial resources. Standing up to the pharmaceutical industry is a good place to start. We urge John Thune, the third-ranking member of the U.S. Senate, to truly make a difference in Americans' lives and fight for affordable health care.

The Daily Republic, Mitchell, Dec. 6

Shopping online? That's not what SD's budget needs

"South Dakota is working," Gov. Dennis Daugaard likes to remind the state's residents.

Amid the announcement of another lean budget year due to disappointing sales tax collections, Daugaard on Tuesday explained South Dakota will continue to be fiscally responsible, a feat the Republican governor has taken pride over for years.

"Maybe we're not able to fulfill all our wishes, but I would say we are still fulfilling our needs," Daugaard told The Associated Press on Monday.

It's a good motto many South Dakotans live by — needs before wants and wishes. That mentality has kept South Dakota in good financial standing even during difficult times when projections fall below expectations.

Rather than farmers buying new tractors when income is down, they usually fix what they have. And while we think the agriculture economy — which has a significant influence on the state's budget — will eventually rebound from its down cycle, we worry more about a less-noticeable trend hampering South Dakota's economy.

The lure to go online and order merchandise is playing a major influence on why we continue to have lean budgets in South Dakota. More people are spending money online, which takes funds directly away from public schools, state government and municipalities because web sales typically don't account for sales tax.

Money from the state's sales tax is 63 percent of South Dakota's state general fund revenue, but an increase in online spending in recent years has put a strain on the budget. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, national e-commerce retail sales have increased 245 percent over the past 10 years, growing from \$113.3 billion in 2006 to \$391 billion in 2016.

As the budget address is still fresh in our minds, we recognize this is one of the most important times

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of the year for retail stores due to holiday shopping. Mitchell Area Development Corporation Executive Director Bryan Hisel said some retailers take in up to 60 percent of their revenue between Thanksgiving and Dec. 31.

"Our local school system, our local county and our local cities depend on you, each of us, making a commitment to try and purchase our merchandise in South Dakota and in your local community," he said Wednesday.

So, as you consider all the gifts you want to purchase this holiday season, think of what South Dakota needs during this lean budget time.

We need to support local businesses by avoiding online sales. Doing that supports South Dakota.

Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, Yankton, Dec. 5

Dive in Yankton on the right path

For the citizens group Dive In Yankton (DIY), the hard work has just begun — but the task ahead already has a solid foundation.

The group was created earlier this year to carry the ball on the idea of building an aquatic center for Yankton to replace the city's aging outdoor swimming pool. The group's organizers saw not only a need for a new swimming facility but also an opportunity to create something that can serve as a valuable attraction for Yankton.

Late last week, the group released a concept of what the proposed aquatic center would look like. It features a lot of enticing ideas that would make the facility a popular attraction.

The aforementioned hard work is raising the money to fund at least part of the project, the cost of which has yet to be determined. Dreaming a dream is easy, but paying for it can be a more contentious matter. The members of DIY know they have a long road ahead of them to make the dream a reality.

But that work — that is, putting in the hours and doing what has to be done to reach the objective — actually began months ago. The state of the current pool — which is not very good — was explained in detail. At the same time, the group collected ideas and gathered feedback on potential concepts for the pool replacement. There have been public meetings and discussions, with adjustments to the vision made along the way. The unveiling of a conceptual rendition last week was the culmination of that part of the journey.

Yankton's current pool is not only aging, but it's also functionally obsolete. Many communities are constructing aquatic centers or water parks, and they have become popular draws. Vermillion opened the Prentis Plunge aquatic center this year and saw a considerable attendance spike in comparison to the old pool. Frankly, a lot of people from Yankton took their kids there to partake in the facility. There are also centers in Norfolk and other area locations. Yankton has fallen behind these neighboring communities in regards to this amenity.

Dive In Yankton organizers also point to the aquatic center as a "quality of life" issue. That term is thrown around a lot, but it means more than just bells and whistles. Items like an aquatic center become attractive offerings for young families looking for a place to live, or for visitors looking for recreational adventures. So the issue does have a considerable economic component to it.

DIY has done a great job getting the concept this far. Pulling the ideas together and coming up with something in which the public can already feel a certain level of buy-in was important, and that goal has been achieved.

Drumming up the money to make the project a reality will be a steep hill to climb. The project will also likely need public funding at some point, which will also be a hurdle.

But Dive In Yankton has a well-crafted game plan that has served it well so far. That gives the group an encouraging momentum as this project moves forward.

Football players accused in sexual assault plead not guilty

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — Two University of South Dakota football players have pleaded not guilty to sexual assault charges.

KSFY-TV reports that Danny Rambo and Dale Williamson appeared in court Thursday to enter their pleas. Rambo is charged with felony rape and Williamson with felony attempted rape.

A woman told police that Rambo and Williamson entered a bedroom where she was having consensual sex with another player and assaulted her Oct. 22 at the off-campus residence the three players shared. All three players have been suspended indefinitely from the team.

Williamson's attorney asked to withdraw from the case citing a busy caseload, but Judge Cheryle Gering denied the request after Williamson said he wanted the attorney to remain.

Williamson is also facing a separate rape charge arising from another alleged attack.

Information from: KSFY-TV, <http://www.ksfy.com>

Sioux Falls official seeks apology over project testimony

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Sioux Falls city councilor is calling on the chairman and the mayor to apologize after they cut off public testimony before votes were cast on a \$50-million mixed-use parking project.

The Argus Leader reports that the city council voted this week to approve the parking ramp project with a hotel and commercial space after almost an hour of citizen input.

The public-private partnership drew scrutiny in the days ahead of the council's vote for the \$16.5 million bonding package required to finance it.

After nearly an hour of testimony, Mayor Mike Huether decided not to take more public input.

Councilor Pat Starr asked the mayor to reconsider, but the request was denied with the support of Chairman Rick Kiley.

Starr left the room, later asking the men to publicly apologize. Huether defended the move.

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

Regents OK 2 large projects at Northern State University

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's Board of Regents has approved two large projects at Northern State University in Aberdeen.

The American News reports the regents gave unanimous support to a \$6.3 million football practice and women's soccer fields, complete with pavilion, and a \$25.2 million regional science center.

The fields project needs legislative approval during the 2018 session. Lawmakers approved the science building earlier this year. The university plans to break ground on it in spring and complete the facility by July 2019.

The university recently announced a \$45 million capital campaign for those projects and others, including a new South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

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

State women's prison inmate gets more time for felony escape

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A state women's prison inmate has been sentenced to five years on an escape charge. The Capital Journal reports that 31-year-old Patty Peneaux was serving two years and nine months for a fourth drunken driving offense in Lake County. She's been behind bars since May 2016.

She was given an extended release earlier this year to attend to care issues for her children and didn't return to the prison at the appointed time.

Peneaux pleaded guilty to felony prison escape and was recently sentenced. The five years is to be served

at the same time as her other sentence. That means she'll have to serve about two additional years. She had been slated for a parole review in February and for release in March 2019.

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

Clashes erupt across West Bank over US Jerusalem pivot

By ILAN BEN ZION and MOHAMMED DARAGHMEH, Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Palestinians clashed with Israeli troops across the West Bank and Gaza, and Muslim worshippers from Jordan to Indonesia poured into the streets after Friday prayers to protest President Donald Trump's recognition of contested Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

Protesters burned Israeli and U.S. flags or stomped on Trump posters in displays of anger.

In the West Bank, demonstrators torched heaps of tires, sending columns of thick black smoke rising over the cities of Ramallah and Bethlehem. Palestinian stone-throwers traded volleys in the streets with soldiers firing tear gas and rubber bullets.

Clashes were also reported on the border between Gaza and Israel.

Three Palestinians, two of them in Gaza, were wounded by live ammunition and 12 were hit by rubber-coated steel pellets, according to Red Crescent paramedics and health officials.

