

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 11, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 155 ~ 1 of 46



“The greatest good you can do for another is not just to share your riches, but to reveal to him his own.”

-Benjamin Disraeli

Groton Angel Tree presents are to be turned in tomorrow (Monday, Dec. 11th), at 21 N Main, downtown Groton. There are still cards available at Dollar General and at Lori's Pharmacy.

- 1- Recycling trailers
- 1- Chicken Soup for the Soul
- 1- Groton Chiropractic Clinic Ad
- 1- Death Notice: Mary Ann Thompson
- 2- Groton Care & Rehab Help Wanted Ad
- 2- Skating Clinic
- 3- Farmers Union PSA
- 3- Dr. Holm's Weekly Column
- 4- Weekly Vikings Roundup
- 5- Gov. Daugaard's Weekly Column
- 6- Rep. Noem's Weekly Column
- 7- Today in Weather History
- 8- Today's Forecast
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Groton Chiropractic Clinic

Carol McFarland-Kutter, D.C.
1205 N 1st St., Groton 397-8204

Death Notice:

Mary Ann Thompson

Mary Ann Thompson, 86, of Groton passed away December 10, 2017 at Avera St. Luke's Hospital, Aberdeen. Services are pending with Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Monday, Dec. 11

JH GBB hosts Warner

**7th grade at 6 p.m., 8th grade at 7 p.m.
School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.**

Tuesday, Dec. 12

**Boys Basketball hosts Hitchcock-Tulare
JV boys at 6:30 followed by varsity**

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**

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
CARE & REHABILITATION CENTER

1106 N. 2nd Street, Groton

Skating Clinic

We are excited to offer a free skating clinic for all levels of skaters this year. It will be held on Friday, Dec. 29 and will be taught by Aubray Harry, one of our former skaters and current instructors. Clinic attendance is vital to learning the necessary skills which will be needed for their performance routine, so we highly encourage attendance of skaters from all levels.

1:00 - 1:45 Pre-school – 1st grade

1:45 – 2:30 2nd grade – 4th grade

2:30 – 3:15 5th grade – 8th grade

3:15 – 4:00 9th grade - 12th grade

Beginners

Advanced Beginners

Intermediate

Skaters

Please mark your calendars for important upcoming dates for the Carnival.
Costume handout --- it will be held on Friday, January 5 from 3:30 - 8:00 at Emmanuel
Lutheran Church in Groton.

Picture day - Saturday, Jan. 13 --- more details and schedule to come!



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

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

The Beginnings of the Mayo Clinic

By Richard P. Holm, MD

William Worrall Mayo had a curious and remarkable life, which included influencing the development of the prestigious Mayo Clinic. He was the descendent of famous English chemist John Mayow, who in 1668 first discovered spiritus nitroaereus, a component of air that would later be known as oxygen. W.W. Mayo was born in England in 1819 and before moving westward to the Americas, Mayo would study under John Dalton, the scientist best known for developing modern atomic theory.

Mayo left for New York City to work as a pharmacist but soon moved west to attend medical school. He first trained in Indiana but finished his medical degree in Missouri. There, he was troubled with recurrent bouts of malaria, which he blamed on the southern heat. This brought him to move north to Minnesota for a healthier climate. He lived in several Minnesota towns including St. Paul, Duluth, and Le Sueur, before finally moving to Rochester. During those times, W. W. supplemented his medical practice by tailoring, farming, operating a ferry service, serving as a justice of the peace, and publishing a newspaper. He was called to serve as a physician during the devastating Dakota Indian War of 1862, which ended near New Ulm, Minnesota and concluded with the hanging of 38 Dakota Sioux Indians.

Dr. Mayo then moved his family to Rochester in 1864, bringing his wife Louise, their three daughters and a young son. He came for a job with the draft board, performing examinations for the Army. After the Civil War, Dr. Mayo, often called "the little doctor," due to his height of only 5' 4", set up a medical practice of his very own and welcomed the addition of a second son to the family. While W. W.'s practice continued to grow, he also found time to serve as an alderman, a school board member, the mayor of Rochester, and a member of the Minnesota State Senate.

In 1883, a destructive tornado came through Rochester and Mayo turned to the Sisters of St. Francis for help, a teaching order with little medical experience. His eldest son, Will, had just returned to Rochester after medical training, and his second son Charlie, still in medical school, both joined W. W. to care for tornado victims. In response to this experience, the Sisters later built St. Mary's, a twelve-bed hospital with the three Mayo doctors as surgeons and the Sisters of St. Frances as nurses.

The success of the Mayo Clinic is said to have happened because of W. W.'s early concept of a group practice and his appreciation for collaboration. It all started with the dad and two sons working together, along with the Sister-teachers turned nurses and the research and education that follows the shared work of a team.

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Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jordan Wright

The Minnesota Vikings traveled to Charlotte riding an eight-game win streak and had a chance to lock up the NFC North with a win against the Panthers. The Vikings would have also locked up the division with losses by both the Green Bay Packers and Detroit Lions. Unfortunately for the Vikings, none of those things happened on Sunday.

There were plenty of reasons that the Vikings didn't play well on Sunday, but it really all started up front along the offensive line. The problems started before the opening kickoff when rookie center Pat Elflein was ruled out of the game with a shoulder injury. His absence forced left guard Nick Easton to play center and Jeremiah Sirles to come off the bench to play left guard. Combined with the continued absence of right tackle Mike Remmers, the Vikings had three offensive linemen playing out of position. The mid-game injury to left tackle Riley Reiff was the icing on the cake, and at that point it didn't matter what the Vikings did, it was nearly impossible to overcome those disadvantages.

Case Keenum did not have a good game, which was directly related to the offensive line woes. He threw for 280 yards, but it took him 44 pass attempts to get there (a measly 6.36 yards per attempt). Keenum produced two touchdowns, but he also threw two interceptions, fumbled the ball once, and took six drive-stalling sacks. This loss isn't entirely on Keenum, as the offensive line had their worst game of the season, but he is clearly unable to overcome obstacles and put the team on his back when it's needed the most.

To make matters worse, the Vikings were unable to get much going in the run game against the Panthers. They were forced to throw the ball so much, they were only able to run the ball 21 times. They managed to produce 100 yards on those 21 carries (4.8 yards per carry), but it wasn't enough to keep the offense balanced, which allowed Carolina to pin their ears back on defense and get after the quarterback.

With the offense struggling, the Vikings defense was needed to put the clamps down and keep this game within reach. Unfortunately, they were unable to do that on Sunday. For the first time all season, the Vikings defense gave up a 100-yard rusher, with Jonathan Stewart rushing for 103 yards on 16 carries. The Panthers as a team had 216 rushing yards, which allowed them to control the game and keep the Vikings offense off the field. The Vikings defense limited Cam Newton to only 137 passing yards, one touchdown and one interception, but Newtown was able to put the game away with a 62-yard scramble in the fourth quarter.

At the end of the day, the Vikings are still 10-3 and are in great position leading into the playoffs. The Carolina Panthers are a tough team to beat, especially in their home stadium, and the Vikings found that out the hard way. If the Vikings' offensive line was at full strength, I'm sure the game would have been much closer – but injuries are part of the game and must be overcome, which didn't happen on Sunday. Both the offense and the defense played sub-par, and the Vikings are no longer the number one seed in the NFC as a result.

Looking ahead, the Vikings return home and will take on the Cincinnati Bengals on Sunday, December 17. The game will start at noon central time and will be shown on CBS. ESPN has the Vikings as heavy favorites in the game, giving them an 81% chance to win. The Bengals are 5-8 this season and will be coming off an embarrassing 33-7 loss to the Chicago Bears. If the Vikings can shut down Bengals wide receiver A.J. Green, the Vikings should have no problem winning this game. Skol!

Have any questions or comments? Reach out to me on Facebook ([facebook.com/SkolJWright](https://www.facebook.com/SkolJWright)) or on Twitter (@SkolJWright)

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Confronting the Realities of Another Lean Year

The Capitol Building was a busy place on Dec. 5 when lawmakers came to town for the annual Budget Address. They packed the state House early that afternoon to hear about our current economic situation and my proposal for the upcoming budget year.

With revenue trending below projections, I doubt legislators were surprised when I explained we face another lean year. The projected tax revenue for this budget year will leave us \$20 million short. To compound that, we have 450 more students enrolled in our schools than anticipated. This is a good problem. Higher student enrollment means our state is growing. But it's a problem that adds another \$10 million to the gap for this fiscal year.

The revenue shortfall and enrollment growth must be combined with emergency costs that will need to be covered. Unaddressed, this would leave us \$34 million in the red this year. We need to fill that hole to balance in fiscal year 2018, and then adopt a balanced budget for the 2019 fiscal year.

I am proposing we fill the current year gap by reducing expenses where we are able, and using one-time cash sources, including funds from our reserves. This would still leave our reserves at a healthy level of 10 percent of our general fund spending.

For the upcoming fiscal year, I cannot recommend inflationary increases for education, Medicaid providers or state employees. Inflationary increases would cost about \$58 million and we have only \$32 million in new recurring revenue.

Still, although we cannot afford inflationary increases, I am proposing we dedicate the majority of new recurring revenue to those three priority areas. I am recommending the largest funding increase go to K-12 education to cover next year's higher enrollment.

Second, I propose we complete a plan, begun two years ago, to better reimburse community-based Medicaid providers for actual costs. This will allow us to keep our promise to those who serve the most vulnerable in our state.

And for state employees, I am recommending a very modest amount to keep some employee pay, which is already lower than market, from falling even further behind.

Although the situation is not ideal, we must remember that our state has been through tougher times. It was just seven years ago that we were facing major shortfalls because of the recession and had to balance the budget with across-the-board cuts. Our situation is not as dire today and I am not calling for cuts.

Also, this experience is not unique to South Dakota. Many governors and legislatures across the country are seeing soft revenues. Recently, Montana and Oklahoma have had to call special sessions to address budget shortfalls. Moreover, others have not been willing to confront their fiscal reality. According to Moody's, nearly a dozen states began their fiscal year without a budget in place.

In South Dakota, we have been willing to make the difficult decisions and that has put us in an enviable position. We have structural balance, a healthy level of reserves, AAA status with all three credit rating agencies and one of the strongest pension plans in the nation. I'm very proud of these achievements. They reflect the discipline and maturity that South Dakotans expect of their elected officials. We should never take that for granted.



Our Way of Life

Our Constitution makes it clear: "the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." For much of American history, that point was understood.

Maybe that's why the right to bear arms is one of the least debated constitutional amendments in Supreme Court history. In fact, the landmark 2008 Heller decision was the first time in 50-plus years that the Court weighed in on the Second Amendment and examples of cases before 1939 are few and far between.

I believe that's because for most of American history, firearms were integral to the way we lived. People understood how to use them and taught their children how to as well. In South Dakota, that way of life still exists. I'm really proud of that, and I will always fight to protect it.

This December, the House passed legislation to further secure our Second Amendment rights. More specifically, the package included the Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act, which I cosponsored. If this legislation is signed into law, those permitted to carry a concealed handgun will be able to bring it to other states that permit concealed carry. We have a similar reciprocity agreement on the books in South Dakota that lets non-residents carry in the state, but I believe that right should be protected nationwide.

This was the second major bill I've helped pass to protect the Second Amendment this year. Under President Obama, the Social Security Administration had overstepped its mission and discriminated against certain Americans with disabilities. More specifically, federal bureaucrats barred some Social Security beneficiaries who don't manage their own finances from purchasing guns. I cosponsored legislation reversing this decision, which Congress passed and President Trump signed into law this February.

The Second Amendment is as important and relevant today as it was when the Founding Fathers wrote it into our Constitution more than 250 years ago.

I live just down the road from Kones Korner in Castlewood. It started as a gas station in the 1920s, but over the years the owner turned his gun hobby into an extension of the business. He now carries an inventory of more than 2,500 guns. He's built a livelihood around the way we live in South Dakota, around the Second Amendment. And he isn't the only one.

Hunting is a huge contributor to our state's economy. In 2016, hunters spent \$683 million in the state, supporting thousands of jobs and creating countless opportunities for folks to thrive in South Dakota. I know when our kids were little we started a hunting lodge, which I managed for a number of years. It was rewarding work that helped us make ends meet when yields were down.

I am proud of the way we live in South Dakota – of our hobbies and our traditions. Many of us grew up with a shotgun in the pickup, learning gun safety from a young age. We celebrate the liberties and freedoms we're entitled to under the Second Amendment – constitutionally protected liberties and freedoms that should not be infringed upon.

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Today in Weather History

December 11, 1965: Ice, up to 3 inches thick, with even more in some locations, accumulated from freezing rain on utility lines and trees in northern South Dakota, causing extensive damage. The damage was estimated at \$1 million each to telephone lines and power lines, with the highest losses in the northeast quarter of the state. The first accumulation of the glaze began as a thick rime due to dense fog and freezing temperatures before the 11th. Freezing rain, which started the afternoon of the 11th and continued into the 12th, formed a coating of ice over the heavy rime accumulation. The glaze remained for a week or more in most areas. In west central Minnesota, freezing drizzle and freezing rain at night on the 11th caused ice accumulations of 1/2 to 1 inch thick on roads, telephone, and electric wires, as well as tree limbs. Power and other services were disrupted over a broad area. Some services were out for up to four days.

December 11, 2004: High winds gusting to around 60 mph caused some spotty damage in northeast South Dakota. In Watertown, some trees were downed. One tree fell onto a house, causing some minor damage. In Milbank, two rail cars were blown down a railroad track and derailed.

December 11, 1905: The highest temperature ever recorded in South America was recorded at Rivadavia, Argentina with a temperature of 120 degrees.

1932 - Very cold weather prevailed along the West Coast. San Francisco received 0.8 inch of snow, and at the airport the temperature dipped to 20 degrees. At Sacramento CA, the mercury dipped to 17 degrees to establish an all-time record low for that location. Morning lows were below freezing from the 9th to the 15th at Sacramento, and the high on the 11th was just 34 degrees. The cold wave dealt severe damage to truck crops and orange groves in the Sacramento Valley. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Low pressure over southwestern Ontario, Canada, brought snow and gusty winds to the North Central U.S. Winds gusted to 62 mph at Riverton WY. Snow and high winds in eastern North Dakota reduced visibilities to less than one hundred feet at times. Warm weather prevailed across the Southern Plains Region. Half a dozen cities reported record high temperatures for the date, including Del Rio TX with a reading of 89 degrees. Laredo TX and Kingsville TX tied for honors as hot spot in the nation with afternoon highs of 92 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Arctic cold invaded the central and eastern U.S. Sault Ste Marie MI reported a record low of 14 degrees below zero, and International Falls MN was the cold spot in the nation with a low of 25 degrees below zero. Temperatures remained below zero all day over parts of eastern Upper Michigan and northern New England. (The National Weather Summary)








1989 - Strong Santa Ana winds developed across southern California and parts of central California. Winds in Kern County of central California gusted to 100 mph near Grapevine. The high winds reduced visibilities to near zero in the desert areas, closing major interstate highways east of Ontario CA. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

December 11, 1992: A complex storm system moved eastward from the Gulf Coast of Texas to eastern Georgia on December 9 and 10th. In the next 24 hours, the low-pressure system moved to the Chesapeake Bay and rapidly intensified. This system produced gale force winds with gusts exceeding hurricane force affected not only the Mid-Atlantic coastline but also as far southwest as the southern Appalachians where trees were downed and roofs damaged. This storm also produced 20 to 30-foot waves in Massachusetts on December 12 and 13th. Precipitation amounts varied considerably. Rainfall amounts of 8 inches occurred in southeastern Massachusetts, while several areas in New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Maryland recorded more than 30 inches of snow. Precipitation ended during the evening hours on the 12th. Ten deaths resulted from the storm with insured losses totaling near \$850 million and non-insured losses near \$2 billion.

