

Groton Daily Independent

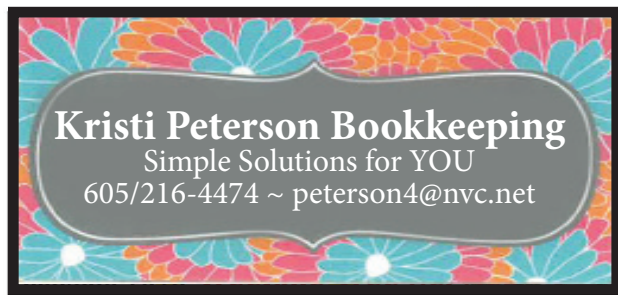
Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 1 of 53



- 1- Recycling trailers
- 1- Chicken Soup for the Soul
- 1- Kristi Peterson Bookkeeping Ad
- 2- Groton Care & Rehab Help Wanted Ad
- 2- No. 13 Northern State Powers Through MSU Moorhead
- 3- Farmers Union PSA
- 3- Ristau Banks Career Night in 69-65 Victory over MSU Moorhead
- 4- Lady Tigers beat Titans, lose to Pheasants
- 4- S & S Lumber Ad
- 5- GBB Photos
- 6- Rep. Noem's Weekly Column
- 7- Today in Weather History
- 8- Today's Forecast
- 9- Yesterday's Weather
- 9- Today's Weather Info
- 9- National Weather Map
- 10- Daily Devotional
- 11- 2018 Community Events
- 12- News from the Associated Press

Saturday

Wrestling at Madison
Debate at Brookings Bell



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**



OPEN GYM

GHS ARENA

December 3, 10, 17
January 7, 14, 21, 28
February 4, 11, 25
March 4, 11

Grades JrK-8 2:30-4:30 PM

Students grades JK-8 must be accompanied by an adult from 2:30-4:30.

Grades 6-12 4:30-6:30 PM

Students will be admitted free of charge.
They must sign in when they arrive.
Students are expected to behave appropriately.
HAVE FUN!

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 2 of 53

No. 13 Northern State Powers Through MSU Moorhead

Aberdeen, S.D. – The No. 13 Northern State University men's basketball team rolled to their tenth straight victory on Friday evening, defeating MSU Moorhead 95-74 from Wachs Arena. The Wolves are now 11-1 on the year and 5-0 in the NSIC.

Northern led by just six as the two teams entered the locker rooms at halftime, however the Wolves broke things open in the second with 57 points in large part to Darin Peterka. The senior dropped 21 of his game high 27 points in the final 20 minutes, hitting 6-of-7 from the arc and 7-of-8 from the floor. NSU shot 63.9 percent from the floor and 53.3 percent from the 3-point line in the half, while holding the Dragons to 42 points defensively.

The Wolves out-rebounded the Dragons 34-to-20 in the game, and notched eight points off 11 offensive boards. They added 36 points in the paint, 23 points off the bench, and 14 points off turnovers. NSU shot 56.5 percent from the floor, 53.6 percent from the arc, and 90.9 percent from the foul line in the game. They added a combined 23 assists, three steals, and one block.

Peterka tallied 27 points in the win, shooting 9-of-12 from the floor and 8-of-10 from the 3-point line. The senior added a team second best six rebounds, as well as four assists and one steal. DJ Pollard added 20 points of his own, shooting 66.7 percent from the floor, while adding five assists and one steal. Logan Doyle tallied 15 points and a team leading nine rebounds, shooting 70.0 percent from the floor.

Carter Evans continues to lead the team off the bench with 13 points. Evans hit 6-of-8 from field goal range, and added two rebounds, one assist, and one block. Gabe King and Bo Fries notched six points each, while Ian Smith followed with four. Smith was selfless with the ball, dishing out a career high ten assists. He also pulled down five rebounds. Logan LeGrand and Justin Decker tallied two points apiece, scoring in the final minutes of play.

The Wolves men return to action Tuesday on the road against a familiar foe to the Dragons. Northern will tip-off with MSU Moorhead at 8 p.m. from Alex Nemzek Hall.

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

Ristau Banks Career Night in 69-65

Victory over MSU Moorhead

Aberdeen, S.D. – The No. 12 Northern State University women's basketball team defeated MSU Moorhead 69-65 on Friday evening, off the heels of Miranda Ristau and Jill Conrad. The pair became the 32nd and 33rd members of the NSU 1,000 point club, and led the team in scoring. The Wolves improved to 9-1 overall and 5-0 in the NSIC.