Dozens more suffered from tear gas inhalation, medics said.

Trump's seismic policy shift on Jerusalem has angered Arabs and Muslims who view it as an expression of blatant pro-Israel bias on one of the region's most explosive religious and political disputes.

Jerusalem is home to major Muslim and Christian shrines, as well as Judaism's holiest site. The Israeli-annexed eastern sector, captured by Israel in 1967, is sought by the Palestinians as a future capital, while Israel says it won't relinquish any part of Jerusalem.

Palestinian political groups had called for massive demonstrations Friday in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem — the lands captured by Israel in 1967 and sought for a Palestinian state.

Separately, the Gaza-based leader of the Islamic militant Hamas agitated for a third uprising against Israel.

On Friday, the militant al-Qaida network urged followers around the world to target vital interests of the United States, its allies and Israel. A statement posted on al-Qaida's media arm as-Sahab called for holy war or jihad and described America as an oppressor of Muslims.

Street protests were held Friday across the region. Marches were staged in Iran, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan and Jordan.

In the Jordanian capital of Amman, hundreds of protesters chanted "Jerusalem is Arab" and "America is the head of the snake."

Demonstrators stomped on a poster that showed Trump alongside a Nazi swastika.

Thousands of worshippers at a traditional flashpoint, Jerusalem's Old City, dispersed quietly after noon prayers.

The Old City is home to the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, which is Islam's third holiest shrine and stands on the remnants of Judaism's holiest site. One of the compound's outer walls is the holiest site where Jews can pray.

In the past, Israeli authorities often imposed age restrictions, barring younger Muslims from entering the Al Aqsa compound during periods of tensions, but did not do so Friday.

The preacher at Al Aqsa told worshippers that the city will "remain Muslim and Arab."

"All we want from the Arab and Muslim leaders is action and not statements of denunciation," Sheikh Yousef Abu Sneineh said to the approximately 27,000 worshippers.

Around 2,000 people later gathered in the plaza around the mosque, chanting: "With our soul and blood, we will defend Al Aqsa and Jerusalem."

For decades, the United States had professed neutrality on the fate of Jerusalem, in line with an international consensus that the fate of the holy city should be determined in negotiations.

Trump's dramatic policy shift, announced Wednesday, has triggered widespread international condem-

nation, including from U.S. allies. Several European leaders have warned the U.S. shift could further destabilize the region.

French President Emmanuel Macron said after a meeting with Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri that he was "launching an appeal for calm and responsibility."

Hariri said the U.S. decision "will further complicate the peace process and pose an additional challenge to the stability of the whole region."

Daraghmeah reported from Ramallah, West Bank. Associated Press writer Maamoun Youssef in Cairo contributed to this report.

Flames engulf San Diego area in newest wildfires

By ELLIOT SPAGAT and ANDREW DALTON, Associated Press

FALLBROOK, Calif. (AP) — Retirement communities built on golf courses, semi-rural race horse stables and other usually serene sites were engulfed by flames as the San Diego area became the latest front in California's wildfire fight.

The fire broke out Thursday amid dry, hot, windy conditions across the region that would be extreme for any season, but are especially stunning just two weeks from winter.

It exceeded 6 square miles (16 square kilometers) in a matter of hours and burned dozens of houses as it tore through the tightly packed Rancho Monserate Country Club community in the small city of Fallbrook, known for its avocado orchards and horse ranches. Three people were burned while escaping the flames, said Capt. Nick Schuler of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

Meanwhile, firefighters in Ventura — 130 miles (209 kilometers) to the north — tried to corral the largest and most destructive fire in the state, which has destroyed 430 buildings. The so-called Thomas Fire has grown to 180 square miles (466 square kilometers) since it broke out Monday. Fire crews made enough progress against large fires around Los Angeles to lift most evacuation orders.

The fire north of San Diego, driven by winds above 35 mph (56 kph), razed rows of trailer homes in the retirement community, leaving charred and mangled metal in its wake.

It wasn't immediately known what sparked the fire next to State Highway 76, but strong winds carried it across six lanes to the other side.

Evacuations were ordered in the area near the Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base and schools and casinos were being used as shelters.

Cynthia Olvera, 20, took shelter at Fallbrook High School.

She had been at her Bonsall home with her younger sister and nephew when her father called from the family nursery to say the fire had reached the gate of their sprawling property.

After starting to drive away, the family turned around to recover forgotten personal documents — but it was too late. Trees were ablaze and flames were within 10 feet (3 meters) of the house.

"I didn't think it would move that fast," she said.

Her older sister wanted to drive in to save her husband's car, but Olvera told her: "Don't do it. It's not worth it."

Her sister heeded the advice and the family made it safely to the school. But the flames followed them, and the family had to pack up again when evacuation orders came for Fallbrook High School.

The family went to a second shelter, not knowing if their house survived.

As the flames approached the elite San Luis Rey Downs training facility for thoroughbreds, many of the more than 450 horses were cut loose to prevent them from being trapped in their stables if barns caught fire, said Mac McBride of the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club.

Herds of horses galloped past flaming palm trees in their chaotic escape of a normally idyllic place. Not all survived.

Horse trainer Scott Hansen said he knows that some of his 30 horses at the facility died.

"I don't know how many are living and how many are dead," he said. "I guess I'll have to figure that

out in the morning.”

It was not yet clear how many horses died, or which elite equine athletes didn't make it, but all of Friday's races at Los Alamitos Race Course were canceled as the racing community mourned.

Along the coast between Ventura and Santa Barbara, tiny beach communities were under siege as fires leapt from steep hillsides across U.S. Highway 101.

“We drove through a wall of flames,” Wendy Frank said, describing her ordeal after evacuating her horses from Ojai on Wednesday night. “I didn't know if we'd make it. I just put the accelerator down. I know we were going over 100 mph (160 kph), we could have been going much more, and just hoped for the best.”

Fires flared up Thursday along the highway, forcing an evacuation of dozens of homes at Faria Beach. The massive fire threatened Ojai, a scenic mountain town of 7,000 people dubbed “Shangri-La” and known for its boutique hotels and New Age spiritual retreats.

Ash fell like snowflakes on citrus orchards scattered around town and on Spanish-style architecture as firefighters parked their trucks around houses in anticipation of winds picking back up.

Some businesses were closed, but staples could be found at Pat's Liquor, where Hank Cheyne-Garcia loaded up with supplies to fuel through another edgy night keeping sentry on the fire.

“It got a little too intense yesterday with the wind kicking up,” he said. “There was just so much smoke. Yesterday you couldn't see the street.”

Associated Press writers Amanda Lee Myers in Ventura, Julie Watson in San Diego, Brian Skoloff in Ojai, and Brian Melley, Michael Balsamo, Chris Weber, Robert Jablon and John Antczak in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

For complete coverage of the California wildfires, click here: <https://apnews.com/tag/Wildfires>

UK, EU claim Brexit breakthrough; eye talks on future ties

By LORNE COOK and JILL LAWLESS, Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — Britain and the European Union hammered out a deal early Friday that allows Brexit talks to finally move on to the all-important issues of trade and the future relationship between the two. But some of the details appeared contradictory and many of the toughest issues remained unresolved.

The last stumbling block had involved the border between Ireland — an EU member — and Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom. After Britain leaves the EU, that will be the only land border between the two.

The Northern Ireland party that has been holding up a deal now says it is satisfied. Negotiators also reached broad agreement on the rights of British citizens in EU countries and EU nationals in the U.K., as well as on Britain's future financial obligations to the European Union.

As a result, the European Commission recommended that the talks move onto the next phase. Leaders of the 27 remaining EU member states are expected to ratify that decision at a meeting on Thursday in Brussels.

