

Groton Daily Independent

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Kristi Peterson Bookkeeping
Simple Solutions for YOU
605/216-4474 ~ peterson4@nvc.net

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**

Today

Girls's basketball at Redfield-Doland
7th grade game at 5 p.m., JV at 6:30 p.m. followed by varsity game. (Varsity game to be broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM.)
Debate at Brookings Bell

Saturday

Wrestling at Madison
Debate at Brookings Bell

Custer State Park Encourages Hay Donations for Those Affected By Fire

CUSTER STATE PARK, S.D. – Humbled by the outpouring of support from individuals across the country, Custer State Park officials are asking that hay donations for those directly impacted by the Legion Lake Fire do so through Farm Rescue.

“The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks and Custer State Park thank the individuals who have called and reached out through social media about donating hay to the park. We have since identified a greater need. We have neighbors and private landowners, who have been impacted by this fire. At this time, we are looking to give them assistance,” said Matt Snyder, Custer State Park Superintendent.

“We are still in the midst of an active fire,” said Snyder. “Custer State Park is being impacted by the fourth largest fire in the history of the Black Hills. At the time our staff is released from working on imminent fire dangers, we will reassess our needs for all wildlife and other areas of the park.”

Individuals who wish to donate hay to those impacted by the fire should contact Farm Rescue at info@farmrescue.org or 701.252.2017 and complete the application online at: https://farmrescueorg.presencehost.net/get_involved/donate/make_a_donation.html. The department has also posted the printed application on the GFP Facebook page.

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



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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
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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")**

Tigers had two big rallies to beat Redfield-Doland

Redfield-Doland jumped out to an 11-point lead early in the second quarter; however, the Pheasants ran out of steam and the Tigers rallied to post a 45-40 Northeast Conference win.

The Pheasants took a 19-11 lead at the end of the first quarter and went up, 22-11. Groton would go on a nine-point run to tie the game at 28 early in the third quarter and would go on another 11-point run in the fourth quarter to take a 39-32 lead.

Brodyn DeHoet would lead the Tigers with 16 points followed by Seric Shabazz with eight, Brandon Keith, Jonathan Doeden and Treyton Diegel with five each, and Anthony Sippel and Peyton Johnson with three each.

The Tigers made 35 percent of their field goals while the Pheasants made 43 percent. Groton Area was eight of 19 from the line for 42 percent off of Redfield-Doland's 18 team fouls. The Pheasants were six of 13 from the line for 46 percent off of Groton Area's 13 team fouls.

Groton Area had 18 turnovers, 11 of which were steals with Jordan Zach having four. The Pheasants had 26 turnovers, 14 of which were steals with Doeden and Shabazz each having four.

Miciah Utecht would have a double-double for the Pheasants with 15 points and 10 of the team's 31 rebounds. Keith would snag down five of Groton Area's 30 rebounds. Seric Shabazz had three assists.

Redfield-Doland won the junior varsity game, 41-31. Scoring for Groton Area: Darien Shabazz 4, Kaden Kurtz 5, Cade Guthmiller 5, Cole Larson 6, Austin Jones 7, Peyton Johnson 2, Tristan Trap-hagen 2.

The Pheasants also won the C game, 47-13. Riley Thurston had seven points, Jackson Cogley had four and Lucas Simon two.

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Boys Varsity Stat Sheet vs. Redfield/Doland

VISITOR: Redfield/Doland ()

NO	PLAYER	P	TOT-FG		3-PT		FT	FTA	REBOUNDS			A	TO	BK	S	MIN		
			FG	FGA	FG	FGA			OFF	DEF	TOT						PF	TP
2	Jordan, Zach	*	0	8	0	6	2	2	1	3	4	3	2	2	5	0	4	32:00
20	Utecht, Micaiah	*	5	9	1	2	4	11	3	7	10	5	15	0	8	0	1	24:00
25	Howe, Dalton	*	4	7	0	2	0	0	2	3	5	3	8	2	5	0	3	24:00
32	Rozell, Drew	*	2	6	1	5	0	0	1	1	2	1	5	0	0	0	1	24:00
33	Baloun, Max	*	4	5	0	0	0	0	0	6	6	3	8	2	4	0	2	32:00
4	Haider, Kolton		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	8:00
11	Rohlfs, Leyton		0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	16:00
15	Osborn, Bennett		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0:00
44	Wipf, Taryn		1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	0:00
TEAM REBOUNDS									2	1	3				0			
Team Totals			16	37	2	16	6	13	9	22	31	18	40	6	26	0	11	160

Total FG% - 1st: 13/20 0.650 2nd: 3/17 0.176 Game: 0.432 Deadball
 3-PT FG% - 1st: 2/5 0.400 2nd: 0/11 0.000 Game: 0.125 Rebounds
 Total FT% - 1st: 0/3 0.000 2nd: 6/10 0.600 Game: 0.462 (4,0)

HOME: Groton ()

NO	PLAYER	P	TOT-FG		3-PT		FT	FTA	REBOUNDS			A	TO	BK	S	MIN		
			FG	FGA	FG	FGA			OFF	DEF	TOT						PF	TP
20	KEITH, BRANDON	F	2	5	1	2	0	0	0	5	5	4	5	1	3	0	3	24:00
42	DEHOET, BRODYN	C	6	13	1	4	3	7	2	3	5	3	16	1	3	0	1	24:00
3	SIPPEL, ANTHONY	G	1	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	1	8:00
4	DOEDEN, JONNY	G	2	4	0	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	5	2	3	0	4	32:00
5	SHABAZZ, SERIC	G	3	9	1	5	1	4	2	2	4	0	8	3	2	0	4	24:00
10	LANE, MARSHALL		0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	1	2	0	0	8:00
22	GUTHMILLER, CADE		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0:00
40	JOHNSON, PEYTON		1	5	0	0	1	1	3	0	3	1	3	0	2	0	0	8:00
50	TRAPHAGEN, TRISTAN		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0:00
55	DIEGEL, TREYTON		1	7	1	6	2	5	0	1	1	1	5	0	1	0	1	32:00
TEAM REBOUNDS									7	2	9				1			
Team Totals			16	46	5	20	8	19	15	15	30	13	45	8	18	0	14	160

Total FG% - 1st: 10/23 0.435 2nd: 6/23 0.261 Game: 0.348 Deadball
 3-PT FG% - 1st: 4/12 0.333 2nd: 1/8 0.125 Game: 0.250 Rebounds
 Total FT% - 1st: 2/5 0.400 2nd: 6/14 0.429 Game: 0.421 (4,0)

SCORE BY PERIODS	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	TOTAL
Redfield/Doland	19	9	4	8	40
Groton	11	15	8	11	45

Last FG: Redfield/Doland 4th-08:00, Groton 4th-08:00
 Largest lead: Redfield/Doland by 11 2nd-08:00, Groton by 7 4th-08:00
 Score tied: 5 times, Lead changed: 2 times

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Boys Junior Varsity Stat Sheet vs. Redfield/Doland

VISITOR: Redfield/Doland

NO	PLAYER	TOT-FG			3-PT			REBOUNDS										MIN
		P	FG	FGA	FG	FGA	FT	FTA	OFF	DEF	TOT	PF	TP	A	TO	BK	S	
4	Haider, Kolton	*	2	10	0	4	0	2	0	2	2	0	4	0	1	0	1	24:00
11	Rohlf, Leyton	*	2	8	1	3	0	0	2	2	4	0	5	0	2	0	0	32:00
15	Osborn, Bennett	*	2	7	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	1	4	2	0	0	1	32:00
22	Frankenstein, Jaxson	*	1	4	0	0	2	2	5	5	10	1	4	1	1	0	2	32:00
44	Wipf, Taryn	*	7	10	0	0	2	3	3	1	4	3	16	1	0	0	0	8:00
5	Suchor, Isaac		4	6	0	2	0	1	1	1	2	2	8	1	1	0	0	24:00
32	Schantz, Thomas		0	3	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	8:00
33	Haider, Austin		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0:00
TEAM REBOUNDS								3	0	3							0	
Team Totals			18	48	1	9	4	8	18	12	30	7	41	5	5	0	5	160

Total FG% - 1st: 9/22 0.409 2nd: 9/26 0.346 Game: 0.375 Deadball
 3-PT FG% - 1st: 0/6 0.000 2nd: 1/3 0.333 Game: 0.111 Rebounds
 Total FT% - 1st: 2/4 0.500 2nd: 2/4 0.500 Game: 0.500 (2,0)

HOME: Groton Area

NO	PLAYER	TOT-FG			3-PT			REBOUNDS										MIN
		P	FG	FGA	FG	FGA	FT	FTA	OFF	DEF	TOT	PF	TP	A	TO	BK	S	
12	SHABAZZ, DARIEN	F	2	5	1	2	1	2	0	4	4	1	6	3	4	0	0	8:00
34	JONES, AUSTIN	F	3	5	1	2	0	0	0	4	4	1	7	2	0	0	1	24:00
40	JOHNSON, PEYTON	C	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	2	0	2	0	0	16:00
14	KURTZ, KADEN	G	1	4	1	1	2	2	0	1	1	1	5	1	2	0	0	32:00
22	GUTHMILLER, CADE	G	2	8	1	3	0	0	2	0	2	0	5	1	1	0	0	16:00
10	THURSTON, RILEY		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8:00
20	SIMON, LUCAS		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	16:00
30	LARSON, COLE		2	5	0	0	0	0	3	1	4	1	4	0	1	0	0	8:00
32	LARSON, CHANDLER		0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0:00
50	TRAPHAGEN, TRISTAN		1	3	0	1	0	0	2	0	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	32:00
TEAM REBOUNDS								1	0	1							0	
Team Totals			12	33	4	9	3	4	9	14	23	7	31	7	10	0	2	160

Total FG% - 1st: 6/17 0.353 2nd: 6/16 0.375 Game: 0.364 Deadball
 3-PT FG% - 1st: 1/5 0.200 2nd: 3/4 0.750 Game: 0.444 Rebounds
 Total FT% - 1st: 3/4 0.750 2nd: 0/0 0.000 Game: 0.750 (1,0)

SCORE BY PERIODS	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	TOTAL
Redfield/Doland	12	8	12	9	41
Groton Area	10	6	7	8	31

Last FG: Add New Team 4th-08:00, Add New Team 4th-08:00
 Largest lead: Add New Team by 13 4th-08:00, Add New Team NONE
 Score tied: 3 times, Lead changed: 0 times

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Boys C-Game Stat Sheet vs. Redfield/Doland

VISITOR: Redfield/Doland

NO	PLAYER	P	TOT-FG		3-PT		FT	FTA	REBOUNDS							MIN		
			FG	FGA	FG	FGA			OFF	DEF	TOT	PF	TP	A	TO		BK	S
3	Gatzke, Colby	*	3	5	1	3	0	0	1	1	2	0	7	0	2	0	1	16:00
4	Stephens, Dylan	*	1	3	1	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	16:00
5	Suchor, Isaac	*	3	6	1	1	0	0	1	4	5	1	7	0	1	0	4	24:00
22	Frankenstein, Jaxson	*	3	7	0	2	1	4	3	2	5	1	7	0	1	0	2	16:00
32	Shantz, Thomas	*	5	7	1	1	0	1	2	5	7	2	11	3	3	0	1	24:00
11	manria, henrigue		1	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	3	0	0	16:00
20	Coats, Kannon		0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	8:00
21	Jungwirth, Jonathon		0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	8:00
23	Bawek, Dirby		0	3	0	1	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	16:00
33	Haider, Austin		4	5	2	3	0	0	4	1	5	0	10	0	1	0	0	16:00
TEAM REBOUNDS									0	4	4							
Team Totals			20	42	6	14	1	5	12	20	32	4	47	3	12	0	8	160

Total FG% - 1st: 13/23 0.565 2nd: 7/19 0.368 Game: 0.476 Deadball
 3-PT FG% - 1st: 4/8 0.500 2nd: 2/6 0.333 Game: 0.429 Rebounds
 Total FT% - 1st: 1/3 0.333 2nd: 0/2 0.000 Game: 0.200 (1,0)

HOME: Groton Area

NO	PLAYER	P	TOT-FG		3-PT		FT	FTA	REBOUNDS							MIN		
			FG	FGA	FG	FGA			OFF	DEF	TOT	PF	TP	A	TO		BK	S
5	COGLEY, JACKSON	F	2	8	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	4	0	2	0	0	24:00
32	LARSON, CHANDLER	F	0	4	0	1	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	1	1	0	0	32:00
20	SIMON, LUCAS	G	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	2	2	0	2	0	4	0	2	8:00
3	SCHINKEL, ANTHONY	*	0	8	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	32:00
10	THURSTON, RILEY	*	3	5	1	3	0	0	2	1	3	0	7	0	3	0	0	0:00
4	DEHOET, CYRUS		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	16:00
22	KASSUBE, HUNTER		0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	32:00
34	PAULSON, STEVEN		0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	8:00
40	FURNEY, CALEB		0	3	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	2	0	0	1	0	0	8:00
TEAM REBOUNDS									1	2	3							
Team Totals			6	31	1	8	0	0	5	13	18	7	13	2	16	0	2	160