Heading into the contest Conrad needed eight points while Ristau needed 12 to break the 1,000 point barrier. Ristau grabbed a team leading and career high tying 29 points, while Conrad notched a season high 18. The duo combined for 47 of the team's 69 points in the game, and shot a combined 56.3 percent from the floor.

The Wolves and Dragons were picked as the top-2 teams in the NSIC Preseason Poll and put on quite a show for the Wachs Arena crowd. Through the 40 minutes of action a total of six ties and five lead changes took place with neither team leading by more than eight points. NSU trailed 40-34 at the half and out-scored the Dragons in both the third and fourth quarters.

Northern put up 23 points in the final ten minutes and defended a Dragon comeback late in the quarter. It was tied at 60-all with just 3:38 to play in the game. Brynn Flakus knocked down her lone three of the contest, giving the Wolves their final lead of the game. Alexis Tappe and Conrad each added to the Northern lead, while the Dragons began to foul as time ran out. Ristau sealed the win for the Wolves hitting her second free-throw with just four seconds remaining.

As a team the Wolves shot 42.6 percent from the floor and 75.0 percent from the charity stripe. They out-rebounded the Dragons 49-32 in the win, grabbing 16 offensive boards. NSU tallied 38 points in the paint, 16 second chance points, 12 points off the bench, and six points off turnovers. They combined for 15 assists, nine blocks, and two steals.

Ristau not only led the team in scoring but notched a season high 14 rebounds in her second double-double of the year. The senior shot 11-of-18 from the floor and added a season high eight blocks. Conrad nearly grabbed a double-double of her own, notching nine rebounds. She added one assist and shot 50.0 percent from the floor and a perfect 4-for-4 from the foul line.

Alexis Tappe was third on the team with eight points, three rebounds, and three assists. Jessi Marti rounded out the starters with two points and a team third best six rebounds. Brianna Kusler dished out three assists and pulled down five rebounds for the Wolves in the win.

Flakus led the team off the bench with five rebounds and five assists. She was followed by Gabby Laimer with three points, and Haley Froelich and Sara Tvedt with two points each. Froelich notched five rebounds and two assists for the team as well.

NSU and MSUM will battle it out again in less than a week, as the Wolves return to action on Tuesday for a 6 p.m. match-up against MSU Moorhead on the road.



All auto owners!

Save \$2-\$4 /tank

& grow your local economy
by choosing low carbon
Super Premium E30's

94 octane, more power,
same mileage, fewer
carbon deposits, lower
maintenance costs,
slashed benzene & related
genotoxic, carcinogenic
tailpipe emissions;

*see sdfu.org's E30 tab for
info, E30 prices\locations.

***Farmers Union's**

PSA: Courtesy Merle

**Anderson (Merle is 94
year old founder of Ace
and legendary ethanol
supporter... "because it is
the right thing to do")**

Lady Tigers beat Titans, lose to Pheasants

Groton Area Lady Tigers dropped its first game of the season Friday to the hands of Redfield-Doland, 52-38.

The Pheasants led at the quarterstops at 16-7, 23-17 and 34-25.

Harleigh Stange led the Tigers with 13 points followed by Payton Maine with 10, Jessica Bjerke had seven, Miranda Hanson five, Jennie Doeden two and Eliza Wanner had one point.

Addison Rozell led the Pheasants with 20 points.

Last Saturday, the Lady Tigers defeated Leola-Frederick, 53-23. Jessica Bjerke led the Tigers with 17 points while Jennie Doeden had 15, Harleigh Stange had 11, Eliza Wanner had five, Miranda Hanson three and Payton Maine 2.

Scoring for the Titans were Michaela Podoll with 13, Keely Podoll and Cassandra Hinz each had eight, Hannah Lapka had four and Maddie Nordine added two points. In the junior varsity games, Groton Area defeated Redfield-Doland, 25-24. Kaycie Hawkins led the Tigers with 13 points while Eliza Wanner and Nicole Marzahn each had five and Caitlyn Barse added two points. Faith Jandel and Alicyn Larson each had eight points for Redfield-Doland.

The Lady Tigers won the junior varsity game over Leola-Frederick, 36-24. Scoring for the Tigers: Eliza Wanner 13, Tadyn Glover and Kaycie Hawkins with 6 each, Payton Colestock 3, and adding 2 points each were Nicole Marzahn, Same Geffre, Caitlyn Barse and Kenzie McInerney. Scoring for the Titans were Anna Lapka with 7, Avery Wolff 5, Kaylin Achen 6, and adding 2 points each were Brooklyn Podoll, Meza Meyer and Olivia Ulmer.