“I believe that we have now made the breakthrough that we needed,” EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker told reporters during a news conference with British Prime Minister Theresa May.

The agreement is intentionally vague on key points, and some of the details appeared to be mutually contradictory.

On the one hand, Britain promises to withdraw from the EU single market and the broader customs union. On the other, the agreement says there will be no hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland, although the former will remain within the EU single market and the latter in the UK.

Exactly what that means will be fought over by politicians and negotiators in the months to come, and the European Commission itself acknowledged in a message to EU leaders that the language “seems hard to reconcile with the United Kingdom's communicated decision to leave the internal market and the Customs Union.”

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The pound rose initially on the news of a breakthrough but later fell back as investors digested the details of the deal. It was trading at \$1.3465, unchanged on the previous day.

The wording of the agreement left people close to the negotiations on both sides of the argument happy, and people further from the negotiations on both sides angry.

"I very much welcome the prospect of moving ahead to the next phase, to talk about trade and security and to discuss the positive and ambitious future relationship that is in all of our interests," May said.

Nigel Farage, who led the drive to leave the EU as chairman of the U.K. Independence Party, said May had caved on critical points. Farage tweeted that the deal was "good news for Mrs. May as we can now move on to the next stage of humiliation."

On the other side, anti-Brexit London Mayor Sadiq Khan said it is "extremely disappointing" that Britain is pledging to leave the single market and customs union.

"Despite the progress today, it looks increasingly unlikely that we will get a deal that works in London's best interests and protects jobs and growth across Britain," he said.

Britain committed once again in the agreement to leave the EU on March 29, 2019. Negotiations must be wrapped up within a year to leave time for parliaments to endorse any deal.

Already, precious time has been lost in matters many thought would be dealt with expeditiously. The real drama lies ahead, with trade talks that normally can take a decade or more compressed into a matter of months.

European Council President Donald Tusk grimly pointed out that 18 months had already passed since Britain's vote to leave the EU and that now the parties must negotiate a transition arrangement in less than a year.

"The most difficult challenge is still ahead," Tusk said. "We all know that breaking up is hard, but breaking up and building a new relation is much harder."

Jill Lawless reported from London. Danica Kirka contributed to this report.

In Franken's fall, sudden Senate pickup chance for GOP

By KYLE POTTER and THOMAS BEAUMONT, Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Minnesota Sen. Al Franken's departure from the Senate solves one problem for Democrats, demonstrating their will to push out one of their own when sexual harassment allegations pile up. Now they must worry about keeping one more vulnerable seat when they already had their hands full in next year's election.

Franken said Thursday he would resign, just a day after new allegations brought the number of women alleging he had groped or tried to kiss them to at least eight.

In a sometimes emotional speech delivered on the Senate floor, Franken said some of the accusations were false, but acknowledged he couldn't continue.

"I know in my heart that nothing I have done as a senator — nothing — has brought dishonor on this institution," Franken declared.

The former comedian who made his name on "Saturday Night Live" is the latest to fall in the national wave of sexual harassment allegations, coming just two days after the resignation of Michigan Democratic Rep. John Conyers, who was the longest-serving member in the current House.

His rapid fall leaves Democratic Gov. Mark Dayton to appoint a replacement to serve until at least 2018, when the state would hold an election to finish Franken's six-year term ending in 2020. Dayton said Thursday he expected to do so "in the next couple of days."

Franken's exit gives Republicans an opening to expand their reach in an already favorable Senate map — two dozen Democratic senators are up for re-election next year, including 10 in states that President Donald Trump carried in 2016. That difficult math raises the question of whether Dayton will appoint a temporary placeholder or try to give a Democrat a running start for the 2018 campaign.

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His lieutenant governor, Tina Smith, has been most frequently mentioned for the temporary appointment. Smith is a trusted former chief of staff for Dayton and also ran former Vice President Walter Mondale's brief Senate campaign in 2002 after Sen. Paul Wellstone died in a plane crash. But Smith previously announced she wouldn't run for governor next year, suggesting she would be no more than a caretaker.

Dayton could also look to a pair of fellow Democratic statewide elected officials: Attorney General Lori Swanson or State Auditor Rebecca Otto. Otto is running for governor and Swanson is thinking about it; either could conceivably turn into a Senate candidate.

While Dayton weighed his choice, eyes were already turning to the 2018 race, especially among Republicans.

Former Gov. Tim Pawlenty — the last Republican to win a statewide election in Minnesota, in 2006 — was seen as a potential heavyweight contender in the GOP. Another possibility, former Sen. Norm Coleman, quickly ruled himself out.

The timing of Franken's departure is uncertain. Fellow Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar said Franken indicated he would officially step down sometime "by the end of the year." It's an abrupt end for someone who had been seen as coming into his own in Washington.

Franken, 66, had gained respect as a serious lawmaker in recent years and had even been mentioned in talk about the 2020 presidential race. But his downward spiral began Nov. 16, when Leeann Tweeden, now a Los Angeles radio anchor, accused him of forcibly kissing her during a 2006 USO tour in Afghanistan.

Other allegations followed, including a woman who says Franken put his hand on her buttocks as they posed for a photo at the Minnesota State Fair in 2010. Two women told the Huffington Post that Franken squeezed their buttocks at political events during his first campaign for the Senate in 2008. A fourth woman, an Army veteran, alleged Franken cupped her breast during a photo on a USO tour in 2003.

But Franken remained defiant in his parting speech, saying that "some of the allegations against me are simply not true" and disputing the details relayed by other accusers, as he had from the start.

And he pointedly noted that he was being forced out while Trump — who has been accused of worse offenses and bragged on a leaked "Access Hollywood" videotape of grabbing women by their genitalia — emerged unscathed. Trump and fellow Republicans have also endorsed Alabama GOP Senate candidate Roy Moore, who has been accused by multiple women of sexual misconduct with them when they were teens and he was a deputy district attorney in his 30s.

"I, of all people, am aware that there is some irony in the fact that I am leaving while a man who has bragged on tape about his history of sexual assault sits in the Oval Office and a man who has repeatedly preyed on young girls campaigns for the Senate with the full support of his party," Franken said.

Beaumont reported from Des Moines, Iowa. AP reporters Mary Clare Jalonick, Matthew Daly, Kevin Freking, Andrew Taylor and Alan Fram in Washington contributed.

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. WHERE CALIFORNIA'S FLAMES ARE DOING DAMAGE

The San Diego area becomes the latest front of the wildfire fight engulfing southern California, burning homes and causing evacuations.

2. TRUMP'S JERUSALEM DECISION SETS OFF PROTESTS

Palestinian groups call for massive demonstrations in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem after Friday prayers, the highlight of the Muslim religious week.

3. BREAKTHROUGH IN BRITAIN'S DIVORCE FROM EU

Britain and the European Union say they are moving to new phase of Brexit talks after overnight agreement over status of the Irish border.

4. WHO CAN GAIN FROM FRANKEN'S RESIGNATION

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The former comedian's fall due to sexual harassment allegations could give Republicans an opening to expand their Senate majority.

5. PARALLELS ABOUND IN ALABAMA AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION DRIVES

Like President Trump, Roy Moore is breaking all the rules of modern-day politics in turbulent Senate campaign.

6. VIDEO HELPS CONVICT POLICEMAN

Images taken by a bystander were crucial in earning 20-year prison sentence for a white officer who shot an unarmed black man in South Carolina.

7. JAIL TIME FOR HORRIFIC SEXUAL ASSAULT THAT EXPOSED RACIAL DIVIDE

Two Australians have been sent to prison for the brutal slaying of an Aboriginal woman in a case that outraged the public.

8. NEW CITY TO RISE OUT OF SANDS

Jordan announces plans to build a new metropolis in the desert by 2050 and bring some relief to its overcrowded capital of Amman.