Total FG% - 1st: 2/13 0.154 2nd: 4/18 0.222 Game: 0.194 Deadball
 3-PT FG% - 1st: 1/4 0.250 2nd: 0/4 0.000 Game: 0.125 Rebounds
 Total FT% - 1st: 0/0 0.000 2nd: 0/0 0.000 Game: 0.000 (0,0)

SCORE BY PERIODS	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	TOTAL
Redfield/Doland	13	18	11	5	47
Groton Area	3	2	6	2	13

Last FG: Add New Team 4th-08:00, Add New Team 4th-08:00
 Largest lead: Add New Team by 36 4th-08:00, Add New Team NONE
 Score tied: 0 times, Lead changed: 0 times

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Today in Weather History

December 15, 1983: A storm system impacted the region on the 14-15th with five inches of snow and high winds to produce blocked roads and numerous school closings on the 15th throughout most of the eastern third of South Dakota. No travel was advised from late afternoon on the 14th due to low visibility and blocked roads in Roberts and Brookings Counties. The conditions contributed some to several traffic accidents. Meanwhile, snow also spread across Minnesota on December 13th and diminished late on the 15th. Snow accumulations ranged from 1 to 2 inches in west central Minnesota to higher amounts over 10 inches to the east. Winds increased and temperatures began to fall on December 14th as an arctic cold front pushed through the state. The strongest winds occurred during the night of December 14th and into the morning of December 15th. Near-blizzard conditions developed in the southwest and west-central sections of Minnesota where the visibility was reported to be near zero with winds of 20 to 30 mph. The wind chill index dropped to 30 below to 60 below zero. Blowing and drifting snow conditions occurred to some degree throughout all of Minnesota. Snow drifts caused many roads to close. Drifting snow continued during the evening of December 15th as the winds and snowfall gradually diminished. This event, associated with an arctic cold front, was the beginning of what would become, and remains, the coldest stretch of December days on record across most of the area. For the next nine days, beginning on December 16th, Aberdeen did not warm above -6 degrees, enduring temperatures as low as -34 F and high temperatures as low as -15 F. Other stations around the region had very similar cold temperatures during the December 16th through December 24th period, with temperatures warming into single digits above zero on Christmas Day.

1839 - The first of triple storms hit Massachusetts Bay. The storm produced whole gales, and more than 20 inches of snow in interior New England. There was great loss of life at Gloucester MA. (David Ludlum)

1901 - An intense cold front swept across the eastern U.S. The cold front produced heavy rain in Louisiana, and heavy snow in the northeastern U.S. (David Ludlum)

1945 - A record December snowstorm buried Buffalo, NY, under 36.6 inches of snow, with unofficial totals south of the city ranging up to 70 inches. Travel was brought to a halt by the storm. (14th-17th) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A major winter storm hit the Great Lakes Region, intensifying explosively as it crossed northern Illinois. High winds and heavy snow created blizzard conditions in southeastern Wisconsin. Winds gusted to 73 mph, and snowfall totals ranged up to 17 inches at LaFarge. The barometric pressure at Chicago IL dropped three quarters of an inch in six hours to 28.96 inches, a record low reading for December. Up to a foot of snow blanketed northern Illinois, and winds in the Chicago area gusted to 75 mph. O'Hare Airport in Chicago was closed for several hours, for only the fourth time in twenty years. High winds derailed train cars at Avon IN. Light winds and partly sunny skies were reported near the center of the storm, a feature typical of tropical storms. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



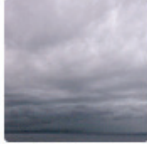




1988 - High pressure in the Pacific Northwest and low pressure in the southwestern U.S. combined to produced high winds from Utah to California. Winds gusting to 70 mph in the San Francisco area left nearly 300,000 residents without electricity. Winds in Utah gusted to 105 mph at Centerville. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A couple of low pressure systems spread heavy snow across the northeastern U.S. Up to two feet of snow was reported along Lake Erie in northeastern Ohio, and up to ten inches was reported in Connecticut. Heavy snow squalls developed over Michigan for the third day in a row. Three Oaks MI reported 25 inches of snow in two days. Twenty-six cities in the north central U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. The low of 10 degrees below zero at Wichita KS was a December record for that location. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

December 15, 1992: Cyclone John hit the sparsely populated northwest coast of Australia with winds gusting to 185 mph. John was the strongest cyclone to hit Australia in over 100 years.

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Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
						
Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Cloudy	Cloudy	Partly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Sunny
High: 40 °F	Low: 25 °F	High: 39 °F	Low: 23 °F	High: 37 °F	Low: 22 °F	High: 42 °F



Time is Running Out!

above normal temperatures
ending Thursday

**Highs in the
30s & 40s
through
Wednesday**

a few 50s today west of the Missouri River

 National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

www.weather.gov/abr

Graphic Created
12/15/2017 3:45 AM

Published on: 12/15/2017 at 3:55AM

Time is running out on our above normal temperatures, which will be coming to an end on Thursday. Until then, highs will be in the upper 30s and 40s through Wednesday, with even a few 50 degree readings west of the Missouri River today. Other than a few flurries or light snow showers over far northeastern South Dakota and western Minnesota, dry conditions are expected through tonight.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 32.9

Low Outside Temp: 26.1

High Gust: 16

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 60° in 1939

Record Low: -24° in 1917

Average High: 25°F

Average Low: 6°F

Average Precip in Dec: 0.25

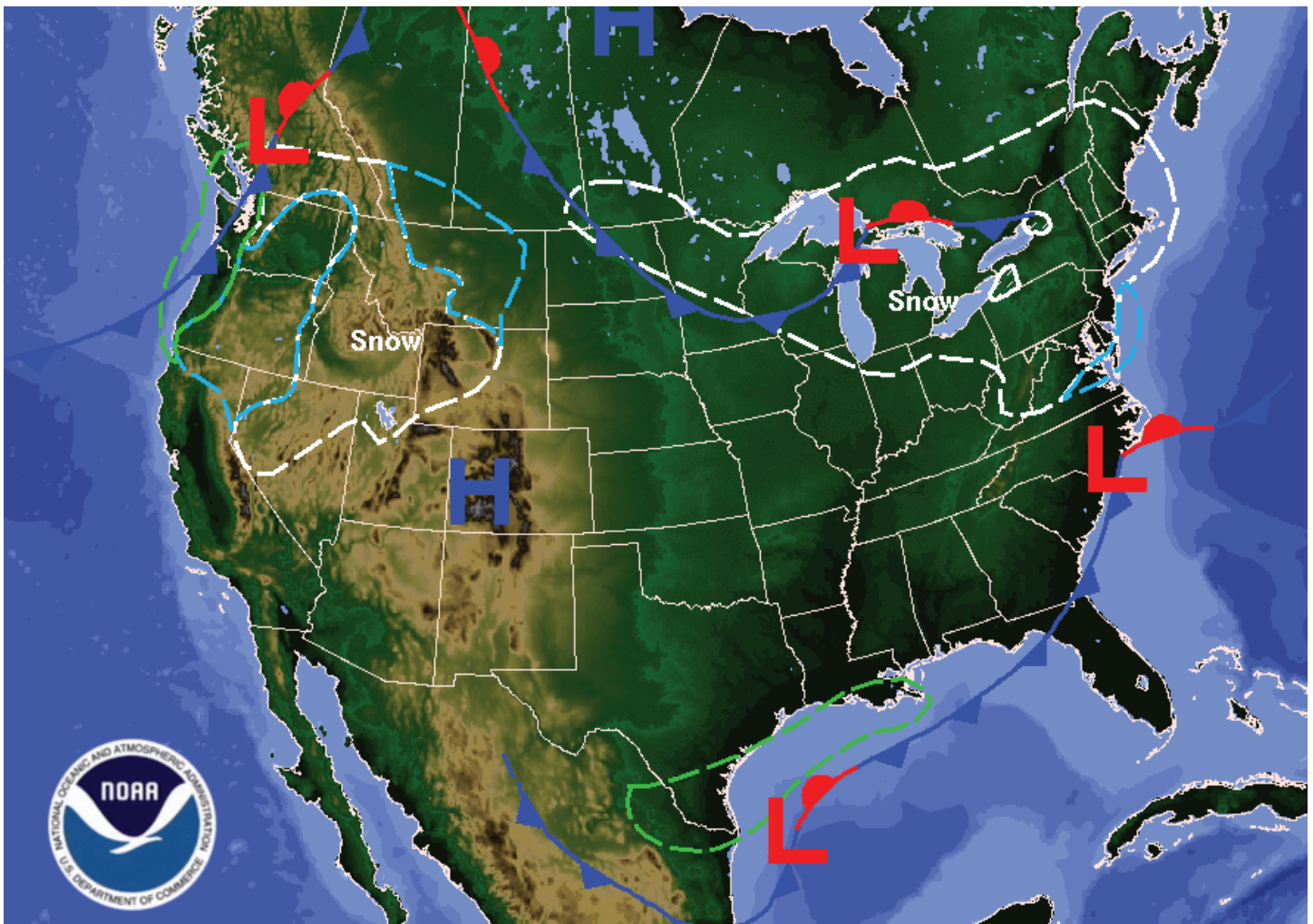
Precip to date in Dec: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 21.45

Precip Year to Date: 13.47

Sunset Tonight: 4:51 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:07 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Fri, Dec 15, 2017, issued 4:06 AM EST

DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center

Prepared by Santorelli 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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PLANNING AHEAD

It was the Sunday before Christmas and the teacher of the fifth grade class was reviewing the details of the birth of Jesus. With carefully chosen words she talked about the difficult journey to Bethlehem. Then she said with sadness, "And when they arrived, there was no room for them in the inn. Wasn't that terrible?"

George, after thinking for a moment about the vacations his family had taken and the plans they made said without thinking, "Why didn't Joseph make a reservation?"

There will be many around us during this holiday season who will make no room – no reservation – for Jesus to be with them once again this year. We often remind each other that "He's the reason for the Season" but do not take time to explain to others what that reason is. We are quick to condemn those who want to take "Christ out of Christmas" but do not take time to plant the message of Christ in their minds and hearts at Christmas. We place the manger scene under the tree, cover it with presents and then wrap it back up and forget about His birth and its significance for another year.

Hanging next to Jesus on a cross was a thief who was dying for crimes he committed. In his final moments he turned to Him and said, "Jesus, remember me." And Jesus said, "I will. Today you will be with me in paradise." Today is the best day to make your reservation to be with Him if you have not done so.

Prayer: Your Word, Lord, declares that "Today is the day of salvation." May we take advantage of this day! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Luke 2:1-7 And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

2018 Groton SD Community Events

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

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

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News from the  Associated Press

Thursday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Christian 73, Leola/Frederick 51
Canistota 68, Freeman 42
Chester 61, Elkton-Lake Benton 39
Colome 58, Gregory 45
Corsica/Stickney 50, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 37
Faith 67, Bison 54
Flandreau 60, Beresford 42
Groton Area 45, Redfield/Doland 40
Hamlin 68, Deuel 59
Herreid/Selby Area 56, Faulkton 35
Hettinger/Scranton, N.D. 66, Harding County 51
Hitchcock-Tulare 49, Wessington Springs 26
Irene-Wakonda 59, Vermillion 46
Kimball/White Lake 59, Mitchell Christian 44
Langford 60, Ipswich 44
Madison 78, Lennox 58
Mobridge-Pollock 50, Timber Lake 40
Platte-Geddes 45, Burke/South Central 39
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 63, Tripp-Delmont/Armour 49
Sioux Valley 93, Baltic 31
Stanley County 61, Philip 37
Sully Buttes 55, Edmunds Central 42
Yankton 49, Brandon Valley 37
Lakota Nation Tournament (Makosica Bracket)
Quarterfinal
Crow Creek 67, Tiospa Zina Tribal 47
McLaughlin 74, Red Cloud 72
White River 69, Lower Brule 57, OT
Lakota Nation Tournament (Paha Sapa Bracket)
Quarterfinal
Little Wound 68, Crazy Horse 28
Marty Indian 57, St. Francis Indian 54
Todd County 62, Standing Rock, N.D. 36
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS
Flandreau Indian vs. Sisseton, ppd.

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Roncalli 59, Milbank 32
Aberdeen Roncalli 59, Milbank Area 32
Bon Homme 55, Scotland 47
Corsica/Stickney 33, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 32
DeSmet 57, Arlington 21
Deubrook 62, Lake Preston 26
Douglas 57, Hot Springs 41

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Edmunds Central 52, Sully Buttes 27
Estelline 38, Dell Rapids St. Mary 30
Flandreau 63, Beresford 46
Hamlin 67, Deuel 24
Highmore-Harrold 55, Potter County 47
Hitchcock-Tulare 42, Wessington Springs 12
Kimball/White Lake 59, Mitchell Christian 33
Lennox 45, Madison 42
Leola/Frederick 60, Aberdeen Christian 18
New Underwood 47, Hill City 32
Philip 61, Stanley County 25
Sioux Valley 69, Baltic 26
St. Thomas More 62, Alliance, Neb. 26
Timber Lake 63, Mobridge-Pollock 33
Warner 62, Northwestern 27
Winner 58, Burke/South Central 44
Lakota Nation Tournament (Makosica Bracket)
Quarterfinal
Crow Creek 65, Todd County 40
Pine Ridge 62, Lower Brule 35
Red Cloud 62, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 59
Lakota Nation Tournament (Paha Sapa Bracket)
Quarterfinal
McLaughlin 62, St. Francis Indian 54
Omaha Nation, Neb. 49, Marty Indian 39
Standing Rock, N.D. 62, Crazy Horse 28
White River 55, Tiospa Zina Tribal 32
Sanford Classic
Brandon Valley 41, Yankton 33

Mooney, South Dakota hold off NAU 90-77 in busy 2nd half

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — Matt Mooney scored 22 of his 24 points after halftime as South Dakota held off a suddenly lively Northern Arizona 90-77 Thursday night, winning for the fifth time in six games.