2010 - The "Pineapple Express" - a meteorological event where southwest winds bring warm, moist air to the U.S. West Coast - produced record rainfall to the Pacific Northwest during December 11th-12th. Seattle experienced record daily rainfall two days in a row. The Seattle-Tacoma International Airport recorded 1.42 inches of rain on the 11th, breaking the old daily record of 1.32 inches set in 1955. The next day, 2.19 inches fell, breaking the daily record of 1.70 inches set in 1966. The Stillaguamish River in western Washington state reached 21.06 feet at Arlington, tying the record set in November 2006. Flood stage for the river is 14 feet. The storm system also brought record warmth to the area. On December 14th, the temperature at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport reached 57, breaking the old daily record of 55 set in 2004. (NCDC)

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Today	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
						
Slight Chance Rain/Snow and Windy	Mostly Cloudy	Decreasing Clouds	Partly Cloudy	Partly Sunny and Breezy	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy
High: 39 °F ↓	Low: 20 °F	High: 38 °F	Low: 24 °F	High: 39 °F	Low: 24 °F	High: 33 °F

Today

Wind Advisory

Rain & Snow Highs 35 - 43°

WINDY Northwest 25 to 45 mph

Aberdeen, SD
www.weather.gov/abr

12/11/2017 3:47 AM CT

WRN



Published on: 12/11/2017 at 3:52AM

A cold front will sweep across the region this morning, with gusty winds and isolated to scattered rain/snow showers this morning. Winds and precipitation should taper off this afternoon. Temperatures will remain relatively mild.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 42.9

Low Outside Temp: 26.9

High Gust: 15

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 59° in 1939

Record Low: -22° in 1927

Average High: 26°F

Average Low: 7°F

Average Precip in Dec: 0.19

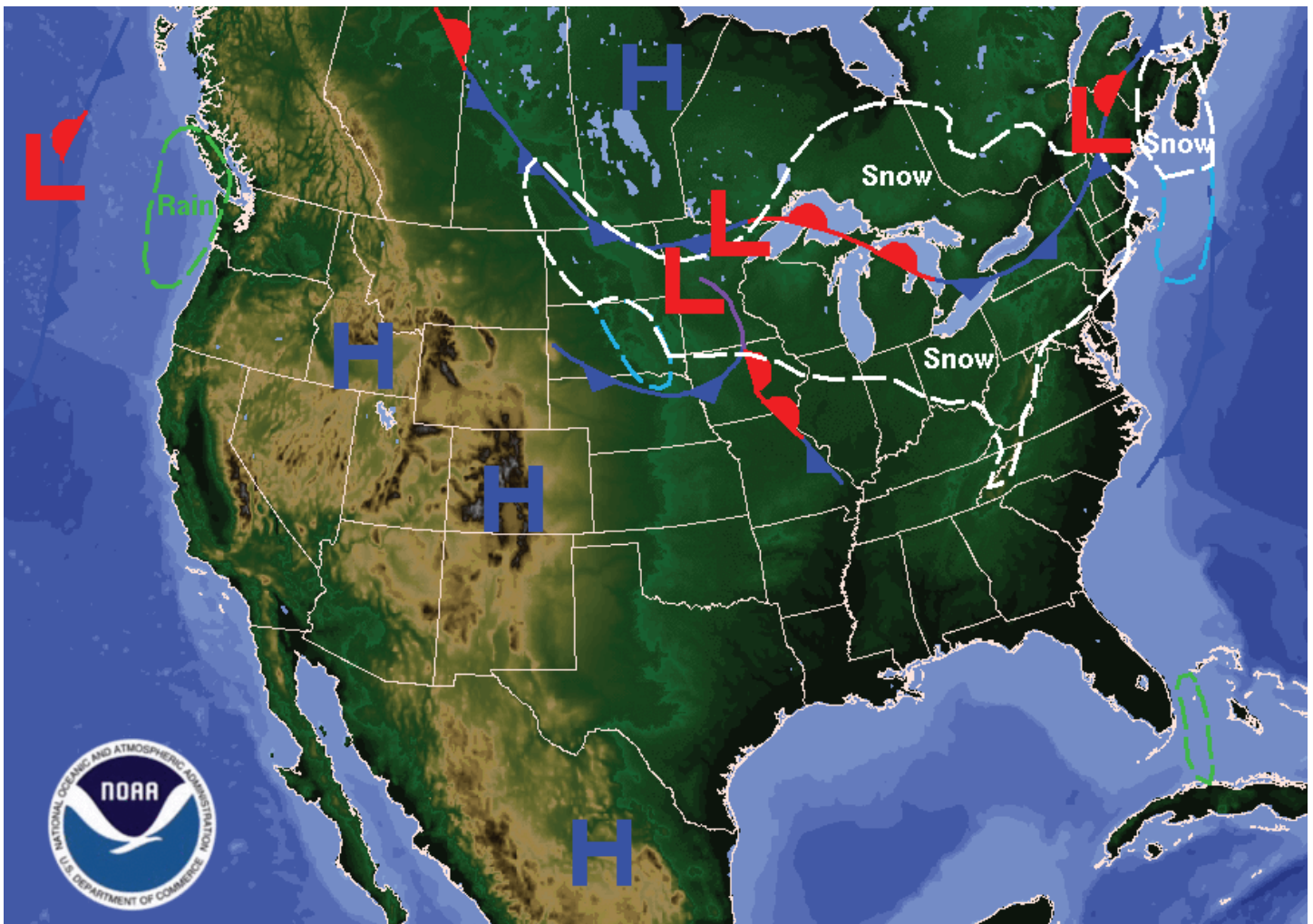
Precip to date in Dec: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 21.39

Precip Year to Date: 13.47

Sunset Tonight: 4:50 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:04 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Mon, Dec 11, 2017, issued 3:54 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)

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WHERE'S JESUS' PRESENT?

It was Christmas Eve. The tree was brightly decorated, the presents were wrapped with beautiful paper and bows, the meal was over and the family gathered together to read the Story of the Birth of Jesus.

"Now," said Dad, "let each one of us say a prayer and I will end our prayer time before we go to bed."

After praying, Susie went to the tree and began to look at each present. She looked at the name on each of them very carefully. The family was curious but quiet.

Finally, Susie, looked at each member of the family and asked, "Where's the present for Jesus? What are we giving Him this year?"

Stunned, the family sat in silence. No one had thought about a gift for Him.

Paul has a suggestion for the best gift we could give Christ this Christmas. Writing to the Romans he said, "And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies – your entire self – to God... be a living and holy sacrifice to Him – the kind He will accept."

When we think of giving gifts this Christmas each of us would do well to think first of the gift we will give God. We need to take Paul's words seriously, and give the most valuable gift – the gift of ourselves – to God!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, trouble our hearts with the words of Paul this season, and carefully and prayerfully consider, first and foremost, the gift we will give You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

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2018 Groton SD Community Events

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

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

News from the Associated Press

Subway paleontology: LA construction unearths fossil trove

CHRISTOPHER WEBER, Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — As part of the crew digging a subway extension under the streets of Los Angeles, Ashley Leger always keeps her safety gear close by.

When her phone buzzes, she quickly dons a neon vest, hard hat and goggles before climbing deep down into a massive construction site beneath a boulevard east of downtown.

Earth-movers are diverted, and Leger gets on her hands and knees and gently brushes the dirt from a spot pointed out by a member of her team. Her heart beats faster because there's a chance she'll uncover what she calls "the big find."

Leger is a paleontologist who digs for fossils in the middle of a city rather than an open plain or desert. She works for a company contracted by Los Angeles transportation officials to keep paleontologists on hand as workers extend a subway line to the city's west side.

"They're making sure that they're recovering every single fossil that could possibly show up," Leger said of her team of monitors. "They call me anytime things are large and we need to lead an excavation."

Since work on the extension began in 2014, fossilized remains have routinely turned up from creatures that roamed the grasslands and forests that covered the region during the last Ice Age, about 10,000 years ago.

They include a partial rabbit jaw, mastodon tooth, camel foreleg, bison vertebrae, and a tooth and ankle bone from a horse.

But the discovery that still makes Leger shake her head in disbelief came about a year ago, shortly after construction began on the project's second phase. She was at home getting ready for bed when a call came in from one of her monitors.

"It looks big," he told her.

The next morning, Leger knelt at the site and recognized what appeared to be a partial elephant skull.

It turned out to be much more. After 15 hours of painstaking excavation, the team uncovered an intact skull of a juvenile mammoth.

"It's an absolute dream come true for me," said Leger, who spent the previous decade at a South Dakota mammoth site with no discoveries even close to the size of the one in Los Angeles. "It's the one fossil you always want to find in your career."

California's stringent environmental laws require scientists to be on hand at certain construction sites.

Paleontologists have staffed all L.A. subway digs beginning in the 1990s, when work started on the city's inaugural line, said Dave Sotero, spokesman for the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

Paying for the paleontologist staff from Cogstone Resource Management is factored into the project's cost, he said. When scientists are brought in to see what crews might have unearthed, work on the project continues, albeit in a different location.

"Our crews try to be as mindful as possible to help them do their jobs. We get out of their way," Sotero said, adding that when the mammoth skull was uncovered, construction workers helped deliver it to the mouth of the site.

From there, the skull was hauled a mile or so to Los Angeles' La Brea Tar Pits and Museum, home to one of America's most fossil-rich sites.

Assistant curator Dr. Emily Lindsey called it a "pretty remarkable find," noting that while thousands of dire wolf and saber-toothed cat remains have been uncovered in L.A., there have been only about 30 mammoths.

A few hundred pounds and the size of an easy chair, the skull is especially rare because both tusks were attached. It's being studied and is available for public viewing inside the museum's glass-walled Fossil Lab.

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With a nod to Hollywood, the 8- to 12-year-old Colombian mammoth was named Hayden, for the actress Hayden Panettiere, featured in the TV series "Nashville" and "Heroes."

The Cogstone monitor at the construction site had been watching her on television before spotting the speck of bone that turned out to be the intact skull.

Similar endeavors have turned up subterranean treasures during digs in other cities.

Workers at a San Diego construction site found fossils including parts of a mammoth and a gray whale and multiple layers of ancient seashells.

Last year, crews working on a development near Boston's seaport uncovered a 50-foot (15-meter) wooden boat possibly dating as far back as the late 18th century.

Lindsey praised California's efforts to ensure science and urban development overlap, while bemoaning what bygone treasures may have been lost before the regulations went into place in the early 1970s.

"Most of the past is below the ground, so you're only going to find it when you dig," she said. "As the city grows, I'm sure we'll find more exciting fossil material."

Follow Christopher Weber at <https://twitter.com/WeberCM> .

South Dakota teacher battles breast cancer for third time

By LIBBY LEYDEN, The Daily Republic

LAKE ANDES, S.D. (AP) — The light shines through an open window, reflecting onto a tall cabinet in Amber Nelson's kitchen.

Photographs of her 9-year-old son Elijah decorate the walls as she rocks back and forth on a wooden chair wearing a gray T-shirt decorated with pink ribbons.

This is Nelson's favorite place to be — at home with her son and her husband, Jim. A simple luxury, but she finds comfort in being surrounded by family.

At 39 years old, Nelson has been diagnosed with breast cancer three times, once in 2013, again in 2016 and now in 2017, the Daily Republic reported . Yet Nelson continues to be resilient.

"I consider myself a fighter who will do anything because my son is my world and I do not want him to go through a world without a mom," Nelson said.

Nelson, a member of the Yankton Sioux Tribe, was born in Wagner and has lived in Lake Andes since she was in seventh grade. Now, she's a third-grade teacher at Andes Central Elementary School.

Nelson's cancer story begins at the start of the school year in 2013, when she felt a sharp pain in her upper stomach. After a variety of scans and tests, Nelson received a call from her doctor that a lump found on her breast was cancerous.

"A lot of thoughts went through my head. I thought, 'Am I going to die?'" Nelson said.

In October, she had surgery to remove the lump, but several complications occurred. What was supposed to be a four-hour surgery to remove the cancerous tissue turned into 10 hours.

Because she was on the operating table for several hours, she said she got an infection, which forced her to stay in the hospital an additional four days. Following the recovery, she underwent 16 weeks of chemotherapy.

"There were times I felt like I was rotting from the inside," Nelson said. "The chemotherapy made me very sick. It took me a long time to even get out of bed."

Six months later, Nelson's doctors declared her cancer in remission, and she returned to teaching.

Almost two years later, Nelson was sitting in a weekly teacher's meeting when she began to feel a sharp pain in her armpit.

She went to the doctor and received a call the day after Thanksgiving in 2016 that the cancer had returned.

"I was not nearly as emotional this time because I knew I had beat it once before, so I could beat it again," Nelson said.

After another surgery to remove the lymph nodes on her side, 18 weeks of chemotherapy and five weeks of radiation, Nelson was again declared in remission. And it stayed that way until this year.

Recently, Nelson read a book to her third-graders about a mother who had cancer. She then asked the class if they knew someone with cancer.

"They all raised their hands," Nelson said. "Cancer is one of those things that affects everyone."

It especially affected Nelson, who in September received news that she once again had been diagnosed with breast cancer for the third time.

But, unlike the other two, the cancer is now on her lung and has since metastasized, rendering it inoperable. For now, Nelson is using a new trial drug, which is aimed toward helping her immune system fight off the disease.

And while she tries the new drug, she will rely on her family for support, as she has in the past. Nelson credits her family as one of the biggest supporters, she said, adding that her two younger brothers shaved their heads in support.

Nelson's battle is well known in Lake Andes, where her co-workers started a fundraiser selling pink T-shirts. Nelson's mother also sells baked goods to raise funds and awareness.

The regular doctor appointments, multiple surgeries and chemotherapy treatments left Nelson with costly medical bills.

Despite Nelson's financial and medical concerns, those close to her say she continues to stay optimistic.

"Amber has this spark of fight in her," said Kristin Dvorak, a pharmacist who lives in Lake Andes and met Nelson in 2005. "She knows the outcome of this round is not the greatest but she also knows miracles can happen and she won't stop the fight."

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

Son reunites with father in South Dakota nursing home

By **STU WHITNEY, Argus Leader**

CANISTOTA, S.D. (AP) — The old man reclines in his wheelchair, thankful for a simple routine and oblivious to his past.

He watches birds frolic in a display case in the sitting room of the Good Samaritan nursing home in Canistota as a television drones nearby, setting a familiar scene.

The difference on this morning is that James O'Reilly, 84 years old and suffering from severe dementia, has a visitor, a cause for excitement among his caretakers. For years they knew little about their patient's background and viewed that uncertainty as a puzzle that needed to be solved.

His namesake, James O'Reilly Jr., enters the room and kneels next to his father, reaching for his hand. The son starts talking about youthful memories, random moments, such as the time he turned pages for a church organist while his father sang in the choir.

He lives in Seattle and is married to a woman named Dina, he tells his dad. They have a 7-year-old daughter who was thrilled to learn that her grandfather is alive and residing in a place called South Dakota.

Her middle name, the son explains, is Maxine, the name of James Sr.'s deceased mother. At that moment the old man's eyes grow moist and rise in recognition, sparked by the spirit of rediscovery.

"There's Dad," said the son with a smile. "I knew he was in there."

For more than a decade, up until just recently, it seemed perfectly reasonable for James O'Reilly Jr. to believe that his father was dead.

He lost contact in 2004, when James Sr. moved from a Rapid City hotel into a home for indigent adults as his mental acuity began to fade. The retired phone company employee, who installed communications lines for nearly 40 years, became harder and harder to track down.

"One day I called the home and the phone was disconnected, with no forwarding number," said James Jr., a 43-year-old systems engineer for a software company. "Shortly after that I moved from California to Seattle, and we lost each other in the wind."

With little paper trail and no money for a private detective, James had no way to reach his father, with whom he had always kept in touch despite a sometimes rocky relationship.

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As months and then years piled up, it seemed realistic to assume the worst.

"I kind of wrote him off," admits O'Reilly. "I figured he died as some John Doe somewhere in the Upper Midwest, so I told my daughter that her grandpa was gone. She knew him only as a photograph."

The bond between father and son was buoyed by their willingness to find common ground while acknowledging their own limitations.

The elder O'Reilly was born in Omaha but raised in Texas and briefly saw action as a Marine corporal in the Korean War. He later became a drill instructor but was told he didn't have the right look to serve in the color guard.

He entered civilian life in the early 1960s and married Patricia Otis in 1971. By the time their son was born three years later, O'Reilly was working for the phone company in Oakland and facing the demands of raising a family.

He openly favored his biological son over his wife's two daughters from a previous marriage, creating a fragile household dynamic that eventually splintered.

When James and Patricia divorced in 1980, James Jr. went to live his father and grandmother in Alameda, about a half-mile from his previous home.

"My dad had a history of not paying his bills on time, even though he had the money," recalls James. "There were a couple times that the lights went out while I was sitting there talking to him, and he'd finally have to pay. My mom called him 'Finally O'Reilly.'"

In the fall of 2014, an elderly man was dropped off at the emergency room at a Sioux Falls hospital, suffering from dementia and unable to speak coherently, the Argus Leader reported.

He had been in the custody of a couple who served as guardians for several older men in Rapid City and Sioux Falls, but they were moving out of state and wanted to abruptly end the arrangement.

The man's name, they told hospital officials, was James O'Reilly. Few other biographical details were provided.