9. WEDDING PLANS DOWN UNDER

Gay marriage in Australia will become legal on Jan. 9 after the governor-general signs bill into law.

10. FORMER ROYAL IN-LAW LATEST KEVIN SPACEY ACCUSER

The ex-husband of Norwegian King Harald's daughter alleges that the actor groped him during the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize concert in Oslo.

Like Trump, Moore breaking the rules of modern-day politics

By **STEVE PEOPLES** and **KIM CHANDLER**, Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) — He has ignored all the rules of modern-day politics.

He speaks unscripted. He skimps on fundraising. He undervalues get-out-the-vote efforts. And he attacks the leaders of his own political party without mercy.

A year ago, that was presidential nominee Donald Trump. This year, it's Senate candidate Roy Moore.

On the ground in Alabama, some believe the Republican Moore is poised to win the state's special election Tuesday in a race that features extraordinary parallels with Trump's White House run. Against all odds, Moore has weathered sexual misconduct allegations while applying the same unorthodox playbook that many political operatives said wouldn't work for anyone but Trump.

"Trump was a rejection of the elite, and I think a lot of folks were hopeful that was a one-time glitch in the system," said Republican operative Andy Surabian, who worked for the Trump campaign last year and now advises a super PAC working to elect Moore. "But it was really an indicator of a long-term trend that's playing out now in Alabama."

Whether by design or coincidence, Moore's candidacy has tracked Trump's in more ways than one.

Both men were badly outspent by the competition. Hillary Clinton and her Democratic allies doubled the spending by Trump and his Republican team. In Alabama, the spending disparity is even greater in favor of Democratic candidate Doug Jones.

Like Trump, Moore's fundraising troubles left him with a bare-bones campaign operation with little comprehensive plan to identify his voters and ensure they get to the polls on Election Day.

Both men have also been marred by scandal.

Just 32 days before the 2016 election, The Washington Post published the "Access Hollywood" video in which Trump admits to sexual predatory behavior. Several women came forward in the following days with detailed accusations of sexual misconduct dating back decades in some cases.

And 33 days before Alabama's 2017 election, The Washington Post published its first story about Moore's accusers, including one woman who said she was 14 when Moore, then a 30-something deputy district attorney, took off her shirt and pants and touched her over her underwear. Several more women came forward in subsequent days with detailed accusations of sexual misconduct.

In both cases, a chorus of Washington Republicans quickly called on the men to quit the race. The

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candidates responded by denying any wrongdoing and attacking the media and their critics in the party elite. And as Election Day neared, the Republican opposition softened.

Each man survived by converting his shortcomings into political strength as an anti-establishment fervor swept through the electorate.

Moore, like Trump before him, cast his fundraising problems and misconduct allegations as evidence that the Washington establishment was plotting against him. And many voters, already frustrated with national politicians, liked it.

"You see a lot of parallels with Trump. They're both very emotionally driven candidacies. They speak to voters' anger and disgust with Washington and the status quo," said Terry Sullivan, the campaign manager for Marco Rubio's presidential campaign. "Frankly, the Republican establishment is helping Roy Moore by opposing him."

As in Trump's case, college-educated voters and minorities will play an oversized role in Moore's race.

Trump's personal brand and the sexual harassment allegations alienated many women and college-educated voters nationally. At the same time, Clinton struggled to persuade black and Hispanic voters to rally behind her candidacy, which helped Trump eke out a narrow victory.

The Jones campaign has devoted extraordinary resources to targeting black voters and college-educated suburban Republicans across Alabama in recent weeks. Whether such voters turn out in strong numbers will largely determine Moore's fate.

"We're able in Alabama to get out there and talk to the voters and tell Doug Jones' story, and we're getting great response," said Giles Perkins, Jones' campaign chairman. "I don't know what kind of campaign Roy Moore has."

Moore was a little-known circuit judge when a decision to decorate his courtroom with a handmade wooden Ten Commandments plaque led to his political ascent.

The American Civil Liberties Union unsuccessfully sued him, and the fame helped catapult him to the position of chief justice of the State Supreme Court in the 2000 election. Arguing he had a right to "acknowledge God," he installed a boulder-sized Ten Commandments monument in the state court building. A judicial discipline panel later removed him from office after he disobeyed a federal court order to remove it.

After failed runs for governor, he was re-elected as chief justice in 2012 and quickly found a new fight: same-sex marriage. He was permanently suspended from the post in 2015 for urging state probate judges to thwart federal court decisions and refuse marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

Moore developed both a passionate following among evangelical Christians and a prickly relationship with the GOP's more-moderate business wing. Just like Trump.

"Donald Trump did one of the most tremendous things I think anyone could do. He fought both the Republicans and the Democrats to become the president of the United States," Moore told voters in Fairhope, Alabama this week.

"I remember when he was elected, I felt like a big weight had been taken off my shoulders. It felt like we had another chance," he said before turning to his own campaign. "And we do have another chance."

Chandler reported from Montgomery, Alabama.

Gay marriage becomes law in Australia; weddings start in Jan

By ROD McGUIRK, Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Gay marriage in Australia became a law Friday as the prime minister gained a final signature on a bill hours after it was overwhelmingly endorsed by Parliament, and the nation started planning weddings that can take place in a month.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull traveled to Government House where Governor-General Peter Cosgrove signed the bill into law on behalf of Queen Elizabeth II, Australia's constitutional head of state.

Cosgrove's signature makes gay marriage legal in Australia from Saturday, when same-sex couples who wed overseas will be recognized as married under Australian law. Couples who intend to marry must give

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a calendar-month notice, making gay weddings legal on Jan. 9, Turnbull said.

Neville Wills, 98, plans to marry his partner of 39 years, Ian Fenwicke, 74, next month.

Some practical reasons to marry become pressing with age. Relatives have contested wills that left estates to same-sex partners, and gays and lesbians want rights to access and medical consultation when a partner is hospitalized.

"The reason is to have a legal relationship that's not in any way challenged — and, of course, we love each other," Wills said. "We'll get the legal relationship straightened out in January. Call it a wedding if you like, I'm not romantic," he added.

The Attorney-General's Department on Friday published online a new form for couples to announce their intention to marry with tick-box options of male, female and "x."

The form defines "x" as "indeterminate, intersex or unspecified."

While the previous document referred to a "bride" and "bridegroom," the new form adds the option of "partner."

Turnbull described Parliament voting late Thursday for gay marriage, with only four lawmakers registering their opposition, as a historic moment.

"Containing my emotions to a suitable, prime ministerial level of calm is quite challenging. I am absolutely pumped. I think this is so wonderful," he said after Parliament passed the bill and the public gallery erupted with a standing ovation.

Celebrations continued late into the night in Oxford Street, the center of Sydney's gay nightlife which is in Turnbull's electorate.

Turnbull has been a long-term advocate for marriage equality and is the first prime minister to attend Sydney's renowned annual Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, which is also in his electorate.

Hours after Parliament's action, a Sydney municipal council offered free venues to host same-sex marriages.

The Inner West Council is accepting bookings for same-sex marriages in its halls, community centers and parks at no charge over a 100-day period from Jan. 7.

"This is an historic day in the struggle for civil rights in Australia," Mayor Darcy Byrne said.

It follows the downtown Sydney municipality's decision in October to offer free venues for same-sex weddings should they become lawful.

The Australian Capital Territory government, which administers Canberra, the national capital, introduced its own same-sex marriage law in 2013 that was overturned by the High Court within a week.

ACT Attorney General Gordon Ramsay said his government would waive the 55 Australian dollar (\$41) cost of wedding certificate for any of the 31 same-sex couples whose short-lived marriages were ruled invalid and want to marry again.