South Dakota (10-3) led 38-23 by halftime as two of Northern Arizona's best scorers had combined for just five points. After the break it was time for something completely different. JoJo Anderson caught fire for Northern Arizona (2-9) scoring 27 of his career-high 30 points with four 3-pointers a blocked shot and three steals in the last 20 minutes when the Lumberjacks came as close as five twice.

Mooney scored to chill the first NAU rally and did it again late in the game. Mooney fouled Anderson, turning his 3-pointer into a 4-point play that cut the lead to 78-73 with three minutes left.

Mooney scored four straight and six of the next nine as South Dakota built the lead to 87-75 by 1:25. Tyler Hagedorn added 20 points and Nick Fuller a career-high 17. The 10-3 start is South Dakota's best in Division I.

Carlos Hines added 10 points for NAU in his second game of the season after injury. Chris Bowling scored 13 but was of three Lumberjacks to foul out.

Kris Kobach endorses Shantel Krebs' congressional bid

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach has endorsed Shantel Krebs to serve as South Dakota's U.S. representative.

Kobach said Thursday in Sioux Falls that Krebs is a "strong supporter" of President Donald Trump. Kobach

says he's gotten to know Krebs as South Dakota's secretary of state.

The endorsement by Kobach, who has advised the White House and serves as vice chairman of a presidential commission on election fraud, could offer Krebs a boost among GOP voters. Over 61 percent of South Dakota voters backed Trump in 2016.

Krebs said in an earlier statement that Kobach has played a lead role in shaping national policies on elections and border security. Krebs says she looks forward to achieving those goals in Congress.

Krebs and Dusty Johnson are competing in the Republican primary for the seat.

South Dakota park to make unplanned bison roundup after fire

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota state park known for annual buffalo roundups drawing thousands of spectators will perform an unscheduled one in the coming days to determine how a historic wildfire affected the animals.

Officials at Custer State Park located its bison herd by Thursday afternoon, and every animal found so far was alive, said Kobbie Stalder, the park's visitor services program manager. However, he cautioned it's unlikely all wildlife escaped unscathed from the fire that has consumed more than 84 square miles (218 square kilometers) in the park and beyond its borders.

The park said that investigators from the South Dakota Wildland Fire Division attributed the cause of the blaze to a downed power line.

Staff will conduct on the "impromptu roundup" to assess the herd of roughly 860 bison and likely give them pneumonia immunizations because of the wildfire, Stalder said.

"Custer State Park is known for their herd of bison," Stalder said. "Every other question any time we post on social media is, you know, 'Are the bison OK?' 'Is the wildlife OK?' 'Are the burros OK?'"

The wildfire, which started Monday, is the third-largest recorded in the Black Hills. There had been no human injuries, and main park buildings have been spared from the blaze, officials said. Well-wishers have posted online with concerns for firefighters, but also for animals like the bison, the captivating national mammal.

Tens of millions of bison, also known as buffalo, once thundered across a range stretching from central Canada through the Great Plains and northern Mexico. After a century-long slaughter driven by commercial hunting for buffalo pelts, the population dwindled to a thousand or fewer near the end of the 1800s.

Now, there are nearly 400,000 bison in North America, many on private ranches and farms, according to the National Bison Association. Executive Director Dave Carter said there are as many as 20,000 buffalo in public herds, with Custer State Park's ranking among the larger ones in the U.S.

The park is just south of Mount Rushmore National Memorial in the state's southwest. It's a top tourist destination, featuring hills with ponderosa pine and prairie. Visitors often drive through to see roaming buffalo and other wildlife.

As firefighters have been able to hold the blaze — it's now 50 percent contained — park officials have been able to dedicate resources toward assessing wildlife and getting more information, Stalder said.

He said officials also have found the park's southern elk herd but are still searching for another group of elk, a dozen burros and most of the pronghorn. Stalder said park staff plans to examine every herd in the park.

Becky Kienzle, a massage therapist from Dickeyville, Wisconsin, said she's been following the fire this week and worrying about wildlife in the park. The 59-year-old has been to the last eight of the fall buffalo roundups, and Kienzle said she plans on going to the park again next year.

"I've been enjoying this park for my entire 50th decade," Kienzle said. "I'm praying for most of my animals to still be there."

Stalder said staff was able to go through early Tuesday and unlock the gates within the park boundary to allow animals to escape the fire.

"We went through and gave them the best opportunity to get out of the way of danger," he said. "They're

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naturally smart enough to do that.”

Karen Conley, executive director of the Dakota Territory Buffalo Association, said the challenge will be wildlife including buffalo in the park having enough food sources to sustain them until regrowth occurs. She said the group has been inundated with offers to help from members of the “buffalo family.”

Texas resident Rhonda Price Mokerski can’t count the number of times she’s been to Custer State Park. The 56-year-old outdoor product wholesaler who grew up in western South Dakota said she’s been worried for people and wildlife.

“We are just always bringing people to the Black Hills to experience it,” said Mokerski, whose favorite park animals are buffalo and burros. “One of the ‘must dos’ is to go through this park.”

South Dakota harvest rebounds following drought conditions

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — U.S. agriculture officials say timely rain, additional acres planted and improved seed hybrids helped salvage South Dakota’s harvest this year, despite the worst drought conditions in five years.

The drought hit some farmers harder than others, but the statewide picture is better than agricultural officials expected at mid-summer, the Argus Leader reported .

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s December projections put the state’s corn crop at 788 million bushels, which makes it the fourth-largest in state history. Soybeans also performed well, with 252 million bushels harvested, down just 1 percent from last year’s record.

“We were definitely worried about what we might get when the combines started rolling in the fall,” said Travis Strasser, a farmer on the South Dakota Corn Growers Association Board of Directors. “We were blessed.”

Strasser said he saw 15 percent higher yields than last year, though the results weren’t consistent across counties.

Krystil Smit, director of the South Dakota Farm Bureau, said genetically-modified seeds produce plants with higher survival rates, even without moisture.

“These varieties can really handle a tremendous amount of stress,” Smit said.

Some counties were more affected by the drought conditions for longer lengths of time. Around 70 percent of South Dakota was in a stage of drought during September.

“If you follow the eastern side of South Dakota, we had a very good crop,” said Jerry Schmitz, a Vermillion farmer. “The further west you went, the drier things got . It was feast or famine.”

South Dakota’s drought has interfered in the state livestock market and contributed to wild fires.

Smit said farmers will need the weather to improve for next year.

“Without a major moisture recovery, they’re going to be looking at conditions that maybe those varieties and management won’t be able to deal,” Smit said.

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

Dakota Access developer, publication argue over lawsuit

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON**, Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — The Texas-based developer of the Dakota Access oil pipeline and a Florida-based environmental publication are arguing in court over whether something billed as a social movement can be sued.

Energy Transfer Partners in August filed a lawsuit against Earth First, Greenpeace and BankTrack, alleging they disseminated false and misleading information about the \$3.8 billion pipeline to move North Dakota oil to Illinois; interfered with construction; and damaged the company’s reputation and finances through illegal acts. The company’s lawsuit, filed in federal court in North Dakota, seeks damages that could approach \$1 billion.

Greenpeace and BankTrack have called the lawsuit meritless and asked that it be thrown out. ETP law-

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yers have asked U.S. District Judge Daniel Hovland to declare that Earth First also has been served with the lawsuit, via Earth First Journal.

The journal has a post office box in Lake Worth, Florida. Its website bills the publication as a forum for discussion within the Earth First movement.

Journal attorney Pamela Spees argues in court documents that the two "are not one and the same." She describes Earth First as a "broad-based social movement" with no formal membership or leadership structure.

The journal "is a legal entity, unlike the ... philosophy," said Spees, an attorney with the New York-based Center for Constitutional Rights. She also wrote that ETP has no evidence to support its contention that the journal is Earth First's "sister organization."

ETP attorneys note that the journal publishes Earth First's manual, "instructing members on how to engage in precisely the type of conduct at issue in this action."

Earth First "should not be permitted to hide behind its purported lack of a formal organizational structure and membership to evade service and avoid responding to the claims against it," company attorneys write.

Attorneys for the other two defendants, Netherlands and U.S.-based Greenpeace and Netherlands-based BankTrack, maintain that the lawsuit is an attack on free speech. The American Civil Liberties Union and five other human rights, justice and philanthropic groups on Monday filed court documents backing the defendants and urging the case be dismissed.

"Under ETP's theories, ordinary political speech that runs counter to a corporation's business interests could expose the speaker to enormous, unwarranted liability," attorneys for the groups wrote.

ETP has told The Associated Press that it has an obligation to its shareholders, partners and stakeholders to pursue claims against the environmental groups.

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

Man shot by robbery victim sentenced to 12 years

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A man who was shot while trying to rob a couple near a mall in Sioux Falls last year has been sentenced to 12 years in prison.

The Minnehaha County State Attorney's Office says Edward LaBlanc was given the maximum sentence possible this week for second-degree attempted robbery.

Sioux Falls police say LaBlanc was shot and wounded after he struck a 71-year-old man who was sitting in a car with his wife in a hotel parking lot near the Empire Mall in October 2016. The male victim had a concealed carry permit and shot LaBlanc.

2 sentenced for stealing from Rapid City-based nonprofit

CUSTER, S.D. (AP) — Two Custer County residents have been sentenced to serve 10 days in county jail and three years on probation and pay restitution for stealing from a nonprofit riding group.

Authorities say 25-year-old Tiffany Thovson and 75-year-old Jerry Smedshammer collected money from Rapid City-based SunCatcher Therapeutic Riding Academy after submitting fake bills for veterinary services and supplies in 2014.

The Rapid City Journal reports that Thovson was a SunCatcher employee and Smedshammer was a board member and volunteer at the time.

The two pleaded guilty to conspiring to commit theft by deception. They've been ordered to repay \$14,600.

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

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Greenway, Ellis to be in South Dakota Sports Hall of Fame

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Two former professional athletes are being inducted into the South Dakota Sports Hall of Fame next year.

Linebacker Chad Greenway of Mount Vernon led Stickney-Mount Vernon to a state football title, earned All-American honors at the University of Iowa and then spent 11 years with the Minnesota Vikings.

Second baseman Mark Ellis of Rapid City won back-to-back American Legion Player of the Year honors, played in the College World Series with the University of Florida and then spent 12 seasons in the major leagues, mainly with Oakland.

Greenway and Ellis are among 16 people who will be inducted into the hall in Sioux Falls on April 14.

Rapid City-based Guard unit to serve 9 months in Middle East

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota National Guard unit has received official orders to deploy to the Middle East.

The 28 members of the Rapid City-based Detachment 1, Company B of the 935th Aviation Support Battalion are to serve nine months beginning next June.

The soldiers will provide aviation maintenance and support for the Army.

The unit also served in the Middle East once before, during Operation Enduring Freedom in 2012 and 2013.

Suspect in car attack faces new charge: first-degree murder

By SARAH RANKIN, Associated Press

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. (AP) — The man accused of driving into a crowd protesting a white nationalist rally in Charlottesville faces a new charge of first-degree murder after a court hearing Thursday in which prosecutors presented surveillance video and other evidence against him.

Prosecutors announced at the start of a preliminary hearing for James Alex Fields that they were seeking to upgrade the second-degree murder charge he previously faced in the Aug. 12 collision in Charlottesville that left 32-year-old Heather Heyer dead and dozens injured. The judge agreed to that and ruled there is probable cause for all charges against Fields, including nine lesser felony counts, to proceed.

Fields' case will now be presented to a grand jury for an indictment.

Authorities say the 20-year-old, described by a former teacher as having a keen interest in Nazi Germany and Adolf Hitler, drove his speeding car into a group of counterprotesters the day of the "Unite the Right" rally that drew hundreds of white nationalist from around the country. The attack came after the rally in this Virginia college town had descended into chaos — with violent brawling between attendees and counterdemonstrators — and authorities had forced the crowd to disband.

Surveillance footage from a Virginia State Police helicopter, played by prosecutors in court, captured the moment of impact by the car and the cursing of the startled troopers on board. The video then showed the car as it reversed, drove away and eventually pulled over. The helicopter had been monitoring the violence, and prosecutors questioned Charlottesville Police Detective Steven Young about the video as it played.

Another surveillance video from a restaurant showed the car head slowly in what Young testified was the direction of the counterprotesters, who were not in view of the camera. The car reversed before speeding forward into the frame again.

After that footage, a man in the crowd shouted an expletive and cried out, "Take me out." He and others left the courtroom.