After hospital officials tried and failed to locate family members, the case was turned over to the Department of Social Services, who transferred O'Reilly to the Good Samaritan facility in Canistota.

But state workers, facing the rare circumstance of a non-verbal individual with memory loss dropped off by non-relatives, continued their quest to connect the dots.

"We collected things that we found out about James," said Kristine Chrisopulous, a long term services and support specialist in Sioux Falls. "We saw that he had written letters that mentioned a son, but we didn't have much to go on. It became a matter of working out different possibilities with our colleagues in Pierre, hoping to solve the mystery."

After graduating from high school and attending junior college, James Jr. tried on a series occupations to see how they fit — delivering pizzas, driving a forklift, painting cars.

Before long he was hired as part of computer technical support for a startup bank, helping to set up the communications network.

"I was pulling cable through a wall in a building one day and stopped and thought, 'Oh my God. I'm my Dad,'" he said.

The notion made him smile. He recalled the days living with his father in Alameda, when James Sr. grumbled about his son watching too much TV while thrusting his worldview upon him.

"Back then Japan was doing really well with cars and electronics, so my dad thought they were taking over," recalls James. "He told me, 'You're going to have to learn Japanese,' and actually put me in a Japanese language class, which is what every 11-year-old boy wants to do on a Saturday."

James Sr. sometimes referred to his son as "Kozo," meaning disciple or novice. When he lived in Atlanta, continuing his phone company duties, his son went to visit him as a high school kid sporting a mullet, with his grades and future in flux.

It was an awkward visit at times, but James Sr. had only one son and James Jr. had but one father. It was within that reality that they found their common ground, alternating Korean War stories with tales of girlfriend drama in California, with neutral silences in between.

By the time James Jr. returned home, he was ready to get his act together and plot a path forward. If

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the uncertain steps of that journey occasionally resembled those of his wayward father, that would be all right with him.

Dina O'Reilly was on her Facebook page in late September when she saw a message that caught her eye. It was from a social services staff worker in South Dakota, and she immediately grasped its importance.

"You've got a James M. O'Reilly and we've got a James M. O'Reilly," the message read. "Are they related by any chance?"

Dina picked up the phone and called her husband, who was traveling at the time.

"James," she said to him, letting the moment sink in. "I think they found your dad."

The news nearly knocked O'Reilly over, and it didn't take long to rule out a scam, misunderstanding or clerical error. Then came more questions: What sort of shape was his father in? Where had he been all these years? Would he remember his only son?

James Jr. consulted with support staff in Sioux Falls and Pierre and flew in from Seattle last month, choosing to make the initial visit without his wife and daughter.

He arrived on a Saturday and stayed three days, sifting through fragments of a depleted past. He brought out old photographs, including one of that visit to Atlanta, with a smiling James Jr. sporting cutoff jeans and a mullet, his draped arm around his father.

He showed off a piece of origami, a carefully folded crane, made by his daughter as a nod to his own Japanese training. When he mentioned his old nickname "Kozo," he saw a brief flash in his father's eyes, a revelation to those who had been caring for the man.

"At one point we were all in the cafeteria while James helped his father with breakfast," said Chrisopulos. "He stood in front of his dad and talked about how much it meant for him to be there, and James (Sr.) made eye contact and smiled and got tears in his eyes. We haven't seen that before or since."

James Jr. considered taking his father back to Seattle, but there are concerns about upsetting his daily routine. Making the trip could be more traumatic than anything.

So O'Reilly plans to return in April with his wife and daughter to celebrate his father's 85th birthday, with Camryn excited to fly on an airplane and see Mount Rushmore as part of the trip.

"I'm sure she'll be a hit with the nursing home residents," said James.

He is enjoying fatherhood and life's possibilities, with a father's imperfect journey as his guide. He recently earned his amateur radio license, an unfinished goal for his dad, and also became a Notary Public. Next up is CPR training, beekeeping, maybe wild mushroom picking with his daughter.

A parent's imprint lasts a lifetime, even if moments are lost. He's thankful that lesson arrived with the force of an unraveled mystery, just in the nick of time.

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

South Dakota holds off Eastern Washington 75-73

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — Matt Mooney scored 19 points, including nine in the final 2:37 of the game, to help South Dakota hold off Eastern Washington 75-73 on Sunday.

Trey Burch-Manning added 19 points and eight rebounds, while reserve Nick Fuller scored 11 with five rebounds for the Coyotes (9-3), who ran their home winning streak against nonconference foes to 12 and improved on their best start since becoming a Division-I school in the 2011-12 season.

Mason Peatling topped the Eagles (3-7) with 19 points, while Bogdan Bliznyuk tallied 18 points and nine rebounds. Jack Perry made three 3-pointers and scored 13 for the Eagles, who have lost four straight and have one game left on a season-opening 10-game road trip. Eastern Washington returns home after playing at Wyoming on Tuesday.

South Dakota led 22-11 on a Mooney layup with seven minutes left in the first half, but Peatling scored nine points from there to pull the Eagles within 32-31 at halftime.

Eastern, which never led, tied it at 34 on a 3-pointer by Ty Gibson 25 seconds into the second half. But Burch-Manning and Mooney accounted for 30 of the Coyotes' final 41 points down the stretch to preserve the win.

Boy donates gifts to South Dakota children's hospital

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — An 11-year-old Watertown boy has donated more than 170 gifts to children at a Sioux Falls hospital this holiday season.

Nolan Adams dropped off presents Saturday for patients at Sanford Children's Hospital. KELO-TV reports it's the fourth year that Nolan has donated toys and other gifts to children at the hospital.

Nolan got the idea a few years ago when he was in the car with his parents and heard an ad about the hospital on the radio. He asked his parents if they could stop somewhere and get some toys.

Nolan's Project raised \$2,800 this year. His mother, Trisha Adams, says he already has about \$300 saved for next year.

Sioux Falls schools see more English language learners

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — An eastern South Dakota city has seen an increase in the number of English language learners in the last few years.

More than 620 English language learners joined the Sioux Falls Schools District last year and a similar number is expected this school year, the Argus Leader reported. The district has more than 2,300 students classified as English language learners this year. About 10 percent of the district's students aren't native English speakers.

Superintendent Brian Maher said he was surprised by the numbers.

"As a country, we've changed a little bit in how we welcome folks who don't know the language, and so to grow from last year to this year is a surprise," Maher said. "I'll be more anxious to see where we head from this point forward."

Demi Moon, the district's director of federal programs and assessment, said she anticipates that the numbers will continue to increase as families impacted by Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico move to the U.S.

The district saw a record amount of diversity in the 2017-18 school year, with students speaking more than 90 different languages in the district.

"The cultural diversity that our students who have never lived anywhere other than Sioux Falls have the opportunity to be exposed to is wonderful," Moon said. "They can learn from those students about different cultures all over the world."

Sioux Falls schools will likely spend more than \$5 million to teach English language learners this year. More schools in the district are hiring full-time specialists to help students learn English.

Moon said that while kids can learn the social component of speaking English quickly, applying English in an academic setting and understanding concepts such as math and science can be more time consuming. It typically takes non-native English speaking children five to seven years to become proficient in the language.

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

South Dakota group hopes to help fund city projects

HARRISBURG, S.D. (AP) — A new fundraising organization may help an eastern South Dakota city raise money for a central park project.

The Harrisburg Community Foundation announced late last month that it hopes to help city officials with the project, the Argus Leader reported. The foundation aims to "build, inspire and engage our community to connect and grow through philanthropy and volunteerism."

The park would include athletic fields, walking trails, a pool with a splash pad and a new playground.

The foundation aims to raise money to fund large-scale capital projects in the city, and create a scholarship program for high school seniors and a grant program for other community organizations.

"We've gone from a small town to having a very large population, and a large young population with children," foundation coordinator Angie Kuiper said. "So these are amenities that Harrisburg didn't have in

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the past, and the amenities that people want.”

The foundation has a six-member board of directors. Kuiper said the group hopes to expand its numbers in order to get more input on how to best help the city.

The foundation is an evolution of the Harrisburg Days Foundation, which organized the Harrisburg Days celebration for nearly a decade. City Hall will take over the event planning in 2018 to allow for the foundation to focus on fundraising.

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

Final push for Moore and Jones in Alabama Senate race

By **BILL BARROW** and **KIM CHANDLER**, Associated Press

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (AP) — Alabama Democrats see Tuesday’s special Senate election as a chance to renounce a history littered with politicians whose race-baiting, bombast and other baggage have long soiled the state’s reputation beyond its borders.

Many Republicans see the vote as chance to ratify their conservative values and protect President Donald Trump’s agenda ahead of the 2018 midterm elections.

At the center are Republican Roy Moore, a former jurist twice removed as state chief justice and now accused of sexual misconduct with teenage girls decades ago, and Democrat Doug Jones, an erstwhile federal prosecutor best known for prosecuting two Ku Klux Klansmen responsible for killing four black girls in the 1963 bombing of Birmingham’s 16th Street Baptist Church.

The winner will take the seat held previously by Trump’s attorney general, Jeff Sessions. Republicans control the Senate with 52 seats.

And while Trump himself didn’t campaign in the state after Moore was hit with allegations of sexual misconduct, the president recorded an audio message for robocalls that went to voters on Monday — underscoring the importance to Trump’s agenda of keeping the seat in Republican hands.

The matchup mixes both Alabama’s tortured history and the nation’s current divisive, bitterly partisan politics, and it has made a spectacle of a Deep South state well acquainted with national scrutiny but not accustomed to competitive general elections.

“This is an election to tell the whole world what we stand for,” Jones told supporters at one stop Sunday, adding that his campaign “is on the right side of history.” At an earlier appearance, he declared Alabama is “at a crossroads” and that Moore, an unapologetic evangelical populist, tries only to “create conflict and division.”

Jones, 63, stops short of explicitly comparing Moore to the four-term Gov. George Wallace, whose populism was rooted in segregation. But Jones alluded Sunday to that era of Alabama politics.

“Elect a responsible man to a responsible office,” Jones said, repeating the campaign slogan of another Alabama governor, Albert Brewer, who nearly defeated Wallace in 1970 in a contest Alabama liberals and many moderates still lament as a lost opportunity.

Some of Jones’ supporters put it even more bluntly. “I thought Alabama’s image was pretty much at the bottom,” said Pat Lawrence, a retired software engineer in Huntsville. A Moore win, Lawrence added, “will be a whole new bottom.”

Those concerns extend even to some GOP quarters. Alabama’s senior senator, Richard Shelby, confirmed Sunday that he did not vote for Moore, saying he wrote in another “distinguished” party figure he declined to name.

Yet for many Republicans, Moore is a paragon of traditional values. They reject accusations that he molested two teenage girls and pursued relationships with others decades ago. Moore denies the charges.

“Everyone has to vote their convictions,” said Kevin Mims of Montgomery, as he held his Bible outside his Baptist church Sunday in Montgomery. “My conviction is he’s the right man for the job.”

Where Moore’s critics see a state judge who defied federal courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision legalizing same-sex marriage, Mims see a stalwart who stands “on the word of God.” Other con-

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servatives see an anti-establishment firebrand in the mold of Trump, who won Alabama by 28 percentage points.

Moore encourages that view with fundraising emails that urge backers to help him “defeat the elite,” a swipe at both Democrats and the establishment Republicans who tried to deny him the GOP nomination earlier this year.

Ultimately, Republicans from Moore to Trump himself are betting on a simple bottom line: Most Alabama conservatives simply won’t defect to a Democrat.

“If Alabama elects liberal Democrat Doug Jones, all of our progress will be stopped cold,” Trump says in a robocall the Moore campaign plans to push out Monday.

The president also invokes a common fear among Republicans, calling Jones “a puppet of Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer,” the Democratic House and Senate leaders in Washington, both of them reviled by conservative voters. “Roy Moore is the guy we need to pass our Make American Great Again agenda,” the president insists.

Moore’s baggage could make it difficult to draw conclusions about what the results might mean beyond Alabama, but both parties are watching closely.

Democrats need to flip 24 GOP-held seats to reclaim a House majority, and they’re trying to dent the slim Republican advantage in the Senate and its dominance of statehouses around the country. In many of those races, they’ll need the same thing Jones must get to win in Alabama: strong turnout among young and non-white voters, along with improved performance among suburban moderates.

A Jones victory would be hailed as a potential precursor, and Democrats have indicated they have a post-Alabama strategy even if Jones loses: They’ll take Alabama’s brand national, hammering Republicans as “the party of Donald Trump and Roy Moore.”

Barrow reported from Mobile, Alabama. Follow Barrow on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/BillBarrowAP> and Chandler at <https://twitter.com/StatehouseKim>.

Russia’s Putin makes stop at Russian military base in Syria

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV, Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Declaring a victory in Syria, Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday visited a Russian military air base in the country and announced a partial pullout of Russian forces from the Mideast nation.

Putin’s surprise visit marked his first trip to Syria, drawing a symbolic line under the campaign that has shored up President Bashar Assad’s government. It was also the first visit by a foreign head of state to war-ravaged Syria since its bloodletting started nearly seven years ago.

Putin’s brief stop at the Hemeimeem air base in Syria’s coastal province of Latakia while on route to Egypt came days after the Russian president declared his bid to run for re-election in the March 18 vote, helping encourage the feelings of pride about Russia’s revived global clout and prestige.

It also followed the Russian announcement last week that the Syrian army, with the help of Russian airstrikes, routed the Islamic State group in eastern Syria and fully restored control over the country’s border with Iraq.

In a televised speech to the Russian troops at the base, the Russian leader hailed their “excellent” performance in Syria.

“You have shown the best qualities of a Russian soldier — courage, valor, team spirit, decisiveness and excellent skills,” said. “The Motherland is proud of you.”

Russia launched its air campaign in Syria at the end of September 2015, when Assad’s government was teetering on the brink of collapse, and quickly changed the course of the conflict in his favor. Russian officials say troops in Syria were there mainly to fight “terrorists” including militants of the Islamic State group and al-Qaida affiliates, but they also heavily targeted other rebel factions opposed to Assad, allowing his troops to claw back significant territory over the past two years.

Putin has hosted Assad twice in the past six years, including a surprise Nov. 21 visit that Assad undertook

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to the Black Sea resort of Sochi.

Russian television stations showed Putin walking off the plane at the air base, embracing and shaking hands with Assad. The two then visited a military operations room at the base.

The Hemeimeem base, located in a region that is the heartland of Assad's Alawite minority, has served as the main foothold for the Russian military campaign in Syria.

"Here in Syria, far away from our borders, you helped the Syrian people to preserve their state and fend off attacks by terrorists," Putin said, facing the troops lined up on the tarmac. "You have dealt a devastating blow to those who blatantly threatened our country. We will never forget about the victims who fell in the fight against terror both here and in Russia."

In his speech, Putin also said that he had ordered the military to withdraw a "significant part" of the Russian contingent in Syria.

"Friends, the Motherland is waiting for you," Putin said. "You are coming back home with victory!"

He added that "if the terrorists again raise their heads, we will deal such blows to them they have never seen."

Putin, however, said the Russian military will maintain its presence at Hemeimeem and the naval facility in Tartus.

Gen. Sergei Surovikin, the Russian military commander in Syria, reported to Putin that the military will pull out 23 warplanes, two helicopter gunships, special forces units, military police and field engineers.

Surovikin said that the remaining forces will be sufficient to "successfully fulfill the tasks" to stabilize the situation in Syria. He wouldn't say how many troops and weapons would stay behind.

Syria has allowed Russia to use Hemeimeem air base indefinitely without cost. Moscow also has signed a deal with Syria to use the Tartus base for 49 years, which could be extended if both parties agree.

The Russian military plans to modernize the air base and expand its runways to allow it to host more warplanes. It also intends to expand the Tartus facility significantly to make it a full-scale naval base capable of hosting warships, including cruiser-sized vessels.

After seeing troops march to the tunes of military marches, Putin drove up to the Russian warplanes parked on the runway and talked to the pilots, who said they will fly back home later in the day.

Syrian TV said Assad thanked Putin for his troops' "effective contribution" to the fight against terrorism in Syria, which he said the Syrian people "will never forget."

"Syria has been saved as a sovereign, independent state, refugees are coming home and conditions have been created for a political settlement under the United Nations' auspices," Putin said.

Associated Press writer Albert Aji in Damascus, Syria, contributed reporting.

Firefighters brace for second week of California wildfires

CHRISTOPHER WEBER, Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — As Southern California enters its second week engulfed in flames, fire officials anticipate more growth and danger due to continued strong wind gusts, no rain and decades-old dry vegetation.