"It's a way of being able to acknowledge the difficulties that some of those couples have been through," Ramsay told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

Anne-Marie Delahunt, who married her partner Meg Clark in Canberra in 2013, said she would take up the government's offer when they marry again in February.

"I think it was a touching measure from the ACT Government to say that our second marriage certificate will be free," Delahunt told ABC.

Gay marriage was endorsed by 62 percent of voters who responded to a national postal ballot by November.

Most gay rights advocates believed the government should have allowed marriages years ago and saw various ideas for a public survey as a delaying tactic. The U.N. Human Rights Committee had called the ballot survey "an unnecessary and divisive public opinion poll."

Chief priest, 2 others dead in Tokyo shrine stabbings

By KAORI HITOMI, Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — The head priest of a prominent shrine in Tokyo was ambushed and killed with a samurai sword, apparently by her brother, who then took his own life, police said Friday.

A female accomplice also died in the attack, and the priest's driver was injured, Tokyo Metropolitan Police said. The motive was unclear, though Japanese media reported there may have been a feud between the priest and her brother.

Police said that Nagako Tomioka, the 58-year-old head of Tomioka Hachimangu shrine, was attacked as she got out of her car Thursday night.

Shigenaga Tomioka, 56, and an accomplice were hiding behind her house, police said. Japanese media said he is the victim's brother, but police would not confirm that. Japanese priests generally live on the grounds of their shrines or temples.

The accomplice attacked the driver with a samurai sword and pursued him as he ran out of the temple grounds and about 100 meters (300 feet) down a road, police said. A trail of splattered blood was still visible on the pavement Friday morning. The driver's injuries were not life-threatening.

The brother is then believed to have killed the woman before committing suicide. At least one blood-stained sword and two survival knives were found near the scene, Japanese media said.

The nearly 400-year-old Tomioka Hachimangu shrine is known for its close ties to sumo and holding one of Tokyo's three big Shinto festivals.

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This story corrects the age of victim Nagako Tomioka to 58 years old.

Wildfire destroys mobile homes in California retirement park

By ELLIOT SPAGAT and AMANDA LEE MYERS, Associated Press

FALLBROOK, Calif. (AP) — A brush fire driven by gusty winds that have plagued Southern California all week exploded rapidly Thursday north of San Diego, destroying dozens of mobile homes in a retirement community and killing race horses at an elite training facility.

The fire exceeded 6 square miles (16 square kilometers) in a matter of hours and tore through the tightly packed Rancho Monserate Country Club community in the small city of Fallbrook, known for its avocado orchards and horse ranches. Three people were burned trying to escape the flames, said Capt. Nick Schuler of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

The destructive blaze broke out as firefighters tried to corral the largest fire in the state that was burning around Ventura — 130 miles (209 kilometers) to the north — and destroyed 430 buildings as it grew to 180 square miles (466 square kilometers) since Monday. Fire crews also fought large fires around Los Angeles, though they made enough progress to lift most evacuation orders.

Like other fires that have broken out this week, Fallbrook has a history of destructive blazes. Ten years ago, as a series of similar fires raced across Southern California, a blaze in Fallbrook injured five people, destroyed 206 homes and burned 14 square miles (36 square kilometers).

Driven by winds above 35 mph (56 kph), Thursday's fire wiped out rows of trailer homes in the retirement community and left behind charred and mangled metal where they had stood.

The fire started from an unknown cause next to State Highway 76 and blew across six lanes to the other side. The highway was closed Thursday night.

Evacuations were ordered in the area near the Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base and schools and casinos were being used as shelters.

Jim Peratt was in Las Vegas on business when his wife called and said she was rounding up their two horses and evacuating their property in Bonsall, a community of 4,000 amid the rolling hills of rural San Diego County.

"She saw nothing but smoke and flames all around," Peratt said. "I'm praying I'll have a home when I get back."

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As the flames approached the elite San Luis Rey Downs training facility for thoroughbreds, many of the more than 450 horses were cut loose to prevent them from being trapped in their stables if barns caught fire, said Mac McBride of the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club.

Horse trainer Scott Hansen said he knows that some of his 30 horses at the facility died.

"I don't know how many are living and how many are dead," he said. "I guess I'll have to figure that out in the morning."

Most of the horses were saved, McBride said, and were being loaded to go to the Del Mar Fairgrounds.

Some ranchers posted urgent pleas on Twitter for help moving horses, including Rawhide Ranch, well-known for running riding camps for children.

The fire and a smaller one 12 miles (19 kilometers) north in the city of Murrieta broke out the day after state officials sent an unprecedented alert to cell phones across seven Southern California counties warning that strong Santa Ana winds could cause extreme fire danger. Although hurricane-force winds predicted did not materialize, firefighters faced gusts that fanned flames and put thousands of homes in jeopardy.

Along the coast between Ventura and Santa Barbara, tiny beach communities were under siege as fire leapt from steep hillsides across U.S. Highway 101.

"We drove through a wall of flames," Wendy Frank said, describing her ordeal after evacuating her horses from Ojai on Wednesday night. "I didn't know if we'd make it. I just put the accelerator down. I know we were going over 100 mph (160 kph), we could have been going much more, and just hoped for the best."

Fires flared up Thursday along the highway, forcing an evacuation of dozens of homes at Faria Beach.

"Anyone in your homes still, you need to leave now," a California Highway Patrol officer said through a loudspeaker while driving down a smoke-shrouded street. "The fire is here, you need to leave."

Joseph Ruffner had left earlier in the week but returned and said he was staying put this time.

"This morning there was a wall of fire back right over here," he said. "I didn't think it was no big deal, but it's coming back to burn what it didn't burn yesterday."

The highway, which runs the length of the state and is a major commuter corridor to Los Angeles, was closed intermittently along the 28-mile (45-kilometer) stretch between Ventura and Santa Barbara.

The Ventura and LA-area fires have put tens of thousands of people under evacuation orders and destroyed nearly 200 homes and buildings, a figure almost certain to rise.

A woman was found dead in a wrecked car in an evacuation zone near the city of Santa Paula, where the Ventura County blaze began Monday night, but officials could not immediately say whether the accident was fire-related.

The massive fire threatened Ojai, a scenic mountain town dubbed "Shangri-La" and known for its boutique hotels and New Age spiritual retreats.

Most of Ojai's 7,000 residents were warned to clear out late Wednesday and patients unable to walk were moved from the Ojai Valley Community Hospital because of unprecedented, hurricane-force Santa Ana winds in the overnight forecast.

Ash fell like snowflakes on citrus orchards scattered around town and on Spanish-style architecture as firefighters parked their trucks around houses in anticipation of winds picking back up.

Some businesses were closed, but staples could be found at Pat's Liquor, where Hank Cheyne-Garcia loaded up with supplies to fuel through another edgy night keeping sentry on the fire.

"It got a little too intense yesterday with the wind kicking up," he said. "There was just so much smoke. Yesterday you couldn't see the street."

Myers reported from Ventura. Associated Press writers Julie Watson in San Diego, Brian Skoloff in Ojai, and Brian Melley, Michael Balsamo, Robert Jablon, Chris Weber, Andrew Dalton and John Antczak in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

For complete coverage of the California wildfires, click here: <https://apnews.com/tag/Wildfires>

'Not a drill': Students hid in classrooms as shooter kills 2

By RUSSELL CONTRERAS, Associated Press

AZTEC, N.M. (AP) — Students hid in their classrooms, some behind locked doors or in closets, as a gunman opened fire Thursday inside a New Mexico high school, killing two classmates before he died.

Authorities in the small town of Aztec near the Colorado border have released few details other than to say the two victims — Casey J. Marquez and Francisco I. Fernandez — attended Aztec High School. The identity of the shooter has yet to be released.

No other injuries were reported, and it was not clear if the shooter died by suicide or was killed by police.

The San Juan County Sheriff's Office in a post on social media asked for the community to pray for the families of Marquez and Fernandez.