Fields, of Maumee, Ohio, sat quietly in a striped jumpsuit with his hands cuffed during the hearing.

His attorney Denise Lunsford did not present evidence or make any arguments at the hearing, although she did cross-examine the detective.

Fields was photographed hours before the attack with a shield bearing the emblem of Vanguard America, one of the hate groups that took part in the rally, although the group denied any association with him.

A former teacher, Derek Weimer, has said Fields was fascinated in high school with Nazism, idolized

Adolf Hitler, and had been singled out by officials at his Union, Kentucky, school for “deeply held, radical” convictions on race.

During her cross-examination of Young, Lunsford asked if searches of Fields’ computer, phone or social media revealed any evidence that he was part of Vanguard America or any other white nationalist group. Young said, “No.”

Young also testified that he was among the first officers to respond to the scene where Fields pulled over. No weapon was found in the car, he said.

Lunsford asked the detective what Fields said as he was being detained.

Fields said he was sorry and asked if people were OK, according to Young. When Fields was told someone had died, he appeared shocked and sobbed, Young said.

Young said authorities had identified 36 victims of the car attack, including Heyer — a number higher than officials have previously given. Some have significant injuries and now use wheelchairs, Young said.

Fields would have faced between five to 40 years in prison for a second-degree murder conviction. First-degree murder carries a penalty of 20 years to life in prison.

Charlottesville General District Court Judge Robert Downer Jr. also presided over preliminary hearings Thursday for three other defendants. Charged in cases related to the August rally are Richard Preston, who is accused of firing a gun, and Jacob Goodwin and Alex Ramos, who are accused in an attack on a man in a parking garage that was captured in photos and video that went viral.

The judge certified the charges against all three men. All those cases will also head to a grand jury.

Jason Kessler, the main organizer of the Unite the Right rally, was in court to watch the proceedings. When he arrived Thursday, a small crowd of angry protesters outside the courthouse chanted, “Blood on your hands.”

Australian probe into child abuse attacks Catholic celibacy

By ROD McGUIRK, Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — An Australian inquiry into child abuse recommended Friday that the Catholic Church lift its demand of celibacy from clergy and that priests be prosecuted for failing to report evidence of pedophilia heard in the confessional.

Australia’s Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse delivered its final 17-volume report and 189 recommendations following a wide-ranging investigation. Australia’s longest-running royal commission — which is the country’s highest form of inquiry — has been investigating since 2012 how the Catholic Church and other institutions responded to sexual abuse of children in Australia over 90 years.

The report heard the testimonies of more than 8,000 survivors of child sex abuse. Of those who were abused in religious institutions, 62 percent were Catholics.

“We have concluded that there were catastrophic failures of leadership of Catholic Church authorities over many decades,” the report said.

Recommendations include that the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference request that the Vatican consider introducing voluntary celibacy for clergy.

It said the bishops’ body should also request clarity on whether information received in the confessional that a child has been sexually abused is covered by the seal of secrecy and whether absolution of a perpetrator should be withdrawn until the perpetrator confesses to police.

Catholic clerics who testified to the royal commission gave varying opinions about what if anything a priest could divulge about what was said in a confessional about child abuse.

The commission’s recommendations, which with interim reports total 409, include making failure to report child sexual abuse a criminal offense. Clerics would not be exempt from being charged.

The law should exclude any existing excuse or privilege relating to a religious confessional, it said.

Pope Francis’s former finance minister, Cardinal George Pell, testified in a video link from the Vatican in 2016 about his time as a priest and bishop in Australia. Pell this year became the most senior Catholic official to face sex offense charges.

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Through his lawyers, Pell has vowed to fight the charges of sexual assault.

The commission found that the church's responses to complaints and concerns about clerics in Australia were "remarkably and disturbingly similar."

The president of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Archbishop Denis Hart, said many of the commission's recommendations "would have significant impact on the way the Catholic Church and others operate in Australia."

He said the Vatican is already giving "serious consideration" to questions raised by the commission about the extent of the seal of the confession and whether child molesters who did not confess to police could be absolved.

"I cannot break the seal. The penalty for any priest breaking the seal is excommunication; being passed out of the church," Hart said. "I revere the law of the land and I trust it, but this is a sacred, spiritual charge before God which I must honor, and I have to try and do what I can do with both."

He said the Australian bishops would put the celibacy recommendations to the Vatican, but added, "I believe that there are real values in celibacy."

The commission found that celibacy was not a direct cause of child sexual abuse, but was a contributing factor, especially when combined with other risk factors.

"We conclude that there is an elevated risk of child sex abuse where compulsorily celibate male clergy or religious have privileged access to children in certain types of Catholic institutions, including schools, residential institutions and parishes," the report said.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, a Catholic, recommended all Australians read the report.

"What that commission has done is exposed a national tragedy. It's an outstanding exercise in love and I thank the commissioners and those who had the courage to tell their stories," Turnbull said.

Catholicism is the largest denomination in majority-Christian Australia.

Ex-Russian minister jailed for 8 years over \$2 million bribe

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia's former economics minister was handed an eight-year prison sentence Friday after being convicted of accepting a \$2 million bribe from President Vladimir Putin's top associate.

The case against Alexei Ulyukayev has been widely seen as part of infighting between Kremlin clans. Ulyukayev was a prominent member of a group of liberal-minded Cabinet members, while his nemesis Igor Sechin is the most prominent representative of the hard-line flank of the Russian elite.

Sechin heads Russia's largest oil producer, Rosneft, and his clout seconds only that of Putin.

Ulyukayev was detained a year ago at Rosneft's headquarters following a sting operation by the Federal Security Service (FSB), the main KGB successor agency. He rejected the charges as a provocation set up by Sechin.

The case was seen as a personal vendetta against Ulyukayev, who had been critical of a Rosneft privatization plan proposed by Sechin that saw the company purchase its own stock.

A Moscow court on Friday also ordered Ulyukayev to pay a \$2.2 million fine. Prosecutors had asked the court to send him to a high-security prison for ten years.

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. WHO COULD HOLD UP GOP TAX PACKAGE

Republican Senator Marco Rubio's potential defection over a tax credit for low-income parents puts a speed bump into his party's effort to approve tax overhaul.

2. HOW NEW RULES COULD AFFECT THE INTERNET

Over time, the repeal of "net neutrality" could change your online viewing and shopping habits and which apps you use.

3. CHARGES UPGRADED FOR CHARLOTTESVILLE DRIVER

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The Ohio man accused of ramming a car into a crowd of people protesting at an August white nationalist rally in Virginia has his most serious charge raised to first-degree murder.

4. HOW HOLLYWOOD IS SHRINKING

Disney's deal to purchase most of 21st Century Fox ends the era of the "Big Six" major movie studios, toppling one of the industry's most famed studios and dramatically redrawing the film industry map.

5. OFFICE ROMANCES COULD GET EVEN MORE COMPLICATED

Workplace relationships that might have flown under the radar — particularly those between boss and subordinate — are getting a new look following the recent flood of sexual misconduct allegations.

6. BREXIT NEGOTIATIONS SET TO ENTER NEXT STAGE

European Union leaders are close to authorizing a new phase in Brexit talks involving future relations and trade with Britain.

7. SUGGESTIONS FROM DOWN UNDER FOR CATHOLICS

An Australian inquiry into child abuse recommends that the Catholic Church lift its demand of celibacy from clergy and that priests be prosecuted for failing to report evidence of pedophilia heard in the confessional.

8. MARIJUANA REACHING RETAIL STATUS IN THE GOLDEN STATE

California's legal marijuana market is finally taking shape as the state issues its first business licenses to sell and transport recreational-use pot, ahead of vending from Jan. 1.

9. OSCAR WINNER FACING NEW ALLEGATIONS

More women are accusing Dustin Hoffman of sexual misconduct, including an incident in which a playwright says the actor exposed himself to her in a hotel room when she was 16 years old.

10. BIG BALLER FINALLY PLAYS BIGGEST BALLER

LeBron James leads the Cleveland Cavaliers to a 121-112 victory over Lavar Ball and the Los Angeles Lakers.

Dustin Hoffman accused of new incidents of sexual misconduct

LOS ANGELES (AP) — More women are accusing Dustin Hoffman of sexual misconduct, including an incident in which a playwright says the actor exposed himself to her in a New York hotel room when she was 16-years-old.

Playwright Cori Thomas described the 1980 incident in a story published Thursday by the trade outlet Variety. She confirmed the story in an email to The Associated Press.

Thomas was a classmate of Hoffman's daughter when she says she met the actor, who invited her to his hotel room to wait for her mother after a dinner with the teenagers. Thomas says after Hoffman's daughter left, the actor took a shower and came out wearing only a towel, which she told Variety he dropped, exposing herself to him. Hoffman then put on a robe and asked Thomas to massage his feet, Thomas said, and repeatedly asked her if she wanted to see him naked again.

The Variety report included the account of another woman, Melissa Kester, who said the actor pushed his hand down her pants while they were in a recording studio. The incident occurred while Hoffman was recording music for the film "Ishtar," and happened behind a partition while others, including Kester's boyfriend, were nearby.

Hoffman's publicist and attorney did not return email messages seeking comment Thursday.

It is the latest allegation of sexual harassment or abuse against the 80-year-old Oscar winner.

Actress Anna Graham Hunter has alleged that Hoffman groped her and made inappropriate comments when she was a 17-year-old intern on the set of the 1985 TV movie "Death of a Salesman."

Hoffman said in an earlier statement that the incident "is not reflective of who I am."

The report came a week after Hoffman was pointedly questioned about his treatment of women by late-night host John Oliver. Hoffman appeared blindsided by Oliver's questioning at a panel hosted by Oliver.

In a lengthy statement emailed to the AP, Thomas wrote of Hunter's allegations, "I recognized Ms. Hunter's story as the truth immediately because of the similarities to what happened to me."

She said attacks on Hunter's credibility led her to speak to Variety about her experience with Hoffman. "In response to why I've stayed quiet for so many years, I have not stayed quiet for so many years, friends and family have been aware of this story for many many years, I just didn't go to newspapers with the story is all," she wrote. "And I regret that. I realize now, that the reason this continued to happen to others, was because of my silence, and I feel guilty about that but I hadn't even processed how badly this shamed and hurt me."

Firefighter dies, thousands more take on California blaze

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. (AP) — One of the thousands of firefighters battling a series of wildfires across Southern California has died, but authorities gave no hint of how.

San Diego-based Cory Iverson was assigned to the blaze northwest of Los Angeles, which has become the fourth largest in California history. Iverson, 32, was an engineer with a state fire engine strike team. He died Thursday.

Dozens of police and fire vehicles escorted a hearse carrying Iverson's flag-draped body to the county medical examiner's office in Ventura.

Iverson had been with the state since 2009 and is survived by his pregnant wife and a 2-year-old daughter, said Fire Chief Ken Pimlott of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

It was the second death linked to the fire. A 70-year-old woman was killed in a car crash while evacuating as the fire raged last week. Her body was found inside the wrecked car along an evacuation route.

Pimlott did not provide any details about Iverson's death but said it was under investigation by an accident review team.

A return of gusty Santa Ana winds brought renewed activity to inland portions of the so-called Thomas Fire straddling coastal Ventura and Santa Barbara counties.

Pimlott said he was "deeply saddened" by Iverson's death but added that fire crews were continuing to focus on their mission.

"The firefight in front of us continues to go on. The communities we are protecting are depending on us and we will not fail," he said at an afternoon news conference.

Authorities said it now covered 379 square miles (982 square kilometers). That surpassed a blaze that burned inland Santa Barbara County a decade ago.

Firefighting costs so far were tallied at \$74.7 million, according to Cal Fire.

Some evacuations were lifted and the risk to the agricultural city of Fillmore was diminishing. But coastal enclaves to the west remained under threat as crews protected hillside homes in Montecito, Summerland and Carpinteria.

The National Weather Service said extreme fire danger conditions could last through the weekend due to lack of moisture along with a likely increase in wind speeds.

Firefighters made some progress Wednesday on corralling the fire, which continued to spread mostly into national forest land.

Since the blaze broke out on Dec. 4, it has burned destroyed 970 buildings — including at least 700 homes. Flames threatened some 18,000 buildings and prompted evacuations of about 100,000 people. Covering more ground than the city of San Diego, it was 35 percent contained.

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

Rubio threat on child tax credit puts bump in GOP tax path

By **STEPHEN OHLEMACHER** and **MARCY GORDON**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican Marco Rubio's potential defection over a tax credit for low-income parents put a speed bump into GOP leaders' drive to push their big tax package through the Senate, but it's a complication that's likely to be resolved.

The Florida senator declared Thursday that he'll vote against the \$1.5 trillion bill unless House and Senate

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negotiators expand the tax credit that low-income Americans can claim for their children.

That puts the Republicans' razor-thin margin in the Senate closer to the edge. The GOP leaders are straining to muscle the bill through Congress next week, handing President Donald Trump his first major legislative victory by Christmas.

Senate Republicans could still pass the package without Rubio's vote, but they would be cutting it extremely close. An original version was approved 51-49 — with Rubio's support. The co-sponsor of Rubio's proposed change, Republican Sen. Mike Lee of Utah, is undecided on the overall bill and is pushing to make the credit as generous as possible, said Lee spokesman Conn Carroll.