A powerful flare-up on the western edge of the largest and most destructive wildfire sent residents fleeing Sunday, as wind-fanned flames ripped down hillsides toward coastal towns northwest of Los Angeles. New evacuations were ordered as the fire sent up an enormous plume near Montecito and Carpinteria, seaside areas in Santa Barbara County.

"The winds are kind of squirrely right now," said county fire spokesman Mike Eliason. "Some places the smoke is going straight up in the air, and others it's blowing sideways. Depends on what canyon we're in."

Southern California's gusty Santa Ana winds have long contributed to some of the region's most disastrous wildfires. They blow from the inland toward the Pacific Ocean, speeding up as they squeeze through mountain passes and canyons.

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Gusts of up to 40 mph (64 kph) are expected through Monday, according to the National Weather Service. Containment increased Sunday on other major blazes in Los Angeles, Riverside and San Diego counties. Resources from those fires were diverted to the Santa Barbara foothills to combat the 270-square-mile (699-sq. kilometer) fire that started Dec. 4 in neighboring Ventura County.

As of late Sunday, the Thomas Fire had destroyed 790 structures and damaged 191.

Fires are not typical in Southern California this time of year but can break out when dry vegetation and too little rain combine with the Santa Ana winds. Though the state emerged this spring from a yearslong drought, hardly any measurable rain has fallen in the region over the past six months.

"This is the new normal," Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown warned Saturday after surveying damage from the deadly Ventura fire. The governor and experts said climate change is making wildfires a year-round threat.

High fire risk is expected to last into January.

The air thick with acrid smoke, even residents of areas not under evacuation orders took the opportunity to leave, fearing another shutdown of U.S. 101, a key coastal highway that was closed intermittently last week. Officials handed out masks to residents who stayed behind in Montecito, the wealthy hillside enclave that's home to celebrities such as Oprah Winfrey, Jeff Bridges and Rob Lowe.

"Our house is under threat of being burned," Ellen DeGeneres tweeted at midday Sunday. "We just had to evacuate our pets. I'm praying for everyone in our community and thankful to all the incredible firefighters."

Ojai experienced hazardous levels of smoke at times and officials warned of unhealthy air for large swaths of the region. The South Coast Air Quality Management District urged residents to stay indoors if possible and avoid vigorous outdoor activities.

In San Diego, which is 130 miles (209 kilometers) to the south, the Lilac Fire was 75 percent contained. The flames erupted suddenly Thursday in the Fallbrook area, known for its avocado groves and horse stables in the rolling hills.

The fire swept through the San Luis Rey Downs training center, where it killed more than 40 elite thoroughbred race horses, and destroyed more than 100 homes — most of them in a retirement community. Three people were burned trying to escape the fire that continued to smolder Sunday.

Despite the size and number of wildfires burning in the region, there has only been one confirmed death: A 70-year-old woman, who crashed her car on an evacuation route, is attributed to the fire in Santa Paula, a small city where the Thomas Fire began.

Most of last week's fires were in places that burned in the past, including one in the ritzy Los Angeles neighborhood of Bel-Air that burned six homes and another in the city's rugged foothills above the community of Sylmar and in Santa Paula.

Associated Press writers Elliot Spagat in Fallbrook and Brian Melley and Robert Jablon in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

Follow Weber at <https://twitter.com/WeberCM> .

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

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. PUTIN MAKES SURPRISE STOP IN SYRIA EN ROUTE TO CAIRO

The Russian president visits a Russian military air base in Latakia and announces a partial pullout of his forces from the country.

2. DIVERGENT VIEWS ON WHAT ALABAMA SENATE VOTE MEANS

The matchup between Roy Moore and Doug Jones mixes both the Deep South state's tortured history and the nation's current divisive, bitterly partisan politics.

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3. MYANMAR MILITARY'S RAPE OF ROHINGYA MUSLIMS SWEEPING, METHODICAL

In interviews with the AP, more than two dozen women and girls bolster the U.N.'s contention that the Myanmar armed forces are systematically using rape as a "calculated tool of terror" to exterminate the Rohingya people.

4. FOR TRUMP, GOP A MOMENTOUS 2 WEEKS

Republicans are determined to deliver the first revamp of the nation's tax code in three decades and agree on a spending bill to avert a government shutdown over the holidays.

5. WHAT ARE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF WORKPLACE SCANDALS

Some women, and men, worry the same climate that's emboldening women to speak up about sexual misconduct could backfire by making some men wary of female colleagues.

6. FIREFIGHTERS BRACE FOR 2ND WEEK OF CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

Southern California fire officials anticipate more growth and danger due to continued strong wind gusts, no rain and decades-old dry vegetation.

7. DEADLINE WEEK CRUNCH FOR HEALTH LAW SIGN-UPS

Friday is the last day for millions of people still eligible to enroll in subsidized private coverage in 39 states served by the federal HealthCare.gov website.

8. BITCOIN FUTURES RISE AS VIRTUAL CURRENCY HITS MAJOR EXCHANGE

The futures contract that expires in January surges more than \$3,000 to \$18,580 eight hours after trading launched on the Chicago Board Options Exchange.

9. WHO ARE FAVORITES FOR POST-WEINSTEIN GOLDEN GLOBES

Steven Spielberg's Pentagon Papers drama "The Post" and Christopher Nolan's World War II tale "Dunkirk" are expected to lead the film categories, while Hulu's "The Handmaid's Tale" and HBO's "Big Little Lies" could be in for a big day on the TV side.

10. STEELERS CLINCH AFC NORTH

Ben Roethlisberger throws for 506 yards and two touchdowns, becoming the first quarterback in NFL history to top 500 yards passing three times, as Pittsburgh (11-2) rallies past Baltimore 39-38.

Start the clock for Trump, GOP in last push on taxes, budget

By DONNA CASSATA, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Start the countdown clock on a momentous two weeks for President Donald Trump and the GOP-run Congress.

Republicans are determined to deliver the first revamp of the nation's tax code in three decades and prove they can govern after their failure to dismantle Barack Obama's health care law this past summer. Voters who will decide which party holds the majority in next year's midterms elections are watching.

Republicans are negotiating with Democrats on the contentious issue of how much the government should spend on the military and domestic agencies to avert a holiday shutdown. An extension of the program that provides low-cost health care to more than 8 million children and aid to hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico, Texas and Florida need to be addressed. And further complicating the end-of-year talks is the fate of some 800,000 young immigrants here illegally.

Lawmakers are trying to get it all done by Dec. 22.

A look at the crowded agenda:

TAXES

Republicans are upbeat about finalizing a tax bill from the House and Senate versions for Trump's first major legislative accomplishment in nearly 11 months in office.

"I feel very confident we're going to get this done ... at the end of the day we're going to get this to the president's desk and he's going to sign it," House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., said Sunday in an interview on Fox News Channel.

The House and Senate bills would cut taxes by about \$1.5 trillion over the next decade while adding

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billions to the \$20 trillion deficit. They combine steep tax cuts for corporations with more modest reductions for most individuals.

Republican leaders have struggled to placate GOP lawmakers from high-tax states like California, New York and New Jersey whose constituents would be hit hard by the elimination of the prized federal deduction for state and local taxes. Repeal of the deduction added up to \$1.3 trillion in revenue over a decade that could be used for deep tax cuts.

Lawmakers finally settled on a compromise in both bills — full repeal of the state and local deductions for income and sales taxes, but homeowners would be able to deduct up to \$10,000 in local property taxes.

And yet it's still not a done deal.

"There's a lot of conversation around the fact that in some of the blue states where the taxes are high, the property tax alone, they will not be able to use the \$10,000 possible deductions," Sen. Tim Scott, R-S.C., said on NBC's "Meet the Press with Chuck Todd" on Sunday. "So allowing for income and property taxes, which would cost another \$100 billion by the way, to be options for folks in those states would be a better solution. And we're looking at ways to make that happen."

Just a few weeks ago, lawmakers were unyielding on their insistence that the corporate tax rate be slashed from 35 percent to 20 percent. Now, one way to finance the changes on state and local taxes would be to cut the corporate tax rate to 21 or 22 percent instead.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Republicans and Democrats are trying to work out a sweeping budget deal. They got a temporary reprieve from a partial government shutdown when they passed a stopgap, two-week bill last Thursday.

Republicans want a major boost in defense spending. Democrats want a similar increase for domestic agencies.

Congress also has to figure out how much disaster aid should be directed to Puerto Rico, Texas and Florida. The Trump administration requested \$44 billion last month, an amount lawmakers from hurricane-slammed regions say is insufficient. The latest request would bring the total appropriated for disaster relief this fall to close to \$100 billion — and the government still must calculate how much it will cost to rebuild Puerto Rico's devastated housing stock and electric grid.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Fresh federal money for the Children's Health Insurance Program, known as CHIP, ran out on Oct. 1, a blow to the widely popular program that provides low-cost medical care to more than 8 million children. Some states have relied on unspent funds, while others that were running out of money got a short-term reprieve in the two-week spending bill.

Lawmakers hope to agree on a long-term budget solution for a program that's about \$14 billion a year.

IMMIGRATION

Democrats want to act now to protect young immigrants who came to the United States illegally as children, with demands that a solution is included in any year-end spending deal.

"We will not leave here without a DACA fix," said Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., referring to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.

These young immigrants, often referred to as Dreamers, face deportation in a few months after Trump reversed administrative protections established by President Barack Obama.

Republicans say it can wait till next year and shouldn't bog down the broad budget agreement. However, House GOP leaders likely will require Democratic votes for the spending bill and they have to work out a deal with Pelosi.

Associated Press writers Marcy Gordon and Andrew Taylor contributed to this report.

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AP sources: Doctors believe Wentz tore ACL, out for year

ROB MAADDI, AP Sports Writer

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Carson Wentz threw a touchdown pass a few plays after suffering an injury that could ruin a special season for the Philadelphia Eagles, and then stuck around to greet teammates and celebrate a division-clinching victory with them.

It's always team-first for No. 11.

Two sources familiar with the injury told The Associated Press that doctors believe Wentz tore his left anterior cruciate ligament in a 43-35 comeback win over the Rams on Sunday and will miss the rest of the season and playoffs.

Wentz, a favorite in the NFL MVP race, will have an MRI on Monday to confirm the severity of the injury. Both people spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to release the information.

After the game, Wentz's left knee was wrapped in a brace. He was driven in a cart up the tunnel at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum and then hobbled to one of the team buses.

"I don't know anything until we evaluate him (Monday)," Eagles coach Doug Pederson said.

Wentz wrote on Twitter: "NFC East Champs! So proud of the resiliency of this team. Such a special group of men. And I greatly appreciate all the prayers! I know my God is a powerful one with a perfect plan. Time to just lean in to him and trust whatever the circumstances! #Proverbs3:5-6"

Wentz was hurt late in the third quarter at Los Angeles. Backup Nick Foles rallied the Eagles (11-2) to a win that secured the NFC East title and put them in first place in the conference with three games remaining.

"Everyone is really excited about the win but you have your starting quarterback go down, it's emotional," Foles said. "It's emotional for me. I work with him every day so I'm dealing with that."

The Eagles have overcome several key injuries and now have to move forward without their most indispensable player. Nine-time Pro Bowl left tackle Jason Peters, return specialist/running back Darren Sproles, star linebacker Jordan Hicks and special-teams captain Chris Maragos already went down for the season.

But they're not the franchise quarterback.

"It (stinks) more so for Carson as a person and a friend and a teammate and what he puts into the game and his preparation," safety Malcolm Jenkins said. "But as a team we have all our goals in front of us."

Wentz is the latest NFL star to go down in a season in which several high-profile players have been sidelined. Seahawks cornerback Richard Sherman and safety Kam Chancellor, Texans defensive lineman J.J. Watt and quarterback Deshaun Watson, Giants receivers Odell Beckham Jr. and Brandon Marshall, Chiefs safety Eric Berry, Browns tackle Joe Thomas and Vikings running back Dalvin Cook and quarterback Sam Bradford each sustained season-ending injuries.

After starting all 16 games as a rookie, Wentz made a giant leap this year. He passed for 3,296 yards, 33 TDs and only seven interceptions.

Wentz again was spectacular against the Rams before he got hurt after getting hit hard as he scrambled into the end zone on a play that was called back because of holding. He stayed in the game and threw a 3-yard TD pass to Alshon Jeffery on fourth down four plays later, setting the franchise record for most TD passes in a season.

"It shows how tough he is," Pederson said.

Foles replaced Wentz the next drive after the Rams took a 35-31 lead. He led the Eagles to a pair of field goals on consecutive drives. Second-year pro Nate Sudfeld is Philadelphia's No. 3 quarterback.

Wentz arrived in Philadelphia as the No. 2 pick in the 2016 draft out of North Dakota State. On Sunday, he outperformed Rams quarterback Jared Goff, the No. 1 pick in that draft.

Despite the injury, Wentz celebrated the victory over the Rams (9-4) with teammates.

"He's one of the leaders on the team. He was there congratulating and celebrating with everyone," Foles said.

Foles, a third-round pick by former Eagles coach Andy Reid in 2012, is in his second stint in Philadelphia. He replaced an injured Michael Vick in 2013 and led the Eagles to an NFC East title during Chip Kelly's

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first season as coach. Foles tied an NFL record with seven TD passes in a game at Oakland in November 2013 and finished that season with 27 TDs and only two picks. The Eagles lost at home to New Orleans in the playoffs. Foles went to the Pro Bowl and was the offensive MVP.

But Kelly traded Foles to St. Louis for Sam Bradford after the 2014 season. Foles spent a year with the Rams, a season with the Chiefs and returned to Philadelphia as a free agent this season.

"I'm absolutely ready to go — need be," Foles said. "I prepare every day."

AP Sports Writer Bernie Wilson contributed to this report from Los Angeles.

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

Nominations for 75th annual Golden Globes coming Monday

By JAKE COYLE, AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — When nominations for the 75th annual Golden Globe Awards are announced Monday morning, the shadow of sexual misconduct scandals will be hard to avoid.

The nominations will begin at 8:15 a.m. EST. A second batch of nominees will follow live on NBC's "Today" show, where less than two weeks earlier, longtime host Matt Lauer was fired following multiple allegations of sexual misconduct.

Lauer was just the latest media figure to be toppled by the ongoing revelations that have followed the ouster of former Weinstein Co. co-chairman Harvey Weinstein, along with many others, including Kevin Spacey. As a co-star in Ridley Scott's upcoming "All the Money in the World," Spacey — whose performance has been removed in reshoots — might have once expected to hear his named among Monday's best supporting actor nominees.

Amazon's "Transparent" and star Jeffrey Tambor have also been regular Globes nominees, and could be again Monday for the show's fourth season. Two women have come forward in the past month to accuse Tambor of sexual harassment, including "Transparent" actress Trace Lysette and his former assistant. Tambor has said "the idea that I would deliberately harass anyone is simply and utterly untrue."

The Globes will be the most prominent platform yet in Hollywood's awards season to confront the post-Weinstein landscape. Presented and chosen by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, their deliberations aren't representative of the larger industry. The HFPA is composed of approximately 90 largely unknown international journalists.

But the Globes, which this year will be hosted by Seth Meyers on January 7, have long characterized themselves as one of the frothiest stops on the awards season circuit. Many will be watching to see how the Globes weigh the likes of "Transparent" and "All the Money in the World." A rough cut of the latter was reportedly screened for the HFPA shortly after Scott finished reshooting the film with Christopher Plummer stepping in for Spacey.

Among the favorites at the Globes this year are Steven Spielberg's Pentagon Papers drama "The Post" and Christopher Nolan's World War II tale "Dunkirk." In the television categories, Hulu's "The Handmaid's Tale" and HBO's "Big Little Lies" could be in for a big morning.

Follow AP Film Writer Jake Coyle on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/jakecoyleAP>

Bitcoin futures rise as virtual currency hits major exchange

CHICAGO (AP) — The first-ever bitcoin future jumped after it began trading Sunday as the increasingly popular virtual currency made its debut on a major U.S. exchange.

The futures contract that expires in January surged more than \$3,000 to \$18,580 eight hours after trading launched on the Chicago Board Options Exchange. The contract opened at \$15,000, according to data from the CBOE.

The CBOE futures don't involve actual bitcoin. They're securities that will track the price of bitcoin on

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Gemini, one of the larger bitcoin exchanges.

The start of trading at 5 p.m. CST overwhelmed the CBOE website. "Due to heavy traffic on our website, visitors to www.cboe.com may find that it is performing slower than usual and may at times be temporarily unavailable," the exchange said in a statement. But it said the trading in the futures had not been disrupted.

Another large futures exchange, the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, will start trading its own futures on Dec. 18 but will use a composite of several bitcoin prices across a handful of exchanges.