The junior varsity team is now 3-0 on the season while the varsity team is 2-1.

S & S Lumber

of Groton

**will be closed on Wednesday, Dec. 20th
for Inventory**

Will reopen on Thursday, Dec. 21st

Thank you for your patronage!

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 5 of 53



Payton Maine



Payton Maine



Jennie Doeden



Eliza Wanner

(Photos by Jeslyn Kosel)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 6 of 53



A New Era

It's hard to believe we're already at the end of 2017. January started with the inauguration of President Trump, ushering in a new era focused on making America great again.

In the year that was to follow, the U.S. House of Representatives passed more than 460 bills – far surpassing recent averages. More than 90 of them have made it through the Senate and earned President Trump's signature to become law. Among these were a series of bills that repealed costly Obama-era regulations. One empowered states to defund Planned Parenthood. Another strengthened Second Amendment protections for those with disabilities. Yet another expanded whistleblower protections within the Department of Veterans Affairs.

In October, the President signed a bill I wrote, which would increase and strengthen women's participation in peace negotiations and conflict prevention. When America's security depends on the success of peace negotiations, we must make sure every proven conflict prevention tactic is on the table. This will help us do that.

In addition to what's already reached President Trump's desk, the House has passed a series of bills to crack down on sanctuary cities and illegal immigration as well as legislation to repeal and replace Obamacare. A bill to improve rural call quality was approved, as was legislation that, if enacted, would ensure those permitted to carry a concealed handgun would be able to bring it to other states that permit concealed carry.

The House-passed Working Families Flexibility Act would allow employers to give workers more flexibility in choosing between overtime pay and additional time off – a choice that's difficult to offer under existing labor laws. The Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act that we passed would ban abortion after 20 weeks. And the bipartisan Resilient Federal Forests Act would pair a responsible budget fix with forest management reforms to dramatically improve the health and resiliency of our forests.

We also passed the CUFF Act, which I introduced, that would make sure wanted felons and parole violators would no longer have access to certain Social Security benefits. Another bill I introduced that would expand the Black Hills National Cemetery outside Sturgis also passed the House. I'm hopeful the Senate will take up and pass these bills in the New Year.

Tax reform has also steadily advanced throughout this time, as we've remained committed to providing families with relief in the New Year.

But more work remains – particularly when it comes to the Farm Bill. This last summer, I joined the House Agriculture Committee in a field hearing to discuss the modifications that will be needed. We received a lot of good feedback. Additionally, I've introduced a series of reforms I'd like to see included, such as legislation to improve the wetland determinations process, better ensure fair CRP rental payments, and expand sodsaver provisions nationwide. I've also put forward a bill to permanently allow the hay harvested on certain CRP acres to be donated to ranchers suffering from drought or fire.

In addition, I am pushing legislation that would prohibit the IRS from rehiring an employee who has been fired for certain forms of misconduct (yes, it's ridiculous we have to pass legislation to do this). Reforms to the Indian Health Service as well as legislation to crack down on sex trafficking and the websites that often facilitate it are also top priorities.

Without question, the last 12 months have made for quite a year, but with the momentum in our direction, I'm excited for what 2018 will bring.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 7 of 53

Today in Weather History

December 16, 1967: With temperatures in the upper 20s, heavy freezing rain fell in west central and southwest Minnesota at night on the 16th, causing widespread ice accumulations on all exposed surfaces, and power and telephone poles and lines went down over a vast region. Some places were without power and phone service for three to four days. This storm was classified as the most severe ice storm in the past 20 years in some areas. Reports were received of turkeys and other poultry dying due to the cold in the countryside. 20 to 30 cars were in the ditch on one slick stretch of road in Rock County. Further west, throughout eastern South Dakota, freezing rain for most of the day formed ice from 3/8 to 3/4 inch on exposed surfaces. Extensive damage was caused to utility lines. All roads became dangerous for traveling, and one death was directly linked to the ice storm. The ice cut off a regular water supply, causing one person to attempt to get water from a cistern. She slipped on the ice into the cistern. Three deaths were indirectly related to the ice storm; two due to automobile accidents, and one due to a heart attack.