Friends were sharing their condolences on Marquez's Facebook page, which displayed photos of the teen in her cheerleading outfit. Fernandez's friends posted on his page and wore T-shirts that memorialized him during a candlelight vigil that brought together hundreds of mourners late Thursday.

Authorities planned to release more information Friday.

Bryn Divine, a senior, said she was sitting at her desk in her history class when she heard gunshots erupt down the hall. At first, it sounded as if someone was swinging a metal baseball bat against the lockers.

Then she heard an announcer over the school intercom tell students: "This is not a drill."

"I stayed in my desk, and I just prayed, 'Please just let this be over as soon as possible.' That was my first reaction," she said.

Sophomore Garrett Parker told Albuquerque television station KOAT that he also heard what he thought was banging on the lockers. Then it got louder and closer.

"Thankfully our teacher always locks the door no matter what. So he kept that locked," Parker said. "When they called over the intercom that it was not a drill, we went to the corner of the room out of sight from the door and just started hiding."

Gov. Susana Martinez called the shooting a heinous and horrific act and told reporters that teachers, school staff and law enforcement jumped in quickly to prevent more deaths. She didn't provide more details.

Police responded to the school less than a minute after getting the initial calls, which came shortly after the start of the first period. With the school in lockdown, they got inside through a window and a door.

Authorities checked each room and building at the school before the students were bused to another location where they were reunited with their parents.

The school remained cordoned off as people braved frigid temperatures for the vigil at a nearby park.

David Stone, 16, and Heaven Angelica Hughes, 15, huddled with friends in below-freezing temperatures to light candles and exchange stories. Both were in a classroom next to the shootings.

"I still can't believe what happened," Stone said. He said one of the victims was his cousin.

Aztec is a rural town of 6,500 people in the heart of northwestern New Mexico's oil and gas country and near the Navajo Nation. Its main street is lined by old brick buildings that date back more than a century.

Local, state and federal authorities said at a news conference that they had a lot of evidence to process and many interviews to conduct. They also were asking any students who might have seen something to call police.

School Superintendent Kirk Carpenter choked up, describing it as a tough day.

"At schools, our primary role and our primary job is to educate students and keep them safe, and when you have something like this, it hits you in the heart," he said.

Aztec school officials say schools across town that shut down Thursday will likely stay closed Friday.

Residents voiced disbelief on social media, while members of the New Mexico congressional delegation, state Attorney General Hector Balderas and other elected officials offered their condolences and other assistance.

Associated Press writers Mary Hudetz and Susan Montoya Bryan contributed to this report from Albuquerque, New Mexico.

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Follow Russell Contreras on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/russcontreras>

Jones makes game-saving INT, Falcons beats Saints 20-17

By PAUL NEWBERRY, AP Sports Writer

ATLANTA (AP) — With the season potentially hanging in the balance, Deion Jones leaped high in the air, about as high as he could go.

He reached even higher, snatching the ball away before it could reach the intended target.

Holding on for dear life with both arms, the Atlanta Falcons linebacker landed flat on his back in the end zone, the ball secured tightly against his chest.

No way he was letting go.

Jones made a leaping interception in the end zone with 1:25 remaining and the Falcons held on for a crucial 20-17 victory over the New Orleans Saints on Thursday night, setting up a three-way race for the NFC South title.

"It was all about the ball," Jones said. "I just opened up my eyes, and all my brothers were right there, standing over me. It was great."

Matt Ryan shook off three interceptions to guide the Falcons to Matt Bryant's 52-yard field goal with 3:49 to go. The Saints (9-4) were in position to pull out the victory, driving to the Atlanta 11 after Drew Brees converted on fourth-and-1 with a quarterback sneak, as coach Sean Payton passed on attempting a tying field goal.

On second down, Brees attempted to hit tight end Josh Hill in the back of the end zone.

Jones had other ideas.

"When it takes a while to land, you know you're up there," Falcons coach Dan Quinn said. "He definitely went up and reached for it."

The Falcons (8-5) climbed within one game of the division-leading Saints with three weeks to go, as New Orleans squandered a chance to build a three-game lead on the defending division champs. Atlanta is back in the race and gets another crack at New Orleans when the teams meet again in the next-to-last week of the regular season at the Superdome.

The Carolina Panthers (8-4) also are right in the thick of things.

Ryan had three interceptions in a stretch of nine plays at the end of the first half and the beginning of the second. But he tied the game with an 8-yard touchdown pass to Mohamed Sanu with 9:55 remaining, finishing 15 of 27 for 221 yards.

Brees was 26 of 35 for 271 yards and two TDs. Yet he was kicking himself for trying to force one at the end.

On the opening possession, New Orleans lost half of its dynamic 1-2 punch in the backfield when rookie Alvin Kamara took a shot to the helmet and staggered off with a concussion.

Mark Ingram was left to carry the load as the "Boom and Zoom" duo became simply "Boom." He was held to 49 yards on 12 carries as the Saints largely abandoned one of the league's top rushing attacks. Michael Thomas had 10 catches for 117 yards and a TD.

With Atlanta trying to drive into position for a tiebreaking field goal in the waning seconds of the opening half, Ryan threw a terrible pass that was picked off by rookie Marshon Lattimore, who was back in the lineup after missing two games with an ankle injury.

Lattimore returned it 33 yards to the Atlanta 29 with 4 seconds remaining, setting up Wil Lutz to boot a 47-yard field goal as time expired. But the Falcons caught a break when the Saints failed to have seven blocked on the line of scrimmage, and the penalty resulted in a mandatory 10-second runoff that ended the half with the score tied at 10.

MATTY PICK

After getting picked off on Atlanta's last play of the first half, Ryan went to the air again on the first play of the second half.

Same result, though it wasn't Ryan's fault.

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The ball went through the arms of tight end Austin Hooper, rolled up on his back and was intercepted by Chris Banjo, setting up the 1-yard scoring pass to Thomas.

On Atlanta's next possession, Ryan guided the Falcons to the New Orleans 9. On third down, he attempted to force a pass into the end zone for Julio Jones only to be picked off again by Marcus Williams. It was the second time this season and ninth time in his career that Ryan has thrown three interceptions in a game.

INJURY REPORT

It was a brutal night for the Saints, which is sure to raise more questions after the health risks of playing on Thursday nights.

In addition to Kamara's injury, New Orleans lost another offensive guard and three starters on defense. Guard Senio Kelemete, filling in for injured starter Andrus Peat (groin), left with a concussion. That forced the Saints to go with Josh LeRibeus, the backup center.

On defense, the Saints lost linebacker A.J. Klein in the first half with a groin injury. Starting defensive end Trey Hendrickson left with an ankle injury and strong safety Kenny Vaccaro was sidelined with a groin injury. "A lot of different guys go down," coach Sean Payton said. "That became challenging."

UP NEXT

Saints: Host the New York Jets (5-7) on Dec. 17 in the first of two straight home games.

Falcons: After a short turnaround for the Thursday night game, Atlanta has an 11-day break before returning to action with a Monday night contest at Tampa Bay (4-8) on Dec. 18.

Follow Paul Newberry on Twitter at www.twitter.com/pnewberry1963 . His work can be found at <https://apnews.com/search/paul%20newberry>

For more AP NFL coverage: www.pro32.ap.org and www.twitter.com/AP_NFL

US team still planning for Olympics despite confusion

By EDDIE PELLIS, AP National Writer

Members of the Trump administration surprised the U.S. Olympic Committee by suggesting the nation's participation at the upcoming Pyeongchang Games in South Korea was "an open question," and the USOC responded by saying it has no plans on pulling out.