The price of a bitcoin has soared since beginning the year below \$1,000, hitting a peak of more than \$16,858 Dec. 7 on the bitcoin exchange Coindesk. As of 1:15 a.m. CST, it was at \$16,733.49 on Coindesk.

Futures are a type of contract in which a buyer and a seller agree on a price for a particular item to be delivered on a certain date in the future, hence the name. Futures are available for nearly every type of security but are most famously used in commodities such as wheat, soy, gold, oil, cocoa and, as dramatized in the Eddie Murphy and Dan Aykroyd movie "Trading Places," concentrated frozen orange juice.

The futures signal greater mainstream acceptance of bitcoin but also open up bitcoin to additional market forces. The futures will allow investors to bet that bitcoin's price will go down — a practice known as shorting — which currently is very difficult to do.

There have been other attempts to bring bitcoin investing into the mainstream. Tyler and Cameron Winklevoss, twin brothers who own large amounts of bitcoin, tried to create an exchange-traded fund based on bitcoin, but federal regulators denied their application.

How much actual investor interest there will be in these bitcoin futures is still up in the air. Many larger Wall Street brokerages and clearinghouses, including Goldman Sachs and JPMorgan Chase, are either not allowing customers to trade bitcoin futures or only allowing select clients to do so. Other brokerages are putting restrictions on the amount of margin a trader can use in bitcoin futures, or putting limits on the amount that can be purchased.

The digital currency has had more than its fair share of critics on Wall Street. JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon has called bitcoin "a fraud." Thomas Peterffy, chairman of the broker-dealer Interactive Brokers Group, expressed deep concerns about the trading of bitcoin futures last month, saying "there is no fundamental basis for valuation of Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies, and they may assume any price from one day to the next."

Peterffy noted that if bitcoin futures were trading at that time, under the CBOE's rules those futures likely would experience repeated trading halts because 10 percent or 20 percent moves in bitcoin prices have not been unusual in recent months.

Bitcoin is the world's most popular virtual currency. Such currencies are not tied to a bank or government and allow users to spend money anonymously. They are basically lines of computer code that are digitally signed each time they are traded.

A debate is raging on the merits of such currencies. Some say they serve merely to facilitate money laundering and illicit, anonymous payments. Others say they can be helpful methods of payment, such as in crisis situations where national currencies have collapsed.

Kelvin Chan in Hong Kong contributed to this report.

This report has been corrected to show the opening price of the bitcoin future contract was \$15,000.

After allegations, Moore avoids spotlight, questions

By KIM CHANDLER, Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — Republican U.S. Senate candidate Roy Moore has been a rare sight on the traditional campaign trail in the days ahead of a critical U.S. Senate race. He's appeared at only a handful of rallies in front of friendly audiences and steadfastly has shunned reporters from the mainstream media.

Moore's past campaigns have never been heavy on the conventional, but his relative absence from the spotlight this time around is nearly unheard of for a major party candidate.

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Moore has focused on meeting with small groups of supporters and an aggressive social media campaign out of camera range as he tries to win Tuesday's election against Democrat Doug Jones - a contest that was supposed to be an easy GOP victory - until November, when a number of women stepped forward to accuse Moore of engaging in sexual misconduct when he was in his 30s and they were teenagers.

Moore has denied the allegations and refuses to back down.

Moore's stealth effort has left Jones resorting to mockery as the Democrat crisscrosses the state trying to pull an upset in Tuesday's special election, buoyed by the possibility that enough Republicans will abandon the 70-year-old Moore in the wake of the allegations.

"Roy Moore is in hiding. He's kind of like the groundhog. He comes out every so often to see if he can see his shadow," Jones said Saturday in Selma during one of several stops for the Democrat this weekend.

Ben DuPre, a campaign spokesman, said Moore is not holding back.

"He's talking to voters. We are getting the message out any way that we can. I know you are the old media and you get offended when we don't talk to you, but we've got Twitter. We've got Facebook. He's doing interviews. He's doing radio."

Moore campaign chairman Bill Armistead said Moore has spent the week doing smaller unannounced events with supporters and has been on the phone with pastors and others urging supporters to get to the polls on Tuesday. He said the campaign feels confident going into Tuesday.

Moore's campaign is actively pushing his narrative on social media and in press releases. He's also drawing headlines with the help of President Donald Trump, who came to the Florida Panhandle on Friday night and has lined up a recorded telephone call from the president that will start being delivered to Alabama voters on Monday.

Moore has never been conventional. He has built a large following among some evangelical voters from two failed gambits: upholding a display of the Ten Commandments in a state building and trying to block same-sex marriage in Alabama. He was tossed from office in both instances.

Moore plans to close out his campaign Monday night with another large rally featuring former Trump campaign guru Steve Bannon.

Alabama campaign consultant David Mowery - whose client Democrat Bob Vance lost to Moore in the 2012 Alabama Supreme Court chief justice race - said Moore has never been a candidate to do many public events but shunning just about all traditional media during the Senate race is "pretty unprecedented."

Still, Mowery said, Moore knows how to focus on his base.

"We never knew where he was and then we'd get a picture from somebody showing us some church marquee saying, 'Judge Moore is here on Saturday,'" he recalled. "He's out there, he's just with his base, and usually in small events."

Mowery said the temptation is to obsess too much over what Moore is doing.

"You lose the forest for the trees worrying over the opponent," Mowery said. "It wasn't like we were competing over the same voters anyway."

"We were going after the Chamber of Commerce, country club, First Methodist kind of Republicans ... not the fundamentalists and the snake handlers. We were never going to get them anyway, and neither is Doug," he said.

Bill Stewart, the former chairman of the political science department at the University of Alabama, said Moore appears to be banking on his evangelical base, as well as the state's overwhelming tendency to vote Republican, to carry him to victory on Tuesday.

Republicans in Alabama tend to clear 60 percent of the vote — though Moore has struggled in his previous races to reach that number — and voters here haven't elected a Democrat to the Senate since 1992.

Stewart said he can't remember a candidate ever virtually "disappearing from public view" the way Moore has. Still, he said Moore has little to gain but "a lot to lose" by making a mistake.

"There may be a method in his madness," Stewart said.

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Firm convictions, uneasiness at churches before Senate race

By STEVE PEOPLES, KIM CHANDLER and BILL BARROW, Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) — Alabama's race for U.S. Senate settled into church for worship on Sunday, with the minister at a historic black congregation calling the race a life-or-death matter for equal rights, conservatives standing by Republican Roy Moore and others feeling unsettled in the middle.

Speaking at Birmingham's 16th Street Baptist Church, where four black girls died in a Ku Klux Klan bombing in 1963, the Rev. Arthur Price evoked the civil rights era between hymns. Democratic nominee Doug Jones prosecuted the last two Klansmen convicted in the attack and has attended events at the church, a downtown landmark with twin domed towers.

"There's too much at stake for us to stay home," Price said of Tuesday's election. He didn't endorse Jones from the pulpit but in a later interview called the candidate "a hero" to the congregation and Birmingham.

Despite allegations of sexual misconduct involving teen girls decades ago, Moore isn't being abandoned by worshippers at Montgomery's Perry Hill Road Baptist Church, where Moore spoke at a "God and Country" rally in September before the accusations arose.

Leaving the red-brick building after a service that ended with a hymn and an altar call, Kevin Mims said he didn't believe the claims against Moore. But even if true, he said, they occurred long ago, and Moore is a conservative who stands "on the word of God."

"Everyone has to vote their convictions," said Mims, holding a Bible. "My conviction is he's the right man for the job."

Lines aren't so clearly defined elsewhere.

Interviews with a dozen parishioners at Mobile's Ashland Place United Methodist Church, the home church of U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions, turned up neither any Moore defenders nor confirmed votes for Jones. The prevailing mood seemed to be one of frustration over having to choose between a Republican with Moore's baggage and any Democrat.

"I will vote for Judge Moore," said Bill Prine, of Mobile. "I'm not a fan of his, but I'll have to stick with the Republicans."

The candidates also spent time in church. Accompanied by Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ), Rep. Terri Sewell (D-Ala), and others, Jones tweeted a photo from More Than Conquerors Faith Church, a large black congregation in Birmingham. Aides to Moore, who has been almost invisible on the campaign trail during the closing days of the race, didn't disclose his whereabouts Sunday.

After church, Jones told supporters in a cramped campaign office that the results of Tuesday's vote would send a message far beyond Alabama's borders.

"This is an election to tell the whole world what we stand for," he said, adding: "This campaign, ladies and gentlemen, is on the right side of history."

President Donald Trump weighed in on the race with a phone message that state voters will receive beginning Monday urging them to vote for Moore.

"I'm going to make America safer and stronger and better than ever before. But we need that seat; we need Roy voting for us," Trump said in audio of the call provided by the Moore campaign.

Polls show the race too close to call. While Moore had a clear path to victory in a state where no Democrat holds statewide office, the 70-year-old has been fighting for his political life since reports surfaced a month ago that he made sexual advances on teen girls when he was a deputy district attorney in his 30s.

Speaking on CNN on Sunday, GOP Alabama Sen. Richard Shelby said allegations that Moore molested a 14-year-old were the "tipping point" in his decision to cast a write-in ballot for a "distinguished Republican" rather than to vote for Moore or Jones.

"There's a lot of smoke," Shelby said. "Got to be some fire somewhere."

Roy Moore's chief strategist, Dean Young, tried to tie Moore to the star of President Donald Trump, who remains popular among state Republicans despite low national approval ratings.

"If the people of Alabama vote for this liberal Democrat Doug Jones, they're voting against the president, who they put in office at the highest level," Young said on ABC News' "This Week with George Stephanopoulos."

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In a state considered part of the Bible Belt, the allegations transformed a race into an unexpected referendum on which is better: a man accused of child molestation claims he vehemently denies or a Democrat? For many conservative Republicans, there's really no choice.

"To me, there's only one person in the race, and that's Judge Moore," said David Smith, leaving Perry Hill Baptist with his wife, Cecilia. The two have a recording of Moore's speech earlier this year at their church and sometimes listen to it in the car for inspiration.

At 16th Street Baptist, Merion Turner recalled participating in civil rights marches and was in high school at the time of the bombing. Turner said she would vote for the Democrat on Tuesday, though her choice has little to do with the allegations of sexual misconduct against Moore.

"I just don't like all the division in this country right now," she said. "I think Doug Jones would help that."

Chandler reported from Montgomery; Barrow reported from Mobile. Associated Press writer Jay Reeves contributed to this report from Birmingham.

Venezuela's socialists romp to victory in mayoral elections

By **FABIOLA SANCHEZ** and **SCOTT SMITH**, Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Venezuela's ruling socialists swept nearly all the races for mayors across the country, and President Nicolas Maduro is now threatening to ban key opposition parties from future elections in the oil-rich country wracked by economic crisis.

Hundreds of supporters shouted "Go Home, Donald Trump" to interrupt Maduro at a rally late Sunday in the colonial center of Caracas, where he announced that pro-government candidates grabbed more than 300 of the 335 mayoral offices.

Sunday's voting marked the last nationwide elections before next year's presidential race when Maduro is expected to seek another term despite his steep unpopularity.

"The imperialists have tried to set fire to Venezuela to take our riches," Maduro told the crowd. "We've defeated the American imperialists with our votes, our ideas, truths, reason and popular will."

The elections played out as Venezuelans struggle with triple-digit inflation, shortages of food and medicine, and charges that Maduro's government has undermined democracy by imprisoning dissidents and usurping the powers of the opposition-controlled National Assembly.

Three of the four biggest opposition parties refused to take part in Sunday's contests, protesting what they called an electoral system rigged by a "dictator." The last time the opposition refused to compete in congressional elections in 2005 it strengthened the government's hand for years.

After dropping his vote into the cardboard ballot box earlier in the day, Maduro responded to the boycott.

"A party that has not participated today cannot participate anymore," Maduro said. "They will disappear from the political map."

This has been a turbulent year for Venezuela, which holds the world's largest oil reserves but has been battered by low crude prices and a crash in production. The country saw months of protests that left more than 120 dead earlier this year, and it is now facing U.S. economic sanctions as it seeks to refinance a huge international debt.

The struggles have caused the president's approval rating to plunge, although the opposition has been largely unable to capitalize on Maduro's unpopularity.

Maduro said the third electoral victory for the ruling party in little more than four months signaled that the socialist "Chavista" revolution begun by the late President Hugo Chavez has defeated its opponents who are intent on sowing violence in the country.

In a country of 30 million people, 9 million cast ballots — about half of eligible voters. Maduro's opponents on social media questioned the figures.

The mayoral elections follow a crushing defeat of opposition candidates in October's gubernatorial elections, where anti-Maduro candidates won just five of 23 races amid allegations of official vote-buying and other irregularities.

Given the opposition's disarray, political analysts said they doubted Maduro's opponents would be able to rally behind a single candidate in next year's presidential election.

"These were absolutely predictable results," local pollster Luis Vicente Leon said on Twitter. "It's absurd to think that an abstaining political force can win the majority of mayorships."

New evacuations as huge Southern California fire flares up

CHRISTOPHER WEBER, Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A powerful flare-up on the western edge of Southern California's largest and most destructive wildfire sent residents fleeing Sunday, as wind-fanned flames churned through old-growth brush in canyons and along hillsides toward coastal towns.

Crews with help from a fleet water-dropping planes and helicopters saved homes as unpredictable gusts sent the blaze deeper into residential foothill areas northwest of Los Angeles that haven't burned in decades. New evacuations were ordered as the fire sent up an enormous plume near Montecito and Carpinteria, seaside areas in Santa Barbara County that had been under fire threat for days and were now choked with smoke.

"The winds are kind of squirrely right now," said county fire spokesman Mike Eliason. "Some places the smoke is going straight up in the air, and others it's blowing sideways. Depends on what canyon we're in."

The department posted a photo of one residence engulfed in flames. It's unclear whether other structures burned. Thousands of homes and businesses in the county were without power.

The air thick with acrid smoke, even residents of areas not under evacuation orders took the opportunity to leave, fearing another shutdown of U.S. 101, a key coastal highway that was closed intermittently last week. Officials handed out masks to residents who stayed behind in Montecito, the wealthy hillside enclave that's home to celebrities such as Oprah Winfrey, Jeff Bridges and Rob Lowe.

"Our house is under threat of being burned," Ellen DeGeneres tweeted at midday Sunday. "We just had to evacuate our pets. I'm praying for everyone in our community and thankful to all the incredible firefighters."

A few miles to the west, Santa Barbara Zoo was closed to the public and its 500 animals confined to their night quarters all day. The zoo was just outside the evacuation area, but smoke and ash blew through the 30-acre property.

Firefighters made significant progress Saturday on other fronts of the enormous fire that started Dec. 4 in neighboring Ventura County. As containment increased on other major blazes in Los Angeles, Riverside and San Diego counties, resources from those fires were diverted to the Santa Barbara foothills.

Forecasters said Santa Ana winds that whipped fires across the region last week would continue in some areas at least through Monday.

A lack of rain has officials on edge statewide because of parched conditions and no end in sight to the typical fire season.

"This is the new normal," Gov. Jerry Brown warned Saturday after surveying damage from the deadly Ventura fire. "We're about ready to have firefighting at Christmas. This is very odd and unusual."

High fire risk is expected to last into January and the governor and experts said climate change is making it a year-round threat.

Overall, the fires have destroyed about 800 homes and other buildings, killed dozens of horses and forced more than 200,000 people to flee flames that have burned over 270 square miles (700 square kilometers) since Dec. 4. One death, so far, a 70-year-old woman who crashed her car on an evacuation route, is attributed to the fire in Santa Paula, a small city where the fire began.

The Ventura County blaze also continued to burn into rugged mountains in the Los Padres National Forest near the little town of Ojai and toward a preserve established for endangered California condors.

Ojai experienced hazardous levels of smoke at times and officials warned of unhealthy air for large swaths of the region. The South Coast Air Quality Management District urged residents to stay indoors if possible and avoid vigorous outdoor activities.

As fires burned in Ventura and Los Angeles counties, firefighters were already in place north of San Diego

on Thursday when a major fire erupted and rapidly spread in the Fallbrook area, known for its avocado groves and horse stables in the rolling hills.

The fire swept through the San Luis Rey Training Facility, where it killed more than 40 elite thoroughbreds and destroyed more than 100 homes — most of them in a retirement community. Three people were burned trying to escape the fire that continued to smolder Sunday.

Most of last week's fires were in places that burned in the past, including one in the ritzy Los Angeles neighborhood of Bel-Air that burned six homes and another in the city's rugged foothills above the community of Sylmar and in Santa Paula.