December 16, 2000: Northwest winds of 30 to 50 mph, with gusts to 60 mph, combined with newly fallen snow and arctic air to bring widespread blizzard conditions and extreme wind chills as low as 70 below zero to west central Minnesota and much of South Dakota from late on the 15th through the 16th. Events were canceled, travel was shut down, and some motorists were stranded. Both US Highway 12 and Interstate 29 in South Dakota were closed throughout the day. As an indirect result of the low visibility, a semi-truck hit and totaled a pickup truck in the snow just west of Clark.

December 16, 1811: An estimated Magnitude 7.5 earthquake struck the Mississippi Valley near the town of New Madrid in Missouri at 2:15 am local time. People were awakened by the shaking in New York City, Washington D.C., and Charleston, South Carolina. The ground motions were described as most alarming and frightening in places like Nashville, Tennessee, and Louisville, Kentucky. In the epicentral area, the ground surface was described as in great convulsion with sand and water ejected tens of feet into the air.

1835 - New England experienced one of their coldest days of record. At noon on that bitterly cold Wednesday the mercury stood at four degrees below at Boston, 15 degrees below at Norfolk CT, and 17 degrees below at Hanover NH. The temperature at Boston was 12 degrees below zero by sunset. Gale force winds accompanied the severe cold, and that night a great New York City fire destroyed much of the financial district. (David Ludlum)

1917 - An ice jam closed the Ohio River between Warsaw, KY, and Rising Sun, IN. The thirty foot high ice jam held for 58 days, and backed up the river a distance of 100 miles. (David Ludlum)

December 16, 1941: In 1941, only two women were employed by the Weather Bureau. By 1945, more than 900 women are employed by the Weather Bureau as observers and forecasters, as a result of filling positions of men during World War II. Eleven days after Pearl Harbor, the Army requested that all weather broadcasts be discontinued. The fear was that the enemy would use this information to plan an attack on the United States.








1987 - A Pacific storm battered the coast of California with rain and high winds, and dumped heavy snow on the mountains of California. Winds along the coast gusted to 70 mph at Point Arguello, and winds in the Tehachapi Mountains of southern California gusted to 100 mph at Wheeler Ridge. Snowfall totals ranged up to 24 inches at Mammoth Mountain. Snow fell for two minutes at Malibu Beach, and Disneyland was closed due to the weather for only the second time in twenty-four years. A winter storm which began in the Southern Rockies four days earlier finished its course producing snow and high winds in New England. Snowfall totals ranged up to 19 inches at Blanchard ME. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Fairbanks, AK, reported freezing rain and record warm temperatures. The afternoon high of 41 degrees was 43 degrees above normal. Snow and high winds continued to plague the mountains of southern California. Mount Wilson CA reported two inches of rain in six hours during the early morning, and a storm total of more than 3.50 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary)


1989 - Fifty-seven cities from the Southern and Central Plains to the Appalachians reported record low temperatures for the date, including North Platte NE with a reading of 17 degrees below zero. Squalls in the Great Lakes Region produced 18 inches of snow at Syracuse NY, and 30 inches at Carlisle IND. Low pressure brought heavy snow to northern New England, with 18 inches reported at Derby VT and Saint Johnsbury VT. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 8 of 53



Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
						
Cloudy	Cloudy	Partly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Sunny
High: 40 °F	Low: 25 °F	High: 39 °F	Low: 24 °F	High: 44 °F	Low: 24 °F	High: 38 °F


This Weekend...



highs near 40°

Looking ahead...

What	When	Confidence
 Much Cooler	after Wednesday	Very High
 Snow	Wednesday Night & Thursday	Moderate



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

www.weather.gov/abr

Graphic Created
12/16/2017 4:47 AM

Published on: 12/16/2017 at 5:03AM

Expect mostly dry conditions and above normal temperatures this weekend. Our persistent warm weather will be coming to an end after Wednesday. There is also a chance of snow for Wednesday night and Thursday. While it's too early to say exactly when, where, and how much snow will fall, please stay up to date on the latest forecast for further details. www.weather.gov/abr