The Senate turmoil erupted the same day that a key faction of House Republicans came out in favor of the bill, boosting its chances. Members of the conservative House Freedom Caucus predicted the vast majority of their members would support the package.

The up-and-down turns came a day after House and Senate Republican leaders forged an agreement in principle on the most sweeping overhaul of the nation's tax laws in more than 30 years. The package would give generous tax cuts to corporations and the wealthiest Americans, and more modest tax cuts to low- and middle-income families.

Republican leaders predicted swift passage next week, sending the bill to Trump for his signature.

At the White House, Trump said he was confident that Rubio will get onboard.

"He's really been a great guy and very supportive. I think that Sen. Rubio will be there," said Trump, who belittled Rubio during the 2016 GOP presidential primaries, calling him "little Marco."

The tax package would double the per-child tax credit from \$1,000 to \$2,000. The bill makes a portion of the credit — \$1,100 — available to families even if they owe no income tax. They would receive the money in the form of a tax refund, which is why it's called a "refundable" tax credit. Rubio wants to increase this amount but wouldn't say by how much.

"Given all the other changes they made in the tax code leading into it, I can't in good conscience support it unless we are able to increase the refundable portion of it. And there's ways to do it, and we'll be very reasonable about it," Rubio said.

During debate on the Senate version of the bill, Rubio proposed a change that would have made the entire \$2,000 credit available to families, even if they owe no income tax, but it was soundly defeated. To pay for the expanded credit, he proposed to slightly scale back a steep cut in the corporate income tax rate.

A few days after the earlier Senate vote, Rubio tweeted a link to a news story that said GOP leaders were indeed considering scaling back the corporate tax cut — but not to pay for an expanded child tax credit.

"They freaked out when I proposed small reduction in Corporate tax cut to pay for cut for working families. Now this?" Rubio tweeted.

The final package slashes the corporate rate from 35 percent to 21 percent. The initial Senate and House bills had set it at 20 percent.

Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, said Senate negotiators got the best deal they could on the overall child tax credit. House GOP negotiators were proposing a \$1,600 tax credit.

"We won everything in the child tax credit," Portman said. When asked if it could be changed further to appease Rubio, Portman said: "We've already won. I mean, we should celebrate our victory."

Rubio's opposition comes at a bad time for Senate Republicans, with two of them missing votes this week because of illness.

John McCain of Arizona, who is 81, is at a Washington-area military hospital being treated for the side effects of brain cancer treatment, and 80-year-old Thad Cochran of Mississippi had a non-melanoma lesion removed from his nose earlier this week. GOP leaders are hopeful they will be available next week.

Associated Press writers Kevin Freking and Ken Thomas contributed to this report.

Follow Stephen Ohlemacher on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/stephenatap>

Poll: Most believe Trump trying to obstruct Russia probe

By CHAD DAY and EMILY SWANSON, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Most Americans think Donald Trump did something illegal or at least unethical regarding ties between his presidential campaign and Russia — and they think he's trying to obstruct the investigation looking into those possible connections.

The deeply divided country is more concerned about health care and the economy than any collusion with the Kremlin, according to a new poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. But the survey also shows that Americans are unhappy with the way Trump is dealing with the investigations led by Congress and special counsel Robert Mueller.

Most people believe Trump is trying to obstruct the investigations, which have resulted in charges against four of his campaign advisers and increasingly appear focused on the president's inner circle.

Four in 10 Americans think the president has done something illegal when it comes to Russia, while an additional 3 in 10 say he's at least done something unethical. And 68 percent disapprove of his response to the investigations.

There are significant partisan divisions, with Democrats far more likely than Republicans to be concerned about Trump's actions or to feel invested in what the probes uncover.

Debra Nanez in Arizona said that she believes Trump broke the law and has been lying to the American people.

"If you go back and do a rewind, you say, 'Yep, he's guilty.' He's lied so badly to us from the beginning until now. He was involved in it. He knew what was going on," said Nanez, 65, who doesn't affiliate with a political party.

But Mary Ruth Stephenson, 83, of Kentucky says she's not yet sure whether Trump has broken the law.

"Unethical, yes. I mean the whole picture of that man is unethical. Illegal? I'll just have to hold that in abeyance until I find out more about what went down," said Stephenson, a registered Republican who says she's unhappy with the current GOP.

Overall, 62 percent of Democrats say they think Trump has done something illegal, while just 5 percent of Republicans think the same. Among Republicans, 33 percent think he's done something unethical, while 60 percent think he's done nothing wrong at all.

Both Nanez and Stephenson, like 63 percent of Americans, say Trump has tried to impede or obstruct the investigations into whether his campaign had Russian ties. According to the survey, 86 percent of Democrats, 67 percent of independents and 24 percent of Republicans agree.

Still, just short of half of Americans — 47 percent — say they're extremely or very concerned about whether Trump or others involved with his campaign had inappropriate contacts with the Russian government. Those results fall along party lines, too, and are largely unchanged since March.

"I feel like there are so many more important issues that we could be focusing on other than something that's basically water under the bridge," said Martina Childers, a 53-year-old Republican who lives in Colorado.

She said the economy, taxes, the military and small business concerns are more pressing issues. The Russia investigations? "I don't think that's so important. I just don't," she said.

Childers' views reflect the feelings of a majority of Americans. Just 4 in 10 call the Russia investigation very or extremely important to them. By contrast, immigration, taxes and health care are all considered much more important, according to the survey.

Melinda McLaughlin, who identifies as an independent and lives in Ohio, said she, too, believes tax reform and the economy are more important issues, but that doesn't mean she's not concerned about the Russia investigations.

"I do feel like there was either collusion or a connection there that affected the election, and I do not feel like the president is telling the truth about his involvement in it," said McLaughlin, who is 56.

She's withholding judgment on whether she'll trust the ultimate findings of Congress and Mueller.

In fact, at this point few Americans have high confidence in either Mueller or Congress to fairly inves-

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tigate the issue.

Of the special counsel's investigation, just 26 percent say they're very or extremely confident that it will be fair and impartial, while an additional 31 percent are moderately confident. Opinions about the possibility of a fair and impartial congressional investigation are even lower, with just 13 percent saying they're very or extremely confident in that happening and 32 percent saying they're moderately confident.

In Colorado, Childers said she can't completely trust Mueller.

"I feel like there may be some ulterior motives there," she said, noting that Trump "ruffled a lot of feathers" when he took office.

But in rural Kentucky, Stephenson said she has high confidence in Mueller.

"I don't see how anybody could be unbiased, but if he doesn't show it in his investigation or his conclusions, that's integrity," she said of Mueller. "I have to go on what so many people have said: They believe in him. They trust him. They think he's honest."

Though, she couldn't say the same thing about Congress.

"What a bunch of crap," she said.

The AP-NORC poll surveyed 1,020 adults from Dec. 7-11 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 4.3 percentage points.

Interviews were conducted online and using landlines and cellphones.

Online:

AP-NORC: <http://www.apnorc.org/>

White House aims to sway opinion on immigration overhaul

By **ZEKE MILLER** and **JILL COLVIN**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House is embarking on a major campaign to turn public opinion against the nation's largely family-based immigration system ahead of an all-out push next year to move toward a more merit-based structure.

The administration was laying the groundwork for such a drive even before an Islamic State-inspired extremist who was born in Bangladesh tried to blow himself up in Midtown Manhattan on Monday. It is assembling data to bolster the argument that the current legal immigration system is not only ill-conceived, but dangerous and damaging to U.S. workers.

"We believe that data drives policy, and this data will help drive votes for comprehensive immigration reform in Congress," said White House spokesman Hogan Gidley.

White House officials outlined their strategy this week exclusively to The Associated Press, and said the data demonstrates that changes are needed immediately. But their effort will play out in a difficult political climate, as even Republicans in Congress are leery of engaging in a major immigration debate ahead of the 2018 midterm elections.

The issue is expected to be prominently featured in the president's Jan. 30 State of the Union address. The White House also plans other statements by the president, appearances by Cabinet officials and a push to stress the issue in conservative media.

The administration is stressing key numbers: Department of Homeland Security data that shows nearly 9.3 million of the roughly 13 million total immigrants to the U.S. from 2005 to 2016 were following family members already in the United States. And just one in 15 immigrants admitted in the last decade by green card entered the country because of their skills.

Other planned releases: a report highlighting the number of immigrants in U.S. jails, assessments of the immigration court backlog and delays in processing asylum cases, and a paper on what the administration says is a nexus between immigration and terrorism.

Critics have questioned the administration's selective use of sometimes misleading data in the past.

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The proposed move away from family-based immigration would represent the most radical change to the U.S. immigration system in 30 years. It would end what critics and the White House refer to as “chain migration,” in which immigrants are allowed to bring a chain of family members to the country, and replace it with a points-based system that favors education and job potential — “merit” measures that have increasingly been embraced by some other countries, including Britain.

Gidley said that for those looking to make the case that the U.S. is ill-served by the current system, “transparency is their best friend.”

“The more people know the real numbers, the more they’ll begin to understand that this is bad for American workers and this is bad for American security. And quite frankly, when these numbers come out in totality, we believe it’s going to be virtually impossible for Congress to ignore,” he said.

The public is sharply divided on the types of changes President Donald Trump is advocating.

A Quinnipiac University poll in August found that 48 percent of voters opposed a proposal that Trump has backed to cut the number of future legal immigrants in half and give priority to immigrants with job skills rather than those with family ties in this country. Forty-four percent of those polled — including 68 percent of Republicans — supported the idea.

The White House hopes to see Congress begin to take up the issue early in 2018 — though it has yet to begin discussions with congressional leaders over even the broad strokes of a legislative strategy, officials said.

Trump has laid out general principles for what he would like to see in an immigration bill in exchange for giving legal status to more than 700,000 young people brought to the U.S. illegally as children. These include the construction of a border wall, tougher enforcement measures and moving to a more merit-based legal immigration system. In September, Trump gave Congress six months to come up with a legislative fix to allow the young immigrants known as “Dreamers” to stay in the country, creating an early-2018 crisis point he hopes will force Democrats to swallow some of his hardline demands.

After Monday’s incident in New York and the truck attack there in October, DHS quickly released information on the suspects’ immigration statuses, and Trump amplified his calls for ending the two programs that brought them to the U.S.

For those who have been pushing for an end to chain migration for decades, it’s a welcome push.

The Federation for American Immigration Reform, or FAIR, which advocates for lower immigration levels, among other changes, recently began a national radio campaign warning of what it sees as the dangers of chain migration and the diversity visa lottery program. The group has spent close to \$1 million over the last month and a half on its campaign.

And NumbersUSA, another group that advocates for lower immigration levels, launched a national six-figure ad campaign Thursday “to educate on Chain Migration categories.”

Guillermo Cantor, research director at the American Immigration Council, counters that the administration is ignoring the benefits of a family-focused immigration system and the values that drove the country to adopt it in the first place.

Research, he said, has shown that allowing immigrants to reunite with their families is one of the best integration tools. And family members bring their own skills, as well as support networks and other benefits, such as help with child care.

“This is a society that’s founded on family values,” Cantor said, arguing that, for many who have become citizens or legal residents, reuniting with siblings and other extended family members is crucial.

Follow Miller and Colvin on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/ZekeJMiller> and <https://twitter.com/colvinj>

EU nations bicker over migration policy as summit opens

By LORNE COOK and VANESSA GERA, Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — European Union nations bickered openly over migration policy Thursday in an east-west divide centered on several nations that refuse to accept refugee quotas.

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The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia announced that they planned to spend around 35 million euros (\$41 million) to beef up EU borders after the four countries — known as the “Visegrad Four” — were criticized for failing to show solidarity with the rest of the bloc.

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte still thought it was “shameless” and said shirking responsibility by not taking in their share would wither the EU. “If we allow this then we get an EU where people go to shop for whatever they like,” and give little back, he said.

Greece and Italy have had to play host to tens of thousands of migrants who have landed there after crossing the Mediterranean or Aegean seas, severely stretching the two countries’ resources. They have called for help from EU partners.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, whose country has taken in the largest number of refugees, said the announcement by the Visegrad nations was welcome but not enough.

“We need solidarity not just in regulating and steering migration ... on the external borders. That is good and important, but we also need internal solidarity,” Merkel said. “In my opinion, there cannot be selective solidarity among European member states.”

EU Council President Donald Tusk said the divide “when it comes to migration, it is between east and west.” He there have been complaints that eastern members were happy to get aid from their richer western partners but unwilling to live up to their part of the bargain of being in a joint endeavor.

“The European Union is not only an ATM when you need support,” said Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel. “Cooperation means solidarity and responsibility.”

The issue of migrants and refugees was high on the agenda of a two-day EU summit in Brussels that started Thursday — and some saw the border funding move by the four nations as a cynical ploy to avoid accepting refugee quotas.

Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico said their contribution will help save European funds. And, he added, “if we will see good projects in the future, first of all projects that are effective, we are ready to spend even more money because we really want to show solidarity.”

Despite the tensions, the discussion at the summit dinner table remained within bounds, Rutte said. “It was fine because we can all take a little hit. If it is the spirit of ‘I like your drawing if you like mine,’ we get nowhere.”