Associated Press writers Elliot Spagat in Fallbrook and Brian Melley and Robert Jablon in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

Follow Weber at <https://twitter.com/WeberCM> .

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

Tigertown: Morris, Trammell elected to baseball Hall of Fame

By RONALD BLUM, AP Baseball Writer

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. (AP) — Fittingly, Jack Morris reached the Hall of Fame in extra innings.

Morris was elected to the Hall by its Modern Era committee on Sunday along with former Detroit Tigers teammate Alan Trammell, completing a joint journey from Motown to Cooperstown.

The big-game pitcher and star shortstop were picked by 16 voters who considered 10 candidates whose biggest contributions came from 1970-87. Morris got 14 votes and Trammell drew 13, one more than the minimum needed.

They will be enshrined on July 29, and fitting they'll go in together. They both began their big league careers in 1977 with Detroit and played 13 seasons alongside each other with the Tigers.

"The time that I've spent wondering if this day would ever come seems to be vanished and erased right now because it did come, and it's amazing," the 62-year-old Morris said during a conference call.

Trammell felt overwhelmed.

"I came to realization that it might not happen, and I was OK with that. I really was," he said. "If people thought it was a tad short, I could live with that."

Former catcher Ted Simmons fell one vote shy, and former players' union head Marvin Miller was five short of the 12 needed.

"It's not a big surprise," Miller's son, Peter, said from Japan. "I think my father's place in history is understood by all baseball players, all baseball fans and the general public."

Morris had 254 wins and seven more in the postseason, including his 10-inning shutout in a 1-0 win for Minnesota over Atlanta in Game 7 of the 1991 World Series.

"No question it was my defining moment in baseball," Morris said. "I never thought I was in trouble and I knew I could get out of it if I was. So I had the best mindset I've ever had in my entire on that night."

Morris also pitched for World Series winners in Detroit — with Trammell, in 1984 — and Toronto in 1992. His 3.90 career ERA tops Red Ruffing's 3.80 as the highest of any pitcher in the Hall.

"For years my earned run average has been an issue for a lot of people that thought it was not good enough for Hall of Fame honors, but I never once thought about pitching for an ERA. I always thought about completing games, starting games, eating up innings and trying to win games more importantly than anything else," he said. "Today's generation is different. In my heart of hearts I don't think for a second that guys that are pitching, the elite guys especially that are pitching in the game today, could not do what we did. I know they could. But they haven't been conditioned to it, both physically and mentally."

His 175 complete games included 20 in 1983. The entire big league total this year was 59, and no pitcher

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had more than five. He said sabermetrics should not be used to evaluate his era.

"Now I'm getting analyzed by a bunch of numbers and things that didn't exist when I played, he said. "Had they existed maybe I would have had a better understanding of what it would have meant to not pitch through pain, to not go deeper into games on nights that I told my manager, 'I'm fine' when I wasn't. But I don't regret doing that, because if you go to the wall and never try to push down the wall, you'll never know if you can."

Now 59, Trammell was a steady presence in the middle of the diamond while playing all 20 of his seasons in Detroit, 19 of them next to double-play partner Lou Whitaker.

Trammell was the 1984 World Series MVP, hitting .450 as the Tigers trounced San Diego in five games and finished off a season in which they started out 35-5.

A six-time All-Star and four-time Gold Glove, Trammell scored 1,231 runs and drove in 1,003. He batted .285 with 185 home runs and a .352 on-base average — he walked 850 times and struck out 874.

Trammell never came close to election during his 15 tries in Hall voting by Baseball Writers' Association of America members, peaking at 40.9 percent in 2016. Starting at 22 percent in his first Hall ballot appearance in 2000, Morris reached at high of 67.7 percent in 2003, his next to last appearance.

Trammell's next visit to the Hall will certainly last longer than his first trip to the shrine in upstate New York. That was in 1995, when the Tigers played the Cubs in the Hall of Fame exhibition game.

Wearing his No. 3 jersey, Trammell jogged the couple blocks and hurried through the Hall in 30 minutes while the teams were limbering up at Doubleday Field.

"I definitely want to come back some day," he said that afternoon, "but I probably wouldn't go through it in my uniform."

Steve Garvey, Tommy John, Don Mattingly, Dale Murphy, Dave Parker and Luis Tiant also were on the ballot.

Miller, who headed the players' union from 1966-82 was on the ballot for the seventh time. Miller sent a letter to the BBWAA in 2008, four years before he died, saying he didn't want to be considered anymore.

The BBWAA annual vote on players will be announced Jan. 24. Chipper Jones, Jim Thome and Omar Vizquel are among 19 first-time candidates, and Trevor Hoffman, Vladimir Guerrero, Edgar Martinez, Roger Clemens and Barry Bonds are among the holdovers.

AP Baseball Writer Ben Walker contributed to this report.

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

Israeli, French leaders tangle over US Jerusalem decision

By JOSEF FEDERMAN and TIA GOLDENBERG, Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The French and Israeli leaders sparred verbally Sunday over the U.S. decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital, while new violence rippled across the region following the move by U.S. President Donald Trump.

In Jerusalem, a Palestinian stabbed an Israeli security guard, seriously wounding him in the first attack in the volatile city since Trump's pronouncement Wednesday. In Beirut, scores of Lebanese and Palestinian demonstrators clashed with security forces outside the heavily guarded U.S. Embassy, and Arab foreign ministers meeting in Cairo demanded that the United States rescind the decision.

The move upended decades of U.S. policy, and a longstanding international consensus, that the fate of Jerusalem be decided in negotiations. Israeli and Palestinian claims to the city's eastern sector form the emotional core of their conflict, and Trump's announcement was seen as siding with the Israelis and has drawn wide international criticism.

At a meeting in Paris with Israel's visiting prime minister, French President Emmanuel Macron condemned recent violence against Israelis. But he also expressed "disapproval" of Trump's decision, calling it "dangerous for peace."

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"It doesn't seem to serve, in the short term, the cause of Israel's security and the Israelis themselves," Macron said.

He urged Israel to freeze its construction of settlements on occupied lands and called for other confidence-building measures toward the Palestinians.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has called Trump's decision "historic," said Israel has maintained its capital in the city for 70 years and the Jewish connection to Jerusalem goes back 3,000 years.

"Paris is the capital of France, Jerusalem is the capital of Israel," he said. "We respect your history and your choices. And we know that as friends, you respect ours."

"I think the sooner the Palestinians come to grips with this reality, the sooner we move toward peace," he added.

The exchange between the two allies set the stage for what could be a tense meeting Monday for Netanyahu with European Union foreign ministers in Brussels. The Jerusalem issue and the moribund peace process are expected to be high on the agenda.

Last week, EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini warned that Trump's decision "has the potential to send us backward to even darker times than the one we are already living in."

She also warned that Trump's "move could diminish the potential role that the United States could play in the region and create more confusion around this."

The meeting could be a precursor for what seems to be an emerging rift between Israel and the U.S. on one side, and Europe and the Palestinians on the other.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has said Trump's decision has in effect disqualified the U.S. from continuing in its role as the traditional mediator of peace talks. The Palestinians have spent recent days trying to rally Arab and broader international opposition to the decision.

After Abbas political adviser Majdi Khaldi said Saturday that the Palestinian leader won't meet with Vice President Mike Pence when he visits the region this month, a spokeswoman for Pence said Sunday it was "unfortunate that the Palestinian Authority is walking away again from an opportunity to discuss the future of the region."

EU leaders, including Macron, have reiterated support for establishing an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel. Trump has said he would support the idea if both sides endorse it — effectively giving Israel a veto over any peace proposal. Netanyahu's government is dominated by opponents to Palestinian independence. Trump's Middle East team, headed by his son-in-law Jared Kushner, has been working for months on a peace plan but has not yet released it.

Israel captured east Jerusalem from Jordan in the 1967 Middle East war and annexed the area to its capital in a move that was not internationally recognized. The Palestinians claim east Jerusalem as the capital of a future state, along with the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

East Jerusalem is home to Judaism's most sacred site, as well as key holy places for Christians and Muslims. These conflicting claims have erupted into deadly bloodshed in the past.

A senior U.S. official appealed to world leaders, especially in the Middle East, to calm regional tensions.

Acting Assistant Secretary of State David Satterfield told Arab journalists that Trump's pronouncement was merely a "recognition of simple reality" that Israel's government already is in Jerusalem.

He said the U.S. was not prejudging final-status negotiations about the city's final borders and expressed hope that world leaders understand the U.S. is committed to moving forward with a peace plan he expects to be unveiled in the new year.

"This is a question of choice: Do leaders choose to speak to their peoples, to their regions in terms that reflect reality or in terms that incite or inflame?" he said. "We hope it's the former."

The Palestinians staged three "days of rage" after Trump's dramatic announcement, with clashes breaking out in flashpoints across the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, and Gaza militants firing rockets into Israel. Four people in Gaza were killed. In the West Bank, there were dozens of injuries, but no deaths.

There were indications that Sunday's stabbing at the Jerusalem bus station was motivated by Trump's move, although police did not officially confirm it.

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They said the attacker was a 24-year-old Palestinian from the West Bank city of Nablus. Israeli media identified him as Yassin Abu al-Qarah, who posted on his Facebook page in recent days about Jerusalem, saying "our blood is devoted" to the holy city. Comments on his profile called him a hero for the alleged attack.

Police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said the guard sustained a serious wound to his upper body and the attacker was apprehended.

Palestinian youths also clashed in the West Bank city of Bethlehem, hurling stones at Israeli soldiers, who fired back with rubber bullets and tear gas.

In Beirut, Lebanese security forces broke up the protest outside the U.S. Embassy after demonstrators pelted them with stones. After a rowdy start, the protest drew several hundred people and became more peaceful, with demonstrators chanting and singing.

Clashes resumed in the afternoon, with security forces chasing and arresting a handful of protesters and lobbing tear gas. Lebanon is home to 450,000 Palestinian refugees, nearly 10 percent of the population.

In a resolution long on rhetoric but short on concrete actions, Arab foreign ministers demanded the recognition decision be rescinded and urged the U.N. Security Council to adopt a resolution condemning Trump's decision. They acknowledged that Washington would most likely veto it.

If the U.S. vetoes such a resolution, the Arabs would seek a similar resolution in the U.N. General Assembly, Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad Malki told a news conference in Cairo.

With few options for the Palestinians, and the Arab world preoccupied by other crises, Arab willingness to press the issue may be limited. In Paris, Netanyahu talked about his quiet but improving relations with Arab countries that look to Israel as an ally against Iran.

"There is in this a blessing, because this could help pave the way to an ultimate peace between us and our Palestinian neighbors and between us and the rest of the Arab world," he said.

Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the U.N., defended Trump's move.

"For those who want to say this is a bad idea, I'll tell you: Ask us five or 10 years from now if you still think it's a bad idea. Because I really do think this is going to move the ball in the peace process," she told CNN's "State of the Union."

US Nobel laureate worries politics could undermine science

By DAVID KEYTON and JIM HEINTZ, Associated Press

STOCKHOLM (AP) — An American researcher who shared this year's Nobel Prize for medicine bluntly criticized political developments at home in his address at the awards' gala banquet Sunday night.

Michael Rosbash, who was honored for his work on circadian rhythms — commonly called the body clock — expressed concern that U.S. government support such as that received by him and colleagues Jeffrey Hall and Michael Young is endangered.

"We benefited from an enlightened period in the postwar United States. Our National Institutes of Health have enthusiastically and generously supported basic research ... (but) the current climate in the U.S. is a warning that continued support cannot be taken for granted," he said in a short speech at the ornate city hall in Stockholm.

The 2018 federal budget proposed by President Donald Trump calls for cutting science funding by billions of dollars

"Also in danger is the pluralistic America into which all three of us of born were born and raised after World War II," Rosbash said. "Immigrants and foreigners have always been an indispensable part of our country, including its great record in scientific research."

Literature laureate Kazuo Ishiguro of Britain expressed concern about increasing tensions between social factions.

"We live today in a time of growing tribal enmities of communities fracturing into bitterly opposed groups," said Ishiguro, who was born in Japan.

He said Nobel prizes can counterbalance such animosity.

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"The pride we feel when someone from our nation wins a Nobel prize is different from the one we feel witnessing one of our athletes winning an Olympic medal. We don't feel the pride of our tribe demonstrating superiority over other tribes. Rather it's the pride that from knowing that one of us has made a significant contribution to our common human endeavor," he said.

In the Norwegian capital of Oslo, a survivor of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima compared her struggle to survive in 1945 to the objectives of the group awarded this year's Nobel's Peace Prize.

Setsuko Thurlow, who was 13 when the U.S. bomb devastated her Japanese city during the final weeks of World War II, spoke as a leading activist with the Nobel-winning International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.

Thurlow said the Hiroshima blast left her buried under the rubble, but she was able to see light and crawl to safety. In the same way, the campaign to which she belongs is a driving force behind an international treaty to ban nuclear weapons, she said after ICAN received the Nobel prize it won in October.

"Our light now is the ban treaty," Thurlow said. "I repeat those words that I heard called to me in the ruins of Hiroshima: 'Don't give up. Keep pushing. See the light? Crawl toward it.'"

The treaty has been signed by 56 countries — none of them nuclear powers — and ratified by only three. To become binding it requires ratification by 50 countries.

ICAN Executive Director Beatrice Fihn, who accepted the prize along with Thurlow, said that while the treaty is far from ratification "now, at long last, we have an unequivocal norm against nuclear weapons."

"This is the way forward. There is only one way to prevent the use of nuclear weapons — prohibit and eliminate them," Fihn said.

The prize winners were announced in October. All except the peace prize were awarded in Sweden on Sunday.

The other laureates were American Richard Thaler for his work in behavioral economics; American physicists Kip Thorne, Rainer Weiss and Barry Barish for confirming the existence of gravity waves; and Jacques Dubochet of Switzerland, American Joachim Frank and Richard Henderson of the United Kingdom for advances in electron microscopy.

Associated Press writer David Keyton reported this story in Oslo and AP writer Jim Heintz reported from Moscow.

Shelby bucks Alabama GOP leaders in voting against Moore

By KIM CHANDLER, Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — In his sternest rebuke yet, Alabama Sen. Richard Shelby said repeatedly Sunday his state can "do better" than electing fellow Republican Roy Moore to the U.S. Senate, making clear that a write-in candidate was far preferable to a man accused of sexual misconduct.

Days before the pivotal race, Shelby, who is Alabama's senior senator, said he had already cast an absentee ballot for another, unspecified Republican, even as other prominent state Republicans fell in line behind Moore.

Moore faces Democrat Doug Jones in the special election Tuesday to replace Jeff Sessions, now the U.S. attorney general.

"I couldn't vote for Roy Moore. I didn't vote for Roy Moore. But I wrote in a distinguished Republican name. And I think a lot of people could do that," Shelby told CNN's "State of the Union."

"The state of Alabama deserves better," he said.

"There's a lot of smoke," Shelby said of Moore and his accusers. "Got to be some fire somewhere."

The accusations against Moore have left many GOP voters and leaders in a quandary. Voters face the decision of whether to vote for Moore, accused of sexual misconduct with teenagers decades ago when he was a county prosecutor, or sending Jones to Washington, which would narrow the GOP's already precarious majority in the Senate.

They also could write in a name on their ballots or simply stay home. Meanwhile, most GOP politicians

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in the state must run for re-election next year — where they will face Moore's enthusiastic voting base at the polls.

Shelby said allegations that Moore had molested a 14-year-girl in particular were a "tipping point" in disqualifying him. His latest comments cast fresh doubt on a former judge that President Donald Trump and most Republican leaders in Alabama are backing to help maintain the party's narrow 52-48 majority in the Senate.

Shelby's outspokenness against a man who could become his colleague was the exception rather than the rule.

"I have stated both publicly and privately over the last month that unless these allegations were proven to be true I would continue to plan to vote for the Republican nominee, Judge Roy Moore," Alabama Secretary of State John Merrill wrote in a text message to The Associated Press. "I have already cast my absentee ballot and I voted for Judge Moore."

The AP tried to find out how Republican leaders from Alabama plan to vote. Most officeholders or their staffs responded, while others have publicly stated their plans during public appearances or to other media outlets.

However, several officeholders did not respond to calls, emails or texts from the AP. They include U.S. Reps. Martha Roby, Mike Rogers and Gary Palmer, as well as state Treasurer Young Boozer and state House Speaker Mac McCutcheon.

State officeholders who said they intended to vote for Moore often cited the need to keep the seat in Republican hands.