The confusion began when U.N. ambassador Nikki Haley, in response to a question in a Fox News interview, said "There's an open question" about whether the U.S. team would travel to South Korea, where tensions have grown high after a series of missile tests in North Korea and inflammatory rhetoric between its leader, Kim Jong Un, and U.S. President Donald Trump.

The USOC responded with a statement Thursday saying plans to compete in the Olympics, which run Feb. 9-25, hadn't changed. Shortly after that, White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders told reporters "no official decision has been made."

She later clarified in a tweet, saying: "The U.S. looks forward to participating in the Winter Olympics in South Korea. The protection of Americans is our top priority and we are engaged with the South Koreans and other partner nations to secure the venues."

South Korea's sports ministry spokesman Hwang Seong-un said Friday in Seoul that the government isn't too concerned about the possibility of the U.S. not attending. Hwang said that during a phone conversation with South Korean President Moon Jae-in last week, Trump told the South Korean leader that American athletes and senior government officials would be heading to the Games.

The USOC doesn't receive federal funding, and technically, the official decision on participating belongs to the committee and the athletes themselves, all of whom would be guided by directives from the State Department, which has not issued any travel restrictions to South Korea.

The USOC is in frequent contact with the State Department, the organizing committee in South Korea and law enforcement about security issues in Korea and other places that members of the U.S. team travel.

"Each host city presents a unique challenge from a security perspective, and that is no different in this regard," spokesman Mark Jones said. "We will continue to work with (authorities) to ensure that our athletes, and our entire delegation, are safe."

In September, the USOC's head of security, Nicole Deal, sent a letter to members of the U.S. delegation saying, "Despite current political tensions with North Korea, there is no specific information to suggest there are imminent threats to U.S. citizens or facilities in South Korea."

That same week, USOC CEO Scott Blackmun said, "From our perspective, with the information we currently have, it's full-steam ahead."

It's the same position the USOC held as of Thursday, and athletes who have been faced with the question haven't wavered on their intention to compete.

"I was in Pyeongchang last February and as far as I've been told over the past year by the USOC, everything is basically the same," figure skater Nathan Chen said last month. "I didn't feel any security threats while I was there and I feel like everything will be basically the same for this upcoming Games. I trust the USOC 100 percent and I know that they would do the best for all of their athletes."

Kim Tong-hyung contributed from Seoul.

Keillor: Radio station fired me without full investigation

By JEFF BAENEN, Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Garrison Keillor says Minnesota Public Radio was wrong to fire him last week without fully investigating what a senior executive has described as "multiple allegations" spanning an extended period against the former "A Prairie Home Companion" host.

Jon McTaggart, CEO of MPR's parent company American Public Media Group, addressed the issue at an employee meeting Wednesday. McTaggart didn't provide details of the allegations against the 75-year-old veteran broadcaster, saying only that he has shared them with lawyers and board members.

MPR News reporters refused to attend the meeting because its contents had been declared off the record, but they compiled a report based on interviews with colleagues who did.

In a statement Thursday morning, MPR insisted it conducted a proper review. The statement said two people formerly associated with the show alleged "multiple incidents of inappropriate behavior" by Keillor, though only one claimed the behavior was directed at her. The station said it hasn't made additional details public because the two want privacy.

"The allegations were carefully investigated before MPR made the decision to terminate contracts with Mr. Keillor," the statement said.

Keillor announced Nov. 30 that MPR had terminated his contracts after four decades of entertaining public radio listeners with tales of small-town characters. He said he was fired over "a story that I think is more interesting and more complicated than the version MPR heard." Keillor didn't provide details to the Associated Press but later told the Minneapolis Star Tribune that he had put his hand on a woman's bare back as he tried to console her.

Keillor retired as host of "A Prairie Home Companion" in 2016 but had continued to work for MPR on various projects.

McTaggart said Wednesday that no one else in the company knows the content of the "multiple allegations" against Keillor that span an extended period of time.

Keillor told the Associated Press in an email later Wednesday that he was not at the meeting hosted by McTaggart, so he couldn't provide details of what was said. But he expressed disappointment at the company's response to the allegations.

"I expect to deal with MPR soon to try to fix the enormous mistake they have made by not conducting a full and fair investigation," he said.

Keillor's attorney emailed a statement to AP early Thursday stressing that they know of allegations made by "one individual."

"We trust that Mr. McTaggart will set the record straight in this respect to avoid any misperceptions on that point," Eric Nilsson said in the statement.

Keillor said he wants the matter to be resolved quickly and "with it expects a full restoration of his reputation," Nilsson said.

Keillor, 75, told the Minneapolis Star Tribune he plans to go to Mayo Clinic next week for a pacemaker implant because he was having heart problems. "'Pretty routine but still serious,'" wrote Keillor, who underwent surgery to repair a heart valve at Mayo in 2001. "I'm fine."

"A Prairie Home Companion" continues with Keillor's hand-picked successor, mandolinist Chris Thile.

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Congress averts shutdown, sends Trump stopgap spending bill

By ANDREW TAYLOR and ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress on Thursday passed a stopgap spending bill to prevent a government shutdown this weekend and buy time for challenging talks on a wide range of unfinished business on Capitol Hill. The shutdown reprieve came as all sides issued optimistic takes on an afternoon White House meeting between top congressional leaders and President Donald Trump.

The measure passed the House 235-193, mostly along party lines, and breezed through the Senate on a sweeping 81-14 tally barely an hour later. It would keep the government running through Dec. 22, when another, and more difficult, shutdown problem awaits.

The bill now heads to Trump for his signature.

Topics at the White House session included relief from a budget freeze on the Pentagon and domestic agencies, extending a key children's health program and aid to hurricane-slammed Puerto Rico, Texas and Florida. The trickiest topic, and a top priority for Democrats, involves protections for immigrants brought to the country illegally as children.

These "Dreamer" immigrants are viewed sympathetically by the public and most lawmakers but face deportation in a few months because Trump reversed administrative protections provided to them by former President Barack Obama.

In back-to-back statements, both Democratic and GOP leaders declared the meeting "productive." The White House called it "constructive." Privately, congressional aides said little progress had been made.

"We had a productive conversation on a wide variety of issues. Nothing specific has been agreed to, but discussions continue," said Capitol Hill's top Democrats, Sen. Chuck Schumer of New York and Rep. Nancy Pelosi of California, ticking off a roster of Democratic priorities, including domestic spending increases, funding for veterans and money to battle opioid abuse, immigration and health care.

GOP leaders said they agreed with the need to address immigration, including the almost 1 million immigrants given protections by Obama, many of whom have only known America as their home.

Spokesmen for House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said GOP leaders "stressed the need to address border security, interior enforcement and other parts of our broken immigration system," adding that the tricky immigration issue "should be a separate process and not used to hold hostage funding for our men and women in uniform."

Negotiations are sure to be challenging. Pelosi staked out a hard line Thursday and insisted that any year-end deal solve the immigration issue.

Pelosi told reporters before the meeting that "we will not leave here" without helping the "Dreamers." Her stance was noteworthy because GOP leaders are likely to require Democratic votes for the pre-Christmas

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spending bill.

The White House said "negotiations on immigration should be held separately on a different track" and not slow down funding increases for the Pentagon.

Pelosi returned from the White House to oppose Thursday's stopgap bill. Fourteen Democrats supported the measure, however, while 18 Republicans opposed it.

Among Republicans, the conservative House Freedom Caucus had resisted the pending stopgap measure earlier in the week, fearing it would lead to a bad deal for conservatives down the road. But on Thursday, the group's chairman, Rep. Mark Meadows, R-N.C., said the group will likely give leaders whatever support they need to pass the legislation.

Meadows said they'd help it pass to avoid distractions from the GOP drive to push their treasured \$1.5 trillion tax bill through Congress this month. That measure, which mostly benefits businesses and upper-income people, is Trump's and the GOP's top remaining priority and would be their first major legislative triumph of the year.