Hungary saw tens of thousands of Syrian refugees and others pass through its territory in 2015 looking for shelter in richer northern European nations. Prime Minister Viktor Orban ordered the construction of a border fence to keep migrants out.

Orban said Thursday that the border funds will help defend the EU’s borders with the outside world and will also contribute to EU work in Libya, where many migrants leave for Europe.

After more than 1 million refugees entered Europe in 2015, the EU introduced a refugee-sharing plan to help overwhelmed Greece and Italy.

The four Visegrad nations voted against the quotas, but were legally bound to accept refugees as the decision was made by a majority vote. Still, Hungary and Poland have taken in no refugees under the plan, while the Czech Republic has accepted only 12.

The EU Commission wants to introduce a permanent mechanism that would oblige countries to take in quotas of refugees if a migrant surge hit one or more EU nations. The Visegrad nations remain firmly against migrant quotas.

“Quotas do not work. They are ineffective,” Fico said. “The decision on quotas really divided the European Union.”

Disagreement over how to manage the migrant challenge has created distrust between EU neighbors and fueled anti-migrant parties across Europe, slowly threatening to undermine the entire European project.

French President Emmanuel Macron said it is important not to get bogged down in old disputes and solidarity can take different forms.

“We need to be able to express solidarity without getting trapped in any excessive roadblocks” about the past, he said. “I think everyone needs to make an effort.”

Raf Casert contributed.

EU's Tusk warns of bruising Brexit battle ahead, urges unity

By RAF CASERT and LORNE COOK, Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — European Union chief Donald Tusk warned Thursday of a bruising Brexit battle ahead as Britain and the remaining 27 EU countries move onto to discussions over their future trade relations.

As all 28 EU leaders, including British Prime Minister Theresa May, arrived in Brussels for a summit meeting, Tusk urged the EU-27 to continue to present a united front in the Brexit talks.

"Only when we are united can we successfully perform even the most difficult issues and tasks," said Tusk, the EU's Council President. "I have no doubts that the real test of our unity will be the second phase of the Brexit talks."

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that "a lot still needs to be solved and time is pressing."

On Friday, the EU is set to give the go-ahead for talks to start on the future trade relationship, which is likely to be fraught given the potentially divisive and complicated issues at hand.

Since the EU nations have widely diverging economic relations with Britain — Germany sells a lot of cars to Britain while Spain wants British tourists — and different aspirations on the future relations, maintaining unity might become difficult.

The anticipated decision to authorize the second stage of the Brexit talks follows last week's agreement on matters the EU wanted settled first. These related to Britain's exit bill, the need to maintain an open and frictionless border between Ireland and Northern Ireland, and the rights of citizens' in each other's territories.

May is due to address EU leaders Thursday evening and welcome progress in the Brexit talks. So far, the EU has been united, while Britain's approach has been more chaotic, not least because May's Conservatives lost their majority in a general election in the summer that didn't need to be called. Further questions have been raised by Wednesday's defeat for May in a vote in Parliament that will give lawmakers the final say on the final Brexit deal.

Despite what is widely perceived as a major setback for May, she said on her arrival that "we are on course to deliver Brexit."

Luxembourg's prime minister, Xavier Bettel, said May's defeat in parliament will make her negotiating stance even more complicated: "As soon as she negotiates something you will need to go back to London to get an approval from the parliament and this is not making her life easier. It just makes it more complicated for the U.K. government."

And Austrian Chancellor Christian Kern said "there is a lot of cake left to be eaten" — a clear reference to British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson's remark early in the Brexit talks that Britons could "have our cake and eat it" during the negotiations.

In the draft summit statement, which could be modified before Friday, the leaders emphasize the importance of organizing a transition period, probably of around two years, to ease Britain out of the EU from 2019. British businesses are urging a transition deal soon so they can plan ahead. Without one, many firms have warned that they could put in place contingency plans which could involve many of them relocating activities into the EU single market.

That would buy time for all sides. Britain is due to leave the EU on March 29, 2019 but the Brexit negotiations must be wrapped up by the fall of 2018 to leave time for individual EU parliaments to endorse any agreement.

During a transition period, Britain will have no seat at the EU's table, no lawmakers in the European Parliament, and no judges in the bloc's courts. But it will still be bound by European law, without having any say in decision-making, and the European Court of Justice will remain the final arbiter of any disputes.

According to the draft statement, Britain during this period "will no longer participate in or nominate or elect members of the EU institutions, nor participate in the decision-making of the Union bodies, offices

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and agencies.”

Ahead of the summit, Britain’s chief Brexit negotiator, David Davis, said a situation in which the U.K. crashes out of the EU without a deal has become “massively less probable” as a result of last week’s preliminary agreement.

Davis told lawmakers that a “no-deal” Brexit was now extremely unlikely, although “we continue to prepare for all outcomes.”

Jill Lawless contributed from London.

Ex-‘Apprentice’ star Omarosa to tell all about White House

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former “Apprentice” star Omarosa is putting the White House on notice as she makes her exit: She has “quite a story to tell” about her time in President Donald Trump’s administration and “the world will want to hear it.”

Accustomed to the spotlight, Omarosa Manigault Newman appeared on national television Thursday to push back against reports that she was fired from her job as a Trump assistant and director of communications for a White House office that deals with constituent groups.

She also denied reports that she made a spectacle of herself while being escorted from the White House grounds, calling the stories “100 percent false” and questioning why photos or video of her alleged misbehavior had yet to surface.

Better known by just her first name, Manigault Newman told ABC’s “Good Morning America” that she resigned this week after discussing some of her concerns with White House chief of staff John Kelly. The Secret Service said it had deactivated a pass granting her access to the White House complex, though White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Manigault Newman would be on staff through the administration’s one-year mark.

Before her resignation, Kelly had advised Manigault Newman that changes were forthcoming — including her dismissal, according to two White House officials who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss personnel matters.

Manigault Newman was also expected to be at the White House on Thursday, Huckabee Sanders said. She declined to say for what purpose or to explain why the former reality TV contestant will collect a salary through Jan. 20, citing a policy of declining extensive comment on personnel matters.

“The president likes Omarosa, thanked her for her service,” Sanders told reporters. “And, again, she’ll be here later this afternoon, so she’s resigned from her position, but there’s really nothing else to add on that front.”

Trump himself sang her praises when he was asked at an unrelated White House event about the resignation.

“I like Omarosa. Omarosa’s a good person,” he said.

Manigault Newman described her conversation with Kelly as being “very candid.” A newlywed, she said she had a goal to make it to the administration’s one-year mark and then “get back to my life.”

Her life now seems destined to include writing a tell-all book about her time at the White House.

“When I have a chance to tell my story ... quite a story to tell, as the only African-American woman in this White House, as a senior staff and assistant to the president, I have seen things that have made me uncomfortable, that have upset me, that have affected me deeply and emotionally, that has affected my community and my people,” she said. “And when I can tell my story, it is a profound story that I know the world will want to hear.”

Sanders said Thursday was the first time she’d heard such comments from Manigault Newman.

Her resignation — she was Trump’s most visible African-American adviser — immediately raised questions about diversity in the senior ranks of the White House. Manigault Newman said in a separate interview with ABC’s “Nightline” that it was challenging being the only black woman in the senior staff.

She said most of the other senior advisers are white, had never worked with minorities and didn’t know

how to interact with them. She added that her departure will leave Trump without any African-American representation on his senior staff.

"There was a lack of diversity that I will acknowledge," she told the network for its program airing early Friday.

Sanders insisted at her briefing Thursday that the White House team is diverse "across the board."

Manigault Newman, who drew a top salary of \$179,700, was a high-profile Trump supporter during the presidential campaign and the transition.

Since her stint as a contestant on the first season of Trump's former reality TV show, "The Apprentice," in 2004, Manigault Newman has enjoyed a close relationship with the New York businessman, even after he uttered his "You're fired" catchphrase and booted her from the program. She was portrayed as a cut-throat contestant during the season. She returned to Trump's "Apprentice" franchise several times and appeared on other reality TV shows.

Associated Press writers Zeke Miller and Jonathan Lemire contributed to this report.

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

Consent to kids at heart of gay couple's child support case

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER, Associated Press

KANEOHE, Hawaii (AP) — Attorneys for a divorced lesbian couple fighting over child support in a closely watched case agreed Thursday that consent to having a baby together is a crucial issue but disagreed over whether both spouses gave it.

A woman wants to sever her parental rights to a child her ex-wife gave birth to while she was deployed with the military and is asking the Hawaii Supreme Court to overturn a family court ruling denying that request.

The justices heard arguments Thursday and seemed troubled by considering consent. Associate Justice Sabrina McKenna said that could lead to treating same-sex couples differently from opposite-sex couples.

National gay rights advocates are watching how the dispute plays out, likely the first such case before a state Supreme Court, experts say.

The woman seeking to end her parental rights didn't agree to her then-wife getting pregnant through a sperm donor, wasn't there for the baby's birth and never had a meaningful relationship with the child, her attorney, Rebecca Copeland, told the justices.

The dispute reflects the "changing landscape" of families in Hawaii, Copeland said, adding that the state's laws need to change.

"They jointly made a choice as a married couple to bring him into this world," argued Peter Renn of prominent LGBT-rights group Lambda Legal, which is representing the woman who gave birth.

When discussing consent, the justices explored a variety of hypothetical situations, including a woman who stops taking birth control without her husband's knowledge and a man disputing his parental rights after finding out his wife had a child by having an affair with another man.

Chief Justice Mark Recktenwald said the court will issue a ruling later.

The couple, who are not identified in the confidential family court case, married in Washington, D.C., in 2013 and moved to Hawaii because of military orders for the woman seeking to end her parental rights.

Throughout the marriage, the couple talked about the possibility of having a child together, the court said. While the woman was deployed between January and September 2015, her wife got pregnant. The woman filed for divorce in October 2015, and the child was born while it was pending.

The family court denied her petition because it found that Hawaii's Uniform Parentage Act and Marriage Equality Act presumes that a legal spouse of a woman who gives birth to a baby is the parent of that child, regardless of the spouse's gender.

"This is a very important and of-the-moment question in the LGBT community right now, which is how

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are states going to treat parents of children where there are a same-sex marriage couple," said Cathy Sakimura, family law director for the National Center for Lesbian Rights, which is not involved in the case.

"Are they going to give them the same kind of recognition that any other couple would get or are they going to have a different rule applied to them?" Sakimura said.

There are a handful of similar cases nationwide, but the Hawaii dispute is likely the first involving a same-sex married couple with a child support case before a state's highest court, she said.

Most same-sex parental rights cases involve a spouse who didn't give birth to a child and wants custody, Sakimura said.

"It doesn't happen that often in the same-sex parenting world, but there are few cases where they are trying to avoid child support," she said.

In such cases, conception is a key question, Sakimura said.

"Did the spouse consent to the procedure and know about it? And that is what triggers them being a parent," she said.

The case will test marriage equality, Renn with Lambda Legal has said.

"This is unusual in that biology is being used as a shield to evade parental obligation," he said. "Equal rights come with equal responsibility."

Arguments were held in a high school auditorium because the case is being used to teach students about courts.

FCC votes along party lines to end 'net neutrality'

By BARBARA ORTUTAY and TALI ARBEL, AP Technology Writer

The Federal Communications Commission repealed the Obama-era "net neutrality" rules Thursday, giving internet service providers like Verizon, Comcast and AT&T a free hand to slow or block websites and apps as they see fit or charge more for faster speeds.

In a straight party-line vote of 3-2, the Republican-controlled FCC junked the longtime principle that said all web traffic must be treated equally. The move represents a radical departure from more than a decade of federal oversight.

The big telecommunications companies had lobbied hard to overturn the rules, contending they are heavy-handed and discourage investment in broadband networks.

"What is the FCC doing today?" asked FCC chairman Ajit Pai, a Republican. "Quite simply, we are restoring the light-touch framework that has governed the internet for most of its existence."

The push to eliminate net neutrality has stirred fears among consumer advocates, Democrats, many web companies and ordinary Americans afraid that the cable and phone giants will be able to control what people see and do online. But the broadband industry has promised that the internet experience for the public isn't going to change.

The FCC vote is unlikely to be the last word. Net neutrality supporters threatened legal challenges, with New York's attorney general vowing to lead a multistate lawsuit. Some Democrats want to overturn the FCC action in Congress.

"The fact that Chairman Pai went through with this, a policy that is so unpopular, is somewhat shocking," said Mark Stanley, a spokesman for the civil liberties organization Demand Progress. "Unfortunately, not surprising."

On Thursday, about 60 demonstrators gathered in the bitter chill of Washington to protest the FCC's expected decision. Just before the vote, the hearing room was briefly evacuated and searched for unspecified security reasons.

The FCC subscribed to the principle of net neutrality for over a decade and enshrined it in rules adopted in 2015.

Under the new rules approved Thursday, the Comcasts and AT&Ts of the world could slow down or block access to services they don't like or happen to be in competition with. They could also charge higher fees of rivals and make them pay up for higher transmission speeds. They just have to post their policies

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online or tell the FCC.