In addition to Merrill, others who plan to vote for Moore include Gov. Kay Ivey; Attorney General Steve Marshall; state Auditor Jim Zeigler; Agriculture Commissioner John McMillan; state Senate President Pro Tempore Del Marsh; and Public Service Commissioner Twinkle Andress Cavanaugh, who previously led the state GOP. Also voting for Moore are current state party head Terry Lathan and U.S. Reps. Mo Brooks of Huntsville and Robert Aderholt of Haleyville.

Shelby's decision has played prominently in Jones ads pointing out Republicans who are not voting for their party's nominee.

On Sunday, Shelby acknowledged that if Moore is elected, he would probably have to be seated in the Senate but that an Ethics Committee investigation was already been contemplated to remove him. "I think that the Senate has to look at who is fit to serve in the Senate," he said.

CNN reported last month that U.S. Rep. Bradley Byrne said he will vote Republican and that he does not cast write-in votes. In a statement to the AP, Byrne said it is up to voters to decide.

"Some serious allegations have been made and Judge Moore has vehemently denied them. Frankly, I don't think the people of Alabama want me, any national politician, or the national news media telling them what to think or how to vote," Byrne said in the statement. "The decision is ultimately up to the people of Alabama to evaluate the information they have before them and make an informed decision. We must respect the voters' decision."

Sen. Luther Strange, who lost to Moore in the Republican primary, did not respond to a request for comment from AP, but told The Washington Post recently that the election is up to voters.

"I'm staying out of it now. I think everybody knows how I feel about Judge Moore. We made our case and the voters made a different decision," Strange told the newspaper in a video on its website.

Sessions, who resigned from the Senate to join the Trump administration, declined to say how he would vote. Moore and Jones are competing for his old job.

"There have been some ads that may have suggested I endorsed a candidate, that is not so," Sessions said. "I believe that the people of Alabama will make their own decision."

State party loyalty rules could prohibit a GOP politician, or someone who aspires to be one, from publicly backing Moore's opponent. The rule says anyone who openly supports another party's nominee over a Republican could be barred from running as a Republican in the future.

Ivey became governor earlier this year after Robert Bentley resigned amid a sex scandal involving a much younger female political aide. When reached by the AP, Bentley declined to say who he is voting

for Tuesday.

Ivey said last month that she has no reason to disbelieve the women who have accused Moore and is bothered by their allegations. But Ivey, who plans to run for governor in 2018, said she will vote for Moore anyway for the sake of GOP power in Congress. Her office did not respond to a request for an updated comment.

Associated Press writers Matthew Daly, Sadie Gurman, Donna Cassata and Hope Yen in Washington contributed to this report.

German intelligence warns of increased Chinese cyberspying

By KIRSTEN GRIESHABER, Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — The head of Germany's domestic intelligence agency warned Sunday that China allegedly is using social networks to try to cultivate lawmakers and other officials as sources.

Hans-Georg Maassen said his agency, known by its German acronym BfV, believes more than 10,000 Germans have been targeted by Chinese intelligence agents posing as consultants, headhunters or researchers, primarily on the social networking site LinkedIn.

"This is a broad-based attempt to infiltrate in particular parliaments, ministries and government agencies," Maassen said.

In addition, Chinese hackers increasingly are launching attacks on European companies through trusted suppliers, he alleged.

The BfV established a task force early this year which examined the use of fake profiles on social networks over nine months. The agency provided journalists with what it said were eight of the most prolific fake profiles on LinkedIn used by alleged Chinese spies.

Using names such as Lily Wu, Laetitia Chen or Alex Li, the profiles sport impressive resumes, hundreds of contacts and attractive pictures of young professionals.

The agency also named six organizations it alleged Chinese spies use to cloak their approaches, including one called the Association France Euro-Chine and another named Global View Strategic Consulting.

Messages seeking comment from the organizations weren't immediately returned.

Maassen warned that Chinese cybergroups also were using so-called "supply-chain attacks" to get around companies' online defenses.

Such attacks target IT workers and others who work for trusted service providers to send malicious software into the networks of organizations the attackers are interested in.

"The infections are difficult to detect, since network connections between service providers and their customers aren't suspicious," the BfV said. "This gives the attacker an even better disguise than before."

Frank Jordans contributed to this report.

Anti-migrant leader pushes to win national power in Italy

By FRANCES D'EMILIO, Associated Press

ROME (AP) — The leader of an Italian party that hopes to capitalize on growing resentment of migrants and asylum-seekers told supporters in Rome Sunday it would be "splendid" if he wins national elections and his government can issue one-way tickets home to undeserving refugees.

Matteo Salvini wants to propel his anti-migrant Northern League, which was founded in 1991 as a regional party in Italy's affluent north, to its first premiership in the national election set for early 2018.

To do so, Salvini needs to build support in the south, an underdeveloped area of Italy the League has long denigrated as living off government aid.

Many of the thousands of people who turned out for his Rome rally did come from southern Italy. One of them was Adriana Domeniconi, who traveled by bus from Matera in the "instep" of the boot-shaped

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Italian peninsula.

"We're no longer about north vs. south, but against those invading our country," she said.

Domeniconi was referring to the hundreds of thousands of asylum-seekers and economic migrants that have received shelter in Italy after being rescued at sea from traffickers' boats setting out from the Libyan coast.

Opinion surveys have found that many Italians blame the newcomers for crime.

"The Salvini government will have the (nation's) doors wide open for women and children who are fleeing war, but not for those bringing war to our home," Salvini told the rally. For the latter, "we need one-way tickets to send them back."

The advertised goal of the rally was to oppose a proposed citizenship law that the center-left, Democrat-led government of Premier Paolo Gentiloni is supporting in Parliament before the legislature's term expires in March.

Currently, children born in Italy to migrants with long-term residence permits have to wait until they reach age 18 to seek Italian citizenship. The proposed law would make children as young as 12 who are born in Italy, as well as those arriving as youngsters, eligible to request citizenship after five years of schooling in Italy.

Saying that citizenship "isn't an electoral gift," Salvini told the approving crowd that the legislation "won't happen thanks to the League and you."

The Northern League is planning to run in alliance with the center-right Forza Italia party of former three-time premier Silvio Berlusconi and the tiny right-wing Brothers of Italy party.

Berlusconi, who due to a tax fraud conviction isn't eligible to run for office, considers himself Italy's center-right leader and hasn't voiced support for a Salvini premiership.

Opinion polls published last week indicated Berlusconi's party had about a two-point advantage over the Northern League. Berlusconi hopes the three-party alliance will give the coalition enough votes to be the biggest bloc in Parliament and clinch the premiership.

Salvini at the rally heaped praise on U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin, the former for tax reform and fighting illegal immigration and the latter for "defending values and national borders."

Of his hopes to become premier, Salvini said: "If the Italians want that, it would be a splendid reality."

Frances D'Emilio is on twitter at www.twitter.com

Trump draws protests while honoring civil rights heroes

By **DARLENE SUPERVILLE**, Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — President Donald Trump has honored figures of the civil rights movement, some famous, some not, at a ceremony that exposed stark divisions among Americans about his commitment to that legacy.

Trump on Saturday toured the new Mississippi Civil Rights Museum and the adjacent Museum of Mississippi, both in Jackson. Outside, demonstrators protested his presence, some holding signs that said "Make America Civil Again" and "Lock Him Up" and others shouting "No Trump, no hate, no KKK in the USA." During the opening ceremony, about 25 people stood silently with Confederate battle flag stickers covering their mouths.

Trump spent about 30 minutes at the museums, gave a 10-minute speech to select guests inside and flew back to his Florida estate, skipping the dedication ceremony held outside on a chilly day. He spent more time getting to Jackson than he did on the ground.

In a deliberate voice and rarely diverting from his prepared words, the president sought to honor the famous and the anonymous for their efforts on behalf of freedom and equality. He did not acknowledge the anger his participation had sparked leading up to the dedication.

"The civil rights museum records the oppression, cruelty and injustice inflicted on the African-American

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community, the fight to bring down Jim Crow and end segregation, to gain the right to vote and to achieve the sacred birthright of equality," he said. "And it's big stuff. That's big stuff."

Trump has been accused of harboring racial animosity, and critics cite his blaming of "both sides" for deadly violence at a white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, over the summer. Trump has also relentlessly criticized NFL players for kneeling during the national anthem to protest racism and police brutality largely directed at African-American males.

Trump opened his presidential campaign by branding Mexicans as rapists and criminals, and while campaigning called for a "complete and total shutdown" of Muslims entering the U.S. after a deadly gun attack in San Bernardino, California.

The national president of the NAACP and the mayor of Mississippi's capital city said they kept their distance from Trump because of his "pompous disregard" for the values embodied by the civil rights movement.

Derrick Johnson, head of the nation's oldest civil rights organization, and Mayor Chokwe Lumumba said at a news conference Saturday that they looked forward to a "grander opening" of the museum that they can attend.

"We will never cede the stage to an individual who will fight against us," Johnson said. "We will not allow the history of those who sacrificed to be tarnished for political expediency."

Johnson and Lumumba spoke to about 100 supporters, including some who participated in the civil rights demonstrations of the 1960s, at Smith Robertson Museum and Cultural Center. Once the first public school built for African-Americans in Jackson, it's now a museum to black history and culture.

Lumumba called Trump to task for "his pompous disregard for all of those factors that will not enable us to stand with him today."

The state's attorney general, Jim Hood, criticized Republican Gov. Phil Bryant for inviting Trump. "It threw cold water in the face of people who fought the battles for civil rights," Hood said.

Bryant, who introduced Trump, spoke of "the emotion that comes over you in waves as you see the past, the struggle, the conflict. I'm so very proud today that the president of the United States was here to see and witness it."

Trump told Bryant the museums would be a "great legacy" for him as governor.

In his remarks, Trump drew on the achievements of civil rights veterans.

"Today we strive to be worthy of their sacrifice," he said. "We pray for inspiration from their example. We want our country to be a place where every child from every background can grow up free from fear, innocent of hatred and surrounded by love, opportunity and hope. Today we pay solemn tribute to our heroes of the past and dedicate ourselves to building a future of freedom, equality, justice and peace."

He called the museums "labors of love — love for Mississippi, love for your nation, love for God-given dignity written into every human soul."

Trump singled out Medgar Evers, the Mississippi NAACP leader who was shot to death outside his home in 1963. His widow, Myrlie, was in the audience for Trump's speech and drew a standing ovation when he acknowledged her.

Trump said Medgar Evers "knew it was long past time for his nation to fulfill its founding promise to treat every citizen as an equal child of God." Evers, Trump said, now rests in Arlington National Cemetery "beside men and women of all races, backgrounds and walks of life who've served and sacrificed for our country. Their headstones do not mark the color of their skin but immortalize the courage of their deeds."

Myrlie Evers did not mention Trump in her remarks a short time later at the outdoor public ceremony. "Regardless of race, creed or color, we are all Americans. ... If Mississippi can rise to the occasion, then the rest of the country should be able to do the same thing," she said.

Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., a leader of the civil rights movement, was among those who stayed away. He said Trump's presence at the museum opening was an insult.

The White House accused Lewis and others of injecting politics into a moment it said could be used to bring people together.

Associated Press writers Jeff Amy and Emily Wagster Pettus contributed to this report.

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

Brexit secretary says a no-deal Brexit now less likely

By DANICA KIRKA, Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The likelihood of Britain leaving the European Union without a future trade deal has “dropped dramatically” now that the two sides have reached a preliminary agreement on their divorce terms, the country’s Brexit secretary said Sunday.

The deal hammered out by Prime Minister Theresa May last week means the negotiations on Britain’s March 2019 departure from the EU can move onto the next phase, Brexit Secretary David Davis told the BBC.

The progress should give Britain enough time to negotiate a free-trade agreement for once it is outside the EU, making it unlikely the country will have to fall back on World Trade Organization rules that would impose tariffs, he said.

“The odds, as it were, against a WTO, or no-deal outcome, have dropped dramatically,” Davis said.

The risk of Britain crashing out of the EU without a deal has raised concern among business leaders who feared such a result would hamper trade and investment and weaken the nation’s economy.

The danger of a no-deal Brexit would have been much greater without last week’s agreement on so-called divorce issues, including citizen’s rights and the Irish border, because the preliminary talks could have stretched on for months, leaving negotiators short of time to complete an agreement before the 2019 deadline, Davis said.

The government’s goal is to maintain tariff-free access to the EU market for both goods and services, which make up a large part of the British economy. Critics have argued that time already is too short, citing the case of Canada, which took seven years to negotiate a free-trade deal with the EU.

Davis disagreed, saying it will be easier for Britain because the country’s rules and regulations are already aligned with EU rules after 40 years of membership.

“We start in complete alignment, we start in complete convergence, with the EU and we then work it out from there,” he said. “The thing is how we manage divergence ... so it doesn’t undercut access to the market.”

However, Davis noted that no deal terms would be iron-clad until everything is agreed upon — underscoring a caveat in the deal announced Friday.

Asked what would happen if Britain weren’t able to reach a final Brexit deal, Davis said Britain wouldn’t necessarily be bound by the commitments it made in the preliminary agreement, including provisions on the Irish border.

Britain has guaranteed that Northern Ireland, which will have the U.K.’s only land border with the EU after Brexit, would remain in “full alignment” with EU rules to ensure the border remains open and trade between the two parts of Ireland isn’t impeded.

Some have asked whether that means Britain as a whole will have to remain part of the EU’s single market and customs union, undercutting the government’s promise to leave the 28-nation bloc.

Pressed on the contradictory statements, Davis said Britain still plans to leave both the single market and the customs union. While the agreement May reached ensures that standards on goods and services will remain very close to those in the EU, the British government will decide how to achieve that goal, he said.

The comments are already causing issues in Dublin, where Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar had described statements on avoiding a hard border in last week’s deal as being “cast iron.”

The Irish government’s chief whip, Joe McHugh, branded Davis’ comments as “bizarre.”

“My question to anybody within the British government would be, why would there be an agreement, a set of principled agreements, in order to get to phase two, if they weren’t going to be held up? That just sounds bizarre to me,” McHugh said. “This, as far as we’re concerned, is a binding agreement, an agreement in principle.”

Early praise for 'The Last Jedi' after elaborate premiere

By LINDSEY BAHR, AP Film Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — There were cheers, gasps, droid photo opportunities, casino games and more than a few standing ovations at the jam-packed world premiere of "Star Wars: The Last Jedi" Saturday night in Los Angeles, which many are already praising online.

Rian Johnson, the writer and director of the eighth installment of the franchise, dedicated the night to the late Carrie Fisher, who died after filming had completed.

"She's up there flipping the bird and saying, 'Don't bring this night down with solemn tributes,'" Johnson said on stage at the Shrine Auditorium.

It was in that spirit that Johnson excitedly introduced his cast, including Mark Hamill, Adam Driver, Daisy Ridley and Laura Dern. Hamill and composer John Williams, who Johnson called one of the "greatest living film composers" were among the few who got standing ovations.

"Let's watch a Star Wars movie!" Johnson exclaimed as the cast took their seats, the lights dimmed and the yellow Star Wars logo and iconic scrawl appeared on screen to signal the start of the film. The enthusiastic audience laughed and cheered throughout much of the two-and-a-half-hour film. One audience member even shrieked "What?!" at a key scene deep in the film.

The elaborate premiere featured a massive assault vehicle and a procession of Stormtroopers and droids that preceded the first showing of the film in advance of its Dec. 15 release. The mood was joyous and pregnant with anticipation for the highly anticipated and guarded film, which sees the return of Hamill's Luke Skywalker as well as Fisher's final performance.

Formal reviews won't be out for a few days, but journalists and others at the screening who shared their initial reactions online said "The Last Jedi" packed the adventure expected in a Star Wars film, but took it into new territory.

J.J. Abrams, who directed 2015's "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" and will return to direct Episode IX told The Associated Press that the film was "great" and that "Rian killed it."

"Logan" director James Mangold also praised the film's director, calling the movie "a great chapter of a blockbuster franchise," that also had Johnson's "voice shining through."

Producer Adam F. Goldberg wrote that the film made him feel like a kid again.

Entertainment Weekly's Anthony Breznican said the film "will shatter you and then make you feel whole again."

Many who posted online about the premiere said they were still processing the film.

Attendees at Saturday's premiere were the first people outside the cast, filmmakers and top executives at Walt Disney Co. and Lucasfilm who had seen "The Last Jedi." Director Edgar Wright, Patton Oswalt, Greta Gerwig, "Stranger Things" actor Gaten Matarazzo, and Constance Zimmer were among the attendees Saturday.

Wright, who makes a cameo appearance in the film as a rebel, added on Twitter that the film was, "Really great."