But hours before Trump was to bargain with congressional leaders at the White House over longer-term spending decisions, Meadows said the conservatives would oppose any agreement they feel allows excessive federal spending.

"I want to avoid a headline that says President Trump's administration just passes the highest spending levels in U.S. history," Meadows told reporters. "There will be zero support on numbers that are too high, regardless of anybody's position on that."

He also said Ryan promised he'd fight in coming weeks to pass a full-year budget for the military and leave fights with Democrats over domestic spending for later. It is unclear how that strategy would work, since Republicans control the Senate 52-48 and will need at least eight Democratic votes to pass any spending legislation.

The prospects for successful White House talks were buffeted Wednesday when the impulsive Trump blurted to reporters that a shutdown "could happen." He blamed Democrats, saying they want "illegal immigrants pouring into our country, bringing with them crime, tremendous amounts of crime."

Last week, an unexpected attack by Trump on Schumer and Pelosi prompted the two to skip a bargaining session.

The two-week spending bill also makes money available to several states that are running out of funds for the Children's Health Insurance Program, known as CHIP. That widely popular program provides medical care to more than 8 million children.

The CHIP issue is among the year-end items where negotiations have gone positively, and aides say a long-term agreement is nearly in hand.

Asian shares rise on Wall Street gains, upbeat Japan data

By KELVIN CHAN, AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — Asian share indexes advanced Friday, guided by Wall Street gains and healthy quarterly economic data from Japan.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 index rose 1.1 percent to 22,741.23 and South Korea's Kospi advanced 0.2 percent to 2,466.71. Hong Kong's Hang Seng rose 0.6 percent to 28,480.70 and the Shanghai Composite in mainland China added 0.3 percent to 3,280.13. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 climbed 0.3 percent to 5,993.60.

JAPAN DATA: Government data showed Asia's second-largest economy expanded at an annualized 2.5 percent in the third quarter. That's an improvement on an earlier estimate, reflecting stronger than expected business investment and rising inventories, while demand perked up. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was expected later Friday to outline plans for longer-term efforts to shore up growth and productivity.

US SHUTDOWN: Congress passed a stopgap bill to avert a government shutdown over the weekend. The move keeps the government running until Dec. 22, buying more time for unfinished talks on a range of issues and averting market risks for investors for the day.

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QUOTEWORTHY: "Early movers in the Asia region were seen emerging from the gloom this morning, the likes of Japan and South Korea markets kicking off in black," said Jingyi Pan, strategist at CMC Markets in Singapore. "Notably, Japan's equity market was seen receiving a boost from the latest upward revision" of third quarter GDP," she said.

WALL STREET: Major U.S. benchmarks perked higher following a weeklong lull. The S&P 500 rose 0.3 percent to 2,636.98, the Dow Jones industrials average rose 0.3 percent to 24,211.48 and the Nasdaq composite gained 0.5 percent to 6,812.84

ENERGY: Oil futures retreated. Benchmark U.S. crude slipped 7 cents to \$56.62 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract added 73 cents to settle at \$56.69 per barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, rose lost 8 cents to \$62.12 a barrel in London.

CURRENCIES: The dollar rose to 113.36 Japanese yen from 113.10 yen late Thursday. The euro dipped to \$1.766 from \$1.1774.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, Dec. 8, the 342nd day of 2017. There are 23 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 8, 1941, the United States entered World War II as Congress declared war against Imperial Japan, a day after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

On this date:

In 1765, Eli Whitney, inventor of the cotton gin, was born in Westborough, Massachusetts.

In 1813, Beethoven's Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92, was first performed in Vienna, with Beethoven himself conducting.

In 1854, Pope Pius IX proclaimed the Catholic dogma of the Immaculate Conception, which holds that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was free of original sin from the moment of her own conception.

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued his Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction for the South.

In 1914, "Watch Your Step," the first musical revue to feature a score composed entirely by Irving Berlin, opened in New York.

In 1940, the Chicago Bears defeated the Washington Redskins, 73-0, in the NFL Championship Game, which was carried on network radio for the first time by the Mutual Broadcasting System (the announcer was Red Barber).

In 1962, the first session of the Second Vatican Council was formally adjourned. Typographers went on a 114-day strike against four New York City newspapers.

In 1972, a United Airlines Boeing 737 crashed while attempting to land at Chicago-Midway Airport, killing 43 of the 61 people on board, as well as two people on the ground; among the dead were Dorothy Hunt, wife of Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt, U.S. Rep. George W. Collins, D-Ill., and CBS News correspondent Michele Clark.

In 1980, rock star John Lennon was shot to death outside his New York City apartment building by an apparently deranged fan.

In 1982, a man demanding an end to nuclear weapons held the Washington Monument hostage, threatening to blow it up with explosives he claimed were inside a van. (After a 10-hour standoff, Norman D. Mayer was shot dead by police; it turned out there were no explosives.)

In 1987, President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev signed a treaty at the White House calling for destruction of intermediate-range nuclear missiles.

In 1992, Americans got to see live television coverage of U.S. troops landing on the beaches of Somalia as Operation Restore Hope began (because of the time difference, it was early Dec. 9 in Somalia).

Ten years ago: The Justice Department and CIA announced a joint inquiry into the spy agency's destruction of videotapes of interrogations of two suspected terrorists. Talk show host Oprah Winfrey, in her

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first-ever presidential endorsement, backed Barack Obama's White House bid during appearances in Des Moines and Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Skiers, fire-eaters and an ice sculptor joined in worldwide demonstrations to draw attention to global warming. Florida quarterback Tim Tebow became the first sophomore to win the Heisman Trophy.

Five years ago: Police charged Dallas Cowboys defensive lineman Josh Brent with intoxication manslaughter after he flipped his car in a pre-dawn accident that killed teammate Jerry Brown. (Brent was convicted in Jan. 2014 and sentenced to 180 days in jail; he was reinstated by the NFL in Sept. 2014.) Texas A&M quarterback Johnny Manziel became the first freshman to win the Heisman Trophy.

One year ago: John Glenn, whose 1962 flight as the first U.S. astronaut to orbit the Earth made him an all-American hero and propelled him to a long career in the U.S. Senate, died in Columbus, Ohio, at age 95.

Today's Birthdays: Flutist James Galway is 78. Singer Jerry Butler is 78. Pop musician Bobby Elliott (The Hollies) is 76. Actress Mary Woronov is 74. Actor John Rubinstein is 71. Reggae singer Toots Hibbert (Toots and the Maytals) is 69. Actress Kim Basinger (BAY'-sing-ur) is 64. Rock musician Warren Cuccurullo is 61. Rock musician Phil Collen (Def Leppard) is 60. Country singer Marty Raybon is 58. World Bank President Jim Yong Kim is 58. Political commentator Ann Coulter is 56. Rock musician Marty Friedman is 55. Actor Wendell Pierce is 54. Actress Teri Hatcher is 53. Actor David Harewood is 52. Rapper Bushwick Bill (The Geto Boys) is 51. Singer Sinead (shih-NAYD') O'Connor is 51. Actor Matthew Labordeaux is 51. Rock musician Ryan Newell (Sister Hazel) is 45. Actor Dominic Monaghan is 41. Actor Ian Somerhalder is 39. Rock singer Ingrid Michaelson is 38. R&B singer Chrisette Michele is 35. Actress Hannah Ware is 35. Country singer Sam Hunt is 33. Rock singer-actress Kate Voegelé (VOH'-geh) is 31. Christian rock musician Jen Ledger (Skillet) is 28. Actress Wallis Currie-Wood is 26. Actress AnnaSophia Robb is 24.

Thought for Today: "I'm not interested in my legacy. I made up a word: 'live-acy.' I'm more interested in living." — John Glenn (1921-2016).

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