Such things have happened before. In 2007, for example, The Associated Press found that Comcast was blocking or throttling some file-sharing. And AT&T blocked Skype and other internet calling services on the iPhone until 2009.

Thursday's rule change also eliminates certain federal consumer protections, bars state laws that contradict the FCC's approach, and largely transfers oversight of internet service to another agency altogether, the Federal Trade Commission.

Angelo Zino, an analyst at CFRA Research, said he expects AT&T and Verizon to be the biggest beneficiaries because the two internet giants can now give priority to the movies, TV shows and other videos or music they provide to viewers. That could hurt rivals such as Sling TV, Amazon, YouTube or startups yet to be born.

However, AT&T senior executive vice president Bob Quinn said in a blog post that the internet "will continue to work tomorrow just as it always has." He said the company won't block websites and won't throttle or degrade online traffic based on content.

Internet companies such as Google, Twitter and Facebook have strongly backed net neutrality.

Netflix said in a tweet it is "disappointed in the decision to gut #NetNeutrality protections that ushered in an unprecedented era of innovation, creativity & civic engagement. This is the beginning of a longer legal battle."

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said the Trump administration "supports the FCC's effort to roll back burdensome regulations. But as we have always done and will continue to do, we certainly support a free and fair Internet."

FCC Commissioner Mignon Clyburn, a Democrat appointed by President Barack Obama, lambasted the "preordained outcome" of the vote that she said hurts small and large businesses and ordinary people. She said the end of net neutrality hands over the keys to the internet to a "handful of multibillion-dollar corporations."

With their vote, she added, the FCC's Republican commissioners are abandoning the pledge they took to make a rapid, efficient communications service available to all people in the U.S., without discrimination.

But Michael O'Rielly, a GOP commissioner appointed by Obama, called the FCC's approach a "well-reasoned and soundly justified order."

The internet, he said, "has functioned without net neutrality rules for far longer than it has with them." The decision "will not break the internet."

New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, a Democrat, has been investigating what appear to be large numbers of fake public comments submitted to the FCC during the net neutrality comment period. He said 2 million comments were submitted under stolen identities, including those of children and dead people.

Associated Press Writer Chris Rugaber in Washington contributed to this story.

4 children killed in bus-train collision in southern France

PARIS (AP) — A regional train hit a school bus on a crossing in southern France on Thursday, killing four children and critically injuring 11 other people on the bus, the French interior ministry said.

Photos from the scene tweeted by a local television station showed the train derailed and the bus shorn in half — with first responders gathered around.

Prime Minister Edouard Philippe, who flew to the scene Thursday night, said authorities still didn't know what led to the accident at the crossing in Millas, some 15 kilometers (9 miles) west of Perpignan, close to the border with Spain.

Philippe said the "circumstances of this terrible drama are still undetermined."

He confirmed that two inquiries were underway into the accident that left four children dead and 20 others injured — including 11 seriously.

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France's SNCF national rail authority said witnesses described the crossing gates as functioning properly. Regional President Carole Delga told broadcaster France-Info that "it appears that there was no mechanical problem at this crossing."

However, the head of the regional administration, Philippe Vignes, told reporters that investigators would examine whether everything worked properly and also look into reports that batteries in the automatic gate system had recently been stolen.

He said seven of the injured and some of the dead had not been identified by late Thursday.

Some 70 firefighters, 10 emergency ambulances and four helicopters responded to the crash.

The school bus was transporting children home from the Christian Bourquin school in the village of Milas. It was carrying around 20 children aged between 11 and 15, the local authority said.

Psychological help was being offered at a local sports hall from Friday morning.

An SNCF official told The Associated Press that the train was carrying 25 people, including passengers and crew, and all were accounted for and being offered psychological care. The official, Gaelle Le Fauche, added that the train normally travels at 80 kph (50 mph) at that location.

"Several witnesses said the barrier was down" at the time of the crash, the official said. She said the people on the train were "totally shocked."

Transport Minister Elisabeth Borne and Education Minister Jean-Michel Blanquer planned to speak to children at the school Friday.

"France is in mourning," Blanquer said on Twitter.

French President Emmanuel Macron tweeted: "All my thoughts go to the victims of this terrible accident and their families. The government is fully mobilized to give them emergency help."

Associated Press writer Angela Charlton in Paris contributed to this report.

Black women seek rewards from Democrats after Alabama race

By **JESSE J. HOLLAND**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Once again, black women showed up for Democrats, with nearly all of them voting in Alabama for new Sen. Doug Jones, just as they did for Democratic candidates up and down the ballot in other states over the last few months.

The same women, having proven their loyalty by voting 98 percent for Jones, now wonder whether the Democratic Party will return the favor by sharing some of the party's political power, handing over places at the negotiating table and pushing legislation that speaks to their unique issues.

"Black women showed up and showed out," said Kimberlè Crenshaw, co-founder of the African American Policy Forum. In "any other context, people who get it 98 percent right, they'd be at the head of the class. It's time for black women to be at the head of the political class."

Black turnout was also high, at around 30 percent, according to exit polls. That level of support mirrors what black women did in Virginia, where 91 percent of them voted for incoming Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam, and in New Jersey, where 94 percent voted for incoming Gov. Phil Murphy.

Those women also swept other candidates into office, including Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax, the first black candidate to be elected statewide in Virginia since Gov. Doug Wilder in 1989.

"Let me be clear: We won in Alabama and Virginia because #BlackWomen led us to victory," said Tom Perez, chairman of the Democratic National Committee. "Black women are the backbone of the Democratic Party, and we can't take that for granted. Period."

In Montgomery, Alabama, 70-year-old Annette Brown said she sometimes considers voting Republican, but there was no way she was going to vote for firebrand Roy Moore.

"I've been a Democrat all my life, and I'm sure not going to switch for this election. Sometimes I feel like swinging, but not for Moore," she said.

Brown said allegations that Moore pursued teenage girls while in his 30s and his waving of a gun onstage to emphasize his views on the Second Amendment made her decision easy.

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"I believe the ladies. And he's just off kilter anyway. When he pulled out that gun on stage, that was it for me," Brown said.

Black women have their own unique voting-mobilization strategy, said Barbara Arnwine, president of the Transformative Justice Coalition.

"That strategy is what I call 'my momma,'" Arnwine said. "You see, Vera Arnwine, when she knows an election is coming up, she gets on the phone. She calls everybody she knows. And she says. 'Are you voting? Are you registered? ... You better get out there and do it.' So this is what we do and it's just so powerful."

Tuesday's election continued the trend of black women over-performing for Democratic candidates.

In the 2016 presidential race, 94 percent of black women voted for Democrat Hillary Clinton while 53 percent of white women voted for Donald Trump. In 2008 and 2012, black women voted at a higher rate than any racial or gender group, each time giving President Barack Obama 96 percent of their vote.

While black men also turned out in high numbers for Democrats, black women historically have been the backbone of the vote-mobilization efforts, but they rarely get the credit, said LaTosha Brown, a Selma, Alabama, native and co-founder of the Black Voters Matter Fund. In Alabama, black women were on the ground working without much fanfare, just as they've done all the way back to the civil rights movement, she said.

"Black women stand and have continuously been standing in the gap, and been providing an enormous amount of leadership because we don't just bring our own issues. We bring our community with us," she said.

In addition to voting, black women are running for office, testing whether the Democratic Party will stand behind them in the 2018 elections and beyond. Stacey Abrams is running to be Georgia's first black governor. In Virginia, Vangie Williams hopes to become the state's first black congresswoman.

In 2017, black women held only two statewide offices — GOP Lt. Gov. Jenean Hampton of Kentucky and Connecticut state Treasurer Denise Nappier, a Democrat. Black women are mayors of seven of the nation's 100 largest cities and hold 271 state legislature seats, according to the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University's Eagleton Institute of Politics.

Black women say they now need to be compensated for their devotion. Democrats also need to share some of their positions of power with black women on the ballot and inside political party machines on local, state and national levels.

Sen. Kamala Harris of California, who is the only black woman in the Senate and is already being mentioned as a 2020 presidential candidate, said Democrats and progressives need to go beyond just thanking black women.

"Let's address issues that disproportionately affect Black women — like pay disparity, housing & under-representation in elected office," she said Thursday on Twitter.

Rep. Shelia Jackson Lee, a Texas Democrat, said she and other black women Democrats plan to put together a package of legislation that will speak to black women's issues and present it to Democratic leadership with a message.

"You need to address those whose vote, not check, gave you an opportunity," Jackson Lee said, describing an initiative that might include major points such as education, the economy, health care and the criminal justice system. "You're bragging that you want us to be in the civic process. Now do something for that."

Associated Press Writer Bill Barrow in Montgomery, Alabama, contributed to this report.

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US says missile parts prove Iran is illicitly arming Houthis

By JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Flanked by singed missile remnants, President Donald Trump's envoy to the United Nations declared Thursday that "undeniable" evidence proves Iran is arming Houthi rebels in Yemen, the latest bid by the Trump administration to rally the world against the Persian Gulf nation.

U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley came to an emptied-out hangar at a military base not far from the U.S. Capitol, where fragments recovered from missiles launched from Yemen were paraded before reporters. Haley said the truck-sized missile segment behind her had been launched at the international airport in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and "led the U.S. intelligence community to conclude unequivocally that these weapons were supplied by the Iranian regime."

"This is absolutely terrifying," said Haley, one of the Trump administration's most vocal critics of Iran. "Just imagine if this missile had been launched at Dulles Airport or JFK, or the airports in Paris, London or Berlin. That's what we're talking about here."

The newly declassified evidence marked the most aggressive U.S. effort to date to substantiate its claim that Iran funnels weapons to the Houthis, an allegation widely accepted by most countries but that Tehran steadfastly denies. It comes as the Trump administration seeks to rally the world to punish Iran for its ballistic missile program and other worrying activities, despite backing away from the 2015 nuclear deal.

World powers that joined the U.S. in brokering that deal have voiced frustration at Trump's moves to "decertify" Iran's compliance with the deal as a prelude to renegotiating it. The Obama-era deal rolled back Iran's nuclear program in exchange for billions in sanctions relief, but did not address Iran's missile-building or support for militant groups in the Middle East.

"Everyone has focused on the nuclear deal, and Iran has hidden behind the nuclear deal," Haley said. Gesturing to the missiles, she said, "These are the things they're doing while we're all looking the other way."

Haley and other officials said there were two reasons the U.S. knew the missiles could have only come from Iran.

Some have specific markings indicating they were manufactured in Iran. One shredded piece of metal displayed to reporters bore the logo of Shahid Bakeri Industrial Group, an Iranian defense entity under U.S. sanctions.

Others have specific technical characteristics, such as a certain valve, that only Iranian missiles have — "Iranian missile fingerprints," Haley said. One short-range ballistic missile fragment lacked large stabilizer fins that are common to that class of missile. The only known short-range ballistic missiles that don't have those fins are Iran's Qiam missiles, Haley said.

"The weapons might as well have had 'Made in Iran' stickers," Haley quipped.

Not so, said Iran's government, standing behind its assertion that Iran hasn't sent any missiles to Yemen, where Shiite Houthi rebels aligned with Iran have taken over much of the country. Iran's envoy to U.N., Gholamali Khoshroo, said it was "fake and fabricated" evidence that illustrates America's "irresponsible, destructive and provocative role" in the region, according to a statement carried by Iran's official IRNA news agency.

Haley argued that Iranian weapons shipments violated several U.N. Security Council resolutions, including the one that enshrined the 2015 nuclear deal. International legal experts have debated whether the allegation, if true, constitutes a clear-cut violation.

Either way, Haley did not articulate any specific steps the U.S. or other nations could take against Iran as a result of the evidence, which was included in a report to the U.N. secretary-general. But Haley said the U.S. would be working with other countries on "next steps." She added that U.S. lawmakers and delegations from foreign nations would be invited to view the missiles firsthand.

To some critics, the spectacle at Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling carried eerie echoes of former Secretary of State Colin Powell's 2003 speech to the U.N. making the case for the Iraq War. As he sought support for a new resolution, Powell said the U.S. had a "thick intelligence file" detailing Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, at one point using satellite photos and a fake anthrax vial as props. Days later, the United

States invaded. Weapons of mass destruction were never found.

Iran's foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, drew the comparison on Twitter, with side-by-side photos of Haley on Thursday and Powell in his 2003 speech. "When I was based at the UN, I saw this show and what it begat," tweeted Zarif, who was formerly Iran's ambassador to the U.N.

Indeed, the U.S. acknowledged it couldn't account for the full chain of custody, such as how the missiles got into Yemen — an admission that suggests there are still holes in the U.S. intelligence.

"We do not know when they were transported exactly," said Defense Department spokeswoman Laura Seal.

Even so, Haley's presentation was roundly cheered by Iran's enemies, including Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. With U.S. support, a Saudi-led coalition has been fighting the Houthis on behalf of Yemen's internationally recognized government. The civil war has turned Yemen, the Arab world's poorest nation, into a proxy battleground for Sunni-led Saudi Arabia and Shiite-led Iran.

Associated Press writer Nasser Karimi in Tehran, Iran, contributed to this report.