At the after-party, which was modeled after Canto Bight, a casino-based city in the Star Wars galaxy seen in "The Last Jedi," attendees could play blackjack, roulette and craps to win commemorative Star Wars pins.

Fans at the premiere were also treated to up-close looks at new characters, including an elite squad of guards clad in red armor as well as a collection of droids, including the droids C-3PO, R2-D2, and BB-8, who walked and rolled down the red carpet before the film's stars arrived.

"It's a Star Wars movie, and the energy tonight is pretty amazing," said a beaming Andy Serkis, who plays the villain Supreme Leader Snoke.

Ridley, who plays Rey, arrived wearing a shimmering dress adorned with stars. Ridley was in good spirits, saying about her dress, "I mean, it's just fun. It's fun. And I feel fun. And it's got stars on it."

Newcomer Kelly Marie Tran wore a bright red dress with a lengthy train behind it. John Boyega, who earlier in the day tweeted that he might miss the premiere because a snowstorm had snarled travel out

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of Atlanta, arrived sporting a dark blue tuxedo and turtleneck.

Secrecy about the film remained in place on the red carpet. Anthony Daniels, who plays C-3PO, told a reporter looking for details on the film, "I'm going to let you work out everything for yourself."

"The Last Jedi," which arrives in theaters on Dec. 15, is one of the year's biggest releases. Early box office projections are for the film to debut in the \$200 million range for its first weekend.

Associated Press Writers Nicole Evatt and Ryan Pearson contributed to this report.

UN calls for urgent evacuation of 137 sick Syrian children

BEIRUT (AP) — The United Nations children's agency said Sunday 137 children stranded in a rebel-held suburb near the Syrian capital require immediate evacuation amid a crippling siege in which five have reportedly died from a lack of medical care.

The Eastern Ghouta suburb, home to 400,000 residents, has been besieged since 2013 and humanitarian conditions there have deteriorated sharply amid violence that intensified since Nov. 14. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights says at least 202 people, including 47 children, have been killed since.

The area, the last remaining rebel-held pocket near the capital Damascus, is technically part of a "de-escalation zone" brokered by Russia earlier this year. Cease-fires brokered by Russia have largely held elsewhere in Syria but there has been little progress toward a political solution to the conflict that has claimed nearly 400,000 lives since it began in 2011.

Syrian opposition and government delegates are currently in Geneva for a new round of U.N.-sponsored talks after a short break. The government delegation has protested the opposition's insistence on the absence of President Bashar Assad from any future transition period.

After a few days' absence, the government delegation returned to Geneva Sunday for talks which are due to resume Monday.

In its statement Sunday, UNICEF said its aid workers described seeing one of the worst health situations since the conflict began in 2011 during a rare international aid convoy to a neighborhood in the Eastern Ghouta district at the end of November.

UNICEF says 137 children, aged between 7-months to 17-years, require immediate evacuation for conditions that include kidney failure, severe malnutrition and conflict wounds.

"Children are still living through so much horror," said UNICEF Representative in Syria Fran Equiza. "The situation is getting worse day by day. The health system is crumbling and schools have now been closed for almost a month. Sick children desperately need medical evacuation, and many thousands more are being denied the chance of a normal, peaceful childhood."

UNICEF says that nearly 12 per cent of children under 5 years-old in Eastern Ghouta suffer from acute malnutrition — the highest rate ever recorded since the start of the conflict in Syria.

Price hikes push health insurance shoppers into hard choices

By TOM MURPHY, AP Health Writer

Margaret Leatherwood has eight choices for health insurance next year but no good options.

The cheapest individual coverage available in her market would eat up nearly a quarter of the income her husband brings home from the oilfields.

The Bryson, Texas, couple makes too much to qualify for Affordable Care Act tax credits that help people buy coverage. But they don't make enough to comfortably afford insurance on their own, even though Paul Leatherwood works seven days a week.

"I hate to put it like this, but it sucks," said Margaret Leatherwood, who stays at home and takes care of her grandchildren.

This largely middle-class crowd of shoppers is struggling to stay insured. They've weathered years of price hikes and shrinking insurance choices with no help. Faced with more price increases for next year,

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they're mulling options outside insurance or skipping coverage entirely — a decision that could lead to a fine for remaining uninsured and huge bills if an emergency hits.

The sign-up period for 2018 coverage closes on Friday in most states, meaning shoppers have only a few more days to find something that squeezes into their budgets.

"I kind of cringe when I am meeting with those clients because I don't have a solution for them," said Kelly Rector, a Missouri-based insurance agent.

The ACA helped chop the U.S. uninsured population 41 percent to 28.8 million people earlier this year from 48.6 million in 2010, when it became law, according to the latest government figures.

The law expanded Medicaid coverage for the poor and created health insurance marketplaces where people can use income-based tax credits to buy a single or family individual insurance plan if they don't get coverage through work. Those subsidies cover part or all of the bill, capping insurance costs at a percentage of income for those who are eligible. That shields recipients from price hikes of 20 percent or more that have hit many markets.

But that help stops abruptly for people making four times the federal poverty level or more — around \$48,000 for an individual and more than \$98,000 for a family of four.

Of the roughly 15 million people who bought ACA-compliant individual insurance for this year, nearly 7 million had no tax credit help, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation.

Meanwhile, the uninsured rate among adults who make too much to qualify for help buying coverage jumped to 5 percent this year from 2 percent in 2016, according to The Commonwealth Fund.

Brokers and health care researchers expect that to climb again, especially for people with income levels close to the cutoff for federal help.

"It's not going to be like an on-off switch where prices get too high and nobody buys coverage," said Sherry Glied of New York University. "It's more like a drip, drip, drip."

The vulnerable population includes the self-employed, small business owners and those close to qualifying for the Medicare program that covers people age 65 and over.

These customers can face monthly bills that climb past \$2,000 for a family plan and then a big deductible before most coverage starts. Plus fewer markets this year have insurance that comes with a health savings account, which lets people save for medical expenses before taxes. Those accounts are popular with individual insurance shoppers who don't get tax credit help, said St. Louis broker Emily Bremer.

Leslie Glogau said some of her customers in the Orlando, Florida area are considering short-term, limited-benefits plans that are cheaper than ACA-compliant coverage but can leave them vulnerable to big medical bills. Such plans also won't stave off the uninsured penalty, which can amount to a few thousand dollars depending on income.

"People just don't know which way to turn," Glogau said.

Insurance shoppers won't be fined if they can't find an affordable option in their market. But going uninsured would still leave them exposed to huge medical bills.

Margaret and Paul Leatherwood wound up with a limited-benefits plan this year, but they want better protection in case of a big bill. She's 58 and he just turned 60. They're weighing joining a medical cost-sharing ministry for next year.

These ministries are not insurance, but they allow people to band together to share expenses, often by making monthly payments. They can be cheaper than regular coverage, and belonging to one allows customers to escape the ACA penalty for remaining uninsured.

Such arrangements usually come with restrictions or qualifications. For instance, participants may not be allowed to use tobacco, and there might be limits on help for medical conditions that existed before the customer signed up.

"That's really the only option we have that's going to cover anything," Margaret Leatherwood said.

Lance and Stephanie Schmidt bought family coverage in the individual insurance market for years because they don't get employer-sponsored coverage through Lance's dental practice. But the Oklahoma City couple opted for a cost-sharing ministry this year after they realized the monthly insurance bill for their family of

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five would have more than doubled to over \$1,200 and stuck them with a deductible that topped \$7,000. They now pay \$450 a month for a plan through Liberty HealthShare, and they are leaning toward returning next year.

"There's still some risk there, but so far it has proven to be just fine," said Stephanie Schmidt.

Cost-sharing ministries and short-term plans aren't the only alternatives to individual insurance. Tom Morrill, a broker from Kansas City, Missouri, has helped many of his customers set up group coverage through their businesses.

He said that gives them better options than what they would find on the individual market, where coverage prices from the dominant insurer, Cigna, are climbing an average of 42 percent. Four insurers have left that market. The 10 remaining plans all have narrow networks of providers and don't pay for care outside those networks.

"It's nuts," Morrill said. "Rates have jumped dramatically. It's not good coverage."

Princes William and Harry chose sculptor for Diana statue

LONDON (AP) — Kensington Palace says Princes William and Harry have chosen sculptor Ian Rank-Broadley to create a statue of their mother, Princess Diana, to mark the 20th anniversary of her death.

Rank-Broadley, whose image of Queen Elizabeth II has appeared on British coins since 1998, will complete the work by 2019. The statue will be placed on the grounds of Kensington Palace, where Diana once lived.

The princes said in a statement Sunday that the statue is meant to create "a fitting and lasting tribute to our mother" and to remember her life and legacy.

The princes added they had been touched by the kind words and memories shared with them about Diana this year, as the world recalled her death in a Paris car accident in 1997.

Will misconduct scandals make men wary of women at work?

By JENNIFER PELTZ, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Some women, and men, worry the same climate that's emboldening women to speak up about sexual misconduct could backfire by making some men wary of female colleagues.

Forget private meetings and get-to-know-you dinners. Beware of banter. Think twice before a high-ranking man mentors a young female staffer.

"I have already heard the rumblings of a backlash: 'This is why you shouldn't hire women,'" Facebook chief operating officer Sheryl Sandberg wrote in a recent post.

"So much good is happening to fix workplaces right now. Let's make sure it does not have the unintended consequence of holding women back," said Sandberg, author of the working women's manifesto "Lean In."

Ana Quincoces, a Miami-based attorney and entrepreneur who owns her own food line, says her business and its success involves working mostly with men, and sales and other activities are often concluded over lunch or drinks. Those opportunities, she says, are dwindling, because many of the men she knows through her business "are terrified."

"There's a feeling of this wall that wasn't there that is suddenly up because they don't know what's appropriate anymore — it's disconcerting," Quincoces said. "I feel that they're more careful, more formal in their relationships with co-workers. And I can't say I blame them, because what's happened is pervasive. Every day there's a new accusation."

She said many of the men she knows are now avoiding one-on-one social occasions that were normal in the past.

"This is going to trickle down into all industries. ... It's going to become the new normal," Quincoces said. "It's a good thing because women are not afraid anymore, but on the other side, it's a slippery slope."

Americans were already edgy about male-female encounters at work: A New York Times/Morning Consult poll of 5,300 men and women last spring found almost two-thirds thought workers should be extra careful around opposite-sex colleagues, and around a quarter thought private work meetings between men and

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women were inappropriate.

But in a season of outcry over sexual misconduct, some men are suddenly wondering whether they can compliment a female colleague or ask about her weekend. Even a now-former female adviser to the head of Pennsylvania's Democratic Party suggested on Facebook that men would stop talking to women altogether because of what she portrayed as overblown sexual misconduct claims.

Certain managers are considering whether to make sure they're never alone with a staffer, despite the complications of adding a third person in situations like performance reviews, says Philippe Weiss, who runs the Chicago-based consultancy Seyfarth Shaw at Work.

Philadelphia employment lawyer Jonathan Segal says some men are declaring they'll just shut people out of their offices, rather than risk exchanges that could be misconstrued.

"The avoidance issue is my biggest concern, because the marginalization of women in the business world is at least as big a problem as harassment," Segal says. A recent report involving 222 North American companies found the percentage of women drops from 47 percent at the entry level to 20 percent in the C suite.

Vice President Mike Pence has long said he doesn't have one-on-one meals with any woman except his wife and wants her by his side anywhere alcohol is served, as part of the couple's commitment to prioritizing their marriage. The guidelines have "been a blessing to us," the Republican told Christian Broadcasting Network News in an interview this month.

Employment attorneys caution that it can be problematic to curb interactions with workers because of their gender, if the practice curtails their professional opportunities. W. Brad Johnson, a co-author of a book encouraging male mentors for women, says limiting contact sends a troubling message.

"If I were unwilling to have an individual conversation with you because of your gender, I'm communicating 'you're unreliable; you're a risk,'" says Johnson, a U.S. Naval Academy psychology professor.

Jessica Proud, a communications professional and Republican political consultant in New York City, said it would be wrong if this national "day of reckoning" over sexual misconduct resulted in some men deciding not to hire, mentor or work with women. She recalled a campaign she worked on where she was told she couldn't travel with the candidate because of how it might look.

"I'm a professional, he's a professional. Why should my career experience be limited?" she said. "That's just as insulting in a lot of ways."

Associated Press writers Verena Dobnik in New York, David Klepper in Albany, N.Y. and Andrew Welsh-Huggins in Columbus, Ohio, contributed to this report.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Monday, Dec. 11, the 345th day of 2017. There are 20 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 11, 1917, British Gen. Edmund Allenby entered Jerusalem two days after his forces expelled the Ottoman Turks; in a show of respect, Allenby and his officers made their way into the Holy City on foot.

On this date:

In 1602, forces sent by the Duke of Savoy attempted to seize the walled city-state of Geneva by scaling the wall with ladders; however, the Genevans were able to repel the invaders.

In 1792, France's King Louis XVI went before the Convention to face charges of treason. (Louis was convicted, and executed the following month.)

In 1816, Indiana became the 19th state.

In 1936, Britain's King Edward VIII abdicated the throne so he could marry American divorcee Wallis Warfield Simpson; his brother, Prince Albert, became King George VI.

In 1941, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States; the U.S. responded in kind.

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In 1946, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) was established.

In 1957, the movie "Peyton Place," based on the novel by Grace Metalious, had its world premiere in Camden, Maine, where most of it was filmed.

In 1961, a U.S. aircraft carrier carrying Army helicopters arrived in Saigon — the first direct American military support for South Vietnam's battle against Communist guerrillas.

In 1972, Apollo 17's lunar module landed on the moon with astronauts Eugene Cernan and Harrison Schmitt aboard; during three extravehicular activities (EVAs), they became the last two men to date to step onto the lunar surface.

In 1980, President Jimmy Carter signed legislation creating a \$1.6 billion environmental "superfund" to pay for cleaning up chemical spills and toxic waste dumps. "Magnum P.I.," starring Tom Selleck, premiered on CBS.

In 1997, more than 150 countries agreed at a global warming conference in Kyoto, Japan, to control the Earth's greenhouse gases.

In 2008, financier Bernie Madoff was arrested, accused of running a multibillion-dollar Ponzi scheme. (Madoff is serving a 150-year federal prison sentence.)

Ten years ago: Two car bombs in Algeria, including one targeting the U.N. refugee agency's offices, killed 37 people, 17 of them U.N. employees; Al-Qaida's self-styled North African branch claimed responsibility. The Senate Intelligence Committee took closed-door testimony from CIA Director Michael Hayden on how videotapes of terror suspect interrogations were made, then destroyed.

Five years ago: The Michigan Legislature gave final approval to a pair of right-to-work bills that were quickly signed by Republican Gov. Rick Snyder amid angry protests by union members and their supporters. A gunman opened fire in the Clackamas Town Center, a shopping mall in suburban Portland, Oregon, killing two people and wounding another before killing himself. Former NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue (TAG'-lee-uh-boo) overturned the suspensions of four New Orleans Saints players in the league's bounty investigation but said three of the players had engaged in conduct detrimental to the league.

One year ago: President-elect Donald Trump called a recent CIA assessment of Russian hacking in the U.S. election "ridiculous" and said he wasn't interested in getting daily intelligence briefings, telling "Fox News Sunday": "I get it when I need it."

Today's Birthdays: Actor Jean-Louis Trintignant is 87. Actress Rita Moreno is 86. Pop singer David Gates (Bread) is 77. Actress Donna Mills is 77. Former Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont., is 76. Former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry is 74. Singer Brenda Lee is 73. Actress Lynda Day George is 73. Music producer Tony Brown is 71. Actress Teri Garr is 70. Movie director Susan Seidelman is 65. Actress Bess Armstrong is 64. Singer Jermaine Jackson is 63. Rock musician Mike Mesaros (The Smithereens) is 60. Rock musician Nikki Sixx (Motley Crue) is 59. Rock musician Darryl Jones (The Rolling Stones) is 56. Actor Ben Browder is 55. Singer-musician Justin Currie (Del Amitri) is 53. Rock musician David Schools (Hard Working Americans, Gov't Mule, Widespread Panic) is 53. Actor Gary Dourdan (DOOR'-dan) is 51. Actress-comedian Mo'Nique is 50. Actor Max Martini is 48. Rapper-actor Mos Def is 44. Actor Rider Strong is 38. Actress Xosha (ZOH'-shah) Roquemore is 33. Actress Karla Souza is 31. Actress Hailee Steinfeld is 21.

Thought for Today: "The fear of life is the favorite disease of the twentieth century." — William Lyon Phelps, American educator and journalist (1865-1943).