Reach Josh Lederman on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/joshledermanAP>

Disney buying much of Fox, will help it compete with Netflix

By TALI ARBEL, AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Disney is buying a large part of Fox, including its movie and television studios, for about \$52.4 billion, as the home of Mickey Mouse tries to meet competition from technology companies in the entertainment business.

Disney's all-stock deal for the Murdoch family's 21st Century Fox gives it the studios that produce the Avatar movies, "The Simpsons" and "Modern Family." Murdoch will form a new company to keep the U.S. television networks, including Fox News Channel, Fox Business Network and Fox Broadcasting. "The Simpsons" will continue to air on Murdoch's Fox stations.

The deal also brings Marvel characters such as X-Men and The Avengers under one roof — Disney's.

In owning these properties, Disney will be in a better position to compete with the likes of Netflix when it launches ESPN- and Disney-branded streaming services in the coming years.

That Rupert Murdoch and his sons were willing to sell off much of the business that has been built up over decades came as a shock to the entertainment industry.

Murdoch, who built a global media and entertainment empire out of an inheritance from his father in Australia, said what remains of his family's business will be able to focus on American news and sports. During a call with investors Thursday, Murdoch and his sons described the move as a return to the company's lean and aggressive roots.

Murdoch's new company will get national rights to Major League Baseball, the NFL, NASCAR and college sports through the Fox TV network and cable networks FS1, FS2 and Big Ten Network. Disney is getting Fox's regional sports networks, including the Yes Network showing the New York Yankees.

Disney also gets some cable and international TV businesses from Fox.

BATTLING NETFLIX

The deal — announced Thursday on the eve of a major "Star Wars" movie release from Disney — comes as the entertainment business goes through big changes. TV doesn't have a monopoly on home entertainment anymore. There's Netflix, which is spending up to \$8 billion on programming next year. Amazon is building its own library, having splashed out on global TV rights to "Lord of the Rings." Facebook, Google and Apple are also investing in video.

As consumers spend more time online, TV's share of U.S. ad spending is shrinking. Advertisers are following consumer attention to the internet, where Google and Facebook win the vast majority of advertisers' dollars.

To combat this trend, Disney is launching its own streaming services with exclusive video to sharpen its

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ability to compete with Netflix for consumer dollars.

Disney CEO Robert Iger said many Fox properties will fit with the new service, including National Geographic and additional Marvel productions. In some cases, though, Disney will have to wait for existing Fox deals to expire. Fox movies are exclusive to HBO through 2022, for example.

THE MECHANICS

Iger will continue as chairman and CEO of The Walt Disney Co. through the end of 2021. The deal still needs approval from Disney and Fox shareholders.

Before the buyout, Fox will separate the businesses it's keeping into a newly listed company. It will also keep the Fox studio lot in Los Angeles and equity investment in Roku.

Disney will get at least a 39 percent stake in European satellite-TV and broadcaster Sky. Fox is hoping to acquire the remainder of Sky before the deal closes, so that it could give Disney full control after the sale. Disney is also acquiring Star India, a major media company with dozens of sports and entertainment channels.

Disney will also win majority control of Hulu, both its live-TV service and the older service with a big library of TV shows.

Not everyone thinks this is a good bet by Disney, though. Rich Greenfield, a longtime Disney critic, thinks the deal is a bad idea that ties Disney to older TV-distribution systems — cable and satellite TV — rather than helping it look toward the future.

He also notes that regulators may not like the idea of combining two major movie studios. The Justice Department surprised many in the industry and on Wall Street when it sued to block another media megamerger, AT&T's acquisition of Time Warner, in November.

A watchdog group, the Parents Television Council, worries that in getting larger, Disney would be able to extend the traditional big cable bundle to newer online services, resulting in higher prices for consumers.

That said, the White House says President Donald Trump supports the deal and called Murdoch to congratulate him.

MURDOCH FAMILY TAKES A BOW

Murdoch built his empire by buying a string of papers in Australia, the U.K. and the U.S., building an influential platform for his views. He expanded into TV and movies, launching the Fox network and Fox News and changing the face of American news and entertainment.

"Rupert has spent many, many years assembling the components of his empire," said NYU business professor Samuel Craig, who specializes in the entertainment industry.

Rupert Murdoch has ostensibly already handed the reins over to a new generation at Fox. His son James is CEO, while his other son, Lachlan, like Rupert, has the title of executive chairman.

The Murdoch empire has already been divided. After a phone-hacking newspaper scandal in the U.K., News Corp. was split off into a separate company for the publishing and newspaper businesses, which include the New York Post, The Wall Street Journal, The Sun and The Times in the U.K., and book publisher HarperCollins. Now, Fox is slimming down, with the bulk of the company going to Disney.

"The Murdochs realize they don't have the same kind of leverage Disney has, the same kind of brand power," USC Annenberg communications professor Chris Smith said.

It would be harder to launch a Fox-branded streaming service that attracts lots of the new generation of consumers, for example. Smith said that makes it a great time to sell off the entertainment business.

Fox will be left with the live events, news and sports that are key parts of the traditional TV bundle.

MIGHTIER MOUSE

The Disney-branded service, expected in 2019, will have classic and upcoming movies from the studio, shows from Disney Channel, and the "Star Wars" and Marvel movies.

With Fox video, the new service could have more titles than Netflix, Barclays analyst Kannan Venkateshwar said. Buying Fox's FX networks will add edgy TV shows that complement Disney's long list of kid-friendly series and films, he said.

Disney also plans an ESPN Plus service for next year. It isn't a duplicate of the ESPN TV network, but it will stream tennis matches along with major-league baseball, hockey and soccer games, as well as college

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sports. It might be able to add more sports through Fox's regional sports networks — cable channels that show popular sports in the viewer's region.

Disney also owns Marvel, but not all the Marvel characters. It's made movies starring Thor, Doctor Strange and Captain America and the Avengers crew. But the X-Men are at Fox. Bringing them home under one roof could mean movies with more of the characters together. Sony will still have rights to Marvel's Spider-Man, though a deal with Disney lets Spider-Man appear in Disney movies.

AP Business Writer Michelle Chapman in West Orange, New Jersey, and AP Technology Writer Matt O'Brien in Providence, Rhode Island, contributed to this report.

Asian stocks mostly lower as US tax bill uncertainty weighs

By **KELVIN CHAN, AP Business Writer**

HONG KONG (AP) — Asian stock markets were mostly lower Friday as uncertainty about the progress of a sweeping U.S. tax revamp outweighed an optimistic Japanese economic survey.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 index fell 0.9 percent to 22,498.85 while South Korea's Kospi climbed 0.4 percent to 2,478.37. Hong Kong's Hang Seng shed 1 percent to 28,887.09 and the Shanghai Composite in mainland China lost 0.6 percent to 3,272.00. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 sank 0.2 percent to 5,998.30.

JAPAN SURVEY: Corporate sentiment in Asia's second biggest economy is at an 11-year high, according to a quarterly survey. The Bank of Japan's "tankan" business outlook based on a poll of more than 10,000 companies posted its strongest reading since the end of 2006, in the latest sign that the economy is picking up momentum.

TAXING TIME: President Donald Trump's \$1.5 trillion U.S. tax overhaul was teetering on a knife-edge in the Senate, complicating Republican leaders' goal of pushing it through Congress next week and unsettling investor confidence. Senator Marco Rubio vowed to vote against the bill, which gives generous tax cuts to corporations and the wealthy, unless child tax credits are expanded. The bill's original version was approved by only 51-49, with Rubio's support.

MARKET INSIGHT: "A sustained slide into the end of the week may be the case as the tax reform jitters induced a risk-off mood for markets in the region this morning," said Jingyi Pan, strategist at IG Markets. "Notably, we have seen Japan's latest fourth quarter Tankan numbers adding to the set of positive indicators from the country, though little reaction had been seen on the Nikkei 225."

CENTRAL BANKING: Markets were digesting the impact of a raft of decisions by major global central banks over the previous day. The U.S. Federal Reserve raised its benchmark rate for the third time this year as anticipated and indicated three more hikes are in store next year. Policymakers in China and Hong Kong followed suit with their own increases while the European Central Bank and the Bank of England kept their main rates on hold, as expected.

WALL STREET: Major U.S. benchmarks ended lower. The Standard & Poor's 500 index fell 0.4 percent to close at 2,652.01. The Dow Jones industrial average lost 0.3 percent to 24,508.66. The Nasdaq shed 0.3 percent to 6,856.53.

CURRENCIES: The dollar weakened to 112.12 yen from 112.37 yen on Wednesday. The euro rose to \$1.1790 from \$1.1776.

ENERGY: Oil futures advanced. Benchmark U.S. crude rose 7 cents to \$57.11 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract rose 44 cents to close at \$57.04 a barrel on Thursday. Brent crude, used to price international oils, added 4 cents to \$63.35 per barrel in London.

Today in History
By The Associated Press

Today in History

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Today is Friday, Dec. 15, the 349th day of 2017. There are 16 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 15, 1939, the Civil War motion picture epic "Gone with the Wind," starring Vivien Leigh and Clark Gable, had its world premiere in Atlanta.

On this date:

In 1791, the Bill of Rights, the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution, went into effect following ratification by Virginia.

In 1864, the two-day Battle of Nashville began during the Civil War as Union forces commanded by Maj. Gen. George H. Thomas attacked Confederate troops led by Gen. John Bell Hood; the result was a resounding Northern victory.

In 1890, Sioux Indian Chief Sitting Bull and 11 other tribe members were killed in Grand River, South Dakota, during a confrontation with Indian police.

In 1938, groundbreaking for the Jefferson Memorial took place in Washington, D.C. with President Franklin D. Roosevelt taking part in the ceremony.

In 1944, a single-engine plane carrying bandleader Glenn Miller, a major in the U.S. Army Air Forces, disappeared over the English Channel while en route to Paris.

In 1965, two U.S. manned spacecraft, Gemini 6A and Gemini 7, maneuvered toward each other while in orbit, at one point coming as close as one foot.

In 1967, the Silver Bridge between Gallipolis (gal-ih-puh-LEES'), Ohio, and Point Pleasant, West Virginia, collapsed into the Ohio River, killing 46 people.

In 1971, the Secret Service appointed its first five female special agents.

In 1978, President Jimmy Carter announced he would grant diplomatic recognition to Communist China on New Year's Day and sever official relations with Taiwan.

In 1989, a popular uprising began in Romania that resulted in the downfall of dictator Nicolae Ceausescu (chow-SHES'-koo).

In 1995, European Union leaders meeting in Madrid, Spain, chose "euro" as the name of the new single European currency.

In 2001, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, Italy, was reopened to the public after a \$27 million realignment that had dragged on for over a decade.

Ten years ago: Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf (pur-VEHZ' moo-SHAH'-ruhv) lifted a six-week-old state of emergency. International climate talks in Bali, Indonesia, culminated in a last-minute U.S. compromise and an agreement to adopt a blueprint for fighting global warming by 2009. Celine Dion concluded a five-year engagement at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas.

Five years ago: A day after the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, investigators worked to understand what led the 20-year-old gunman to slaughter 26 children and adults after also killing his mother and before taking his own life. In his Saturday radio address, President Barack Obama declared that "every parent in America has a heart heavy with hurt" and said it was time to "take meaningful action to prevent more tragedies like this."

One year ago: A federal jury in Charleston, South Carolina, convicted Dylann Roof of slaughtering nine black church members who had welcomed him to their Bible study. In an unexpected reversal, President Barack Obama declined to sign a renewal of sanctions against Iran but let it become law anyway, in an apparent bid to alleviate Tehran's concerns that Washington was backsliding on the nuclear deal. Colorado's Mike MacIntyre was selected The Associated Press college football Coach of the Year after leading the Buffaloes to a 10-3 record and their first bowl game since 2007.

Today's Birthdays: Actor-comedian Tim Conway is 84. Singer Cindy Birdsong (The Supremes) is 78. Rock musician Dave Clark (The Dave Clark Five) is 75. Rock musician Carmine Appice (Vanilla Fudge) is 71. Actor Don Johnson is 68. Actress Melanie Chartoff is 67. Movie director Julie Taymor is 65. Movie director Alex Cox is 63. Actor Justin Ross is 63. Rock musician Paul Simonon (The Clash) is 62. Movie director John Lee Hancock is 61. Democratic Party activist Donna Brazile is 58. Country singer Doug Phelps (Brother Phelps);

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Kentucky Headhunters) is 57. Movie producer-director Reginald Hudlin is 56. Actress Helen Slater is 54. Actor Paul Kaye (TV: "Game of Thrones") is 53. Actress Molly Price is 52. Actor Garrett Wang (wahng) is 49. Actor Michael Shanks is 47. Actor Stuart Townsend is 45. Figure skater Surya Bonaly is 44. Actor Geoff Stults is 41. "Crowd-hyper" Kito Trawick (Ghostown DJs) is 40. Actor Adam Brody is 38. Actress Michelle Dockery is 36. Actor George O. Gore II is 35. Actress Camilla Luddington is 34. Rock musician Alana Haim (HYM) is 26. Actress Maude Apatow (AP'-ih-tow) is 20. Actress Stefania Owen is 20.

Thought for Today: "The drama of life begins with a wail and ends with a sigh." — Minna Antrim, American writer (1856-1950).