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 9 of 53

Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 39.5

Low Outside Temp: 27.6

High Gust: 14

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 62° in 1962

Record Low: -28° in 1951

Average High: 25°F

Average Low: 5°F

Average Precip in Dec: 0.27

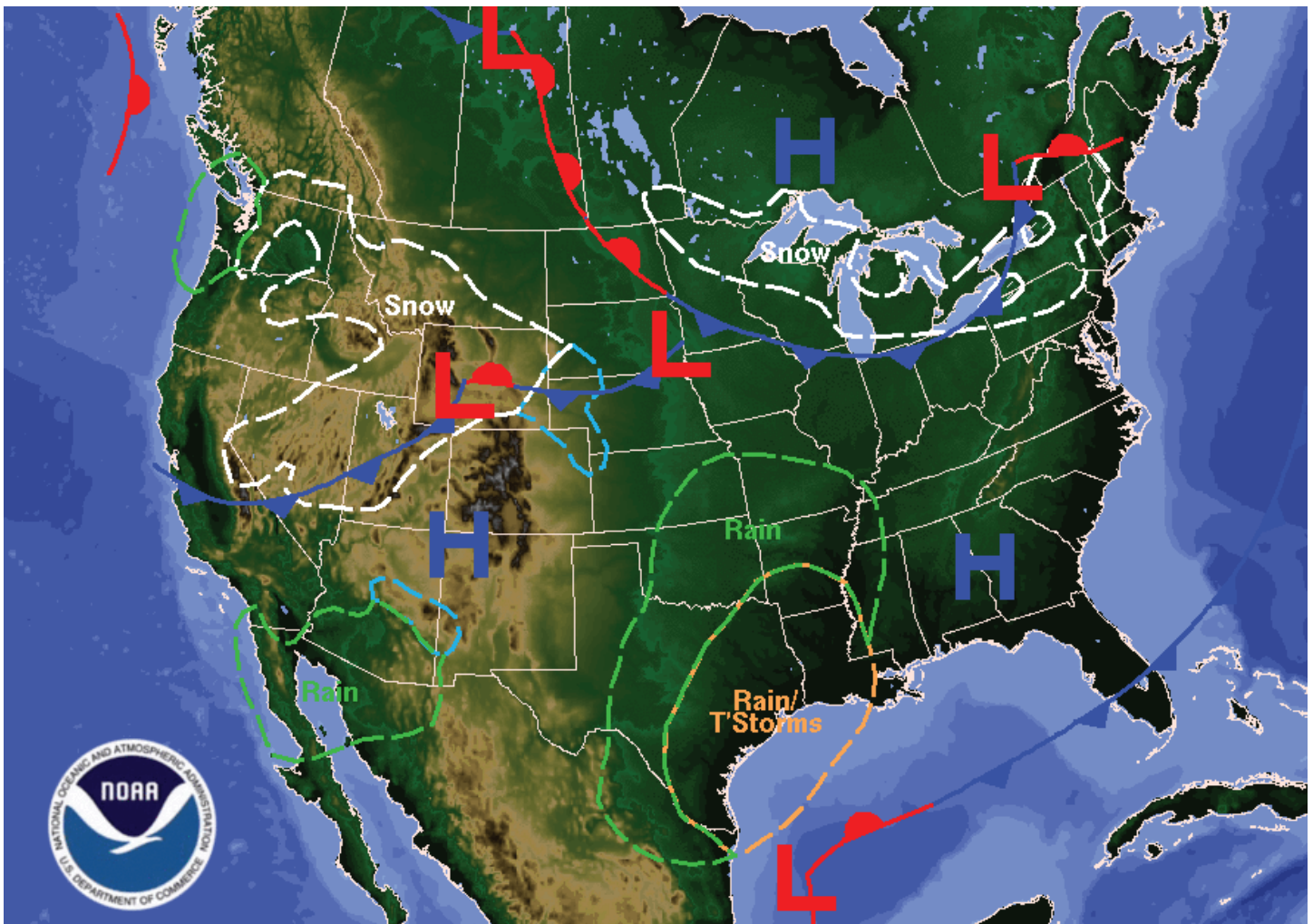
Precip to date in Dec: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 21.47

Precip Year to Date: 13.47

Sunset Tonight: 4:51 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:08 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Sat, Dec 16, 2017, issued 4:02 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)



GIFTS

Christmas gifts generate great excitement and interest. After the presents are wrapped and placed under the tree, many people spend countless hours trying to figure out what might be on the inside. Sometimes the gifts are carefully shaken or lifted to see if the weight or size might give an indication about what could be inside.

But when God gave us the first Christmas gift its value was obvious. It was a gift of love that could not be measured or found outside of Him. It was a gift of mercy that only He could provide. And it was a gift of grace that only He could provide through His Son.

God's love is ultimately expressed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. His love is the source of His mercy and grace and it is because of His love that we have mercy and grace. It was because of His love that He gave His only begotten Son so that whoever believes in Him will find His mercy and enjoy His grace and be with Him forever in eternity.

John says something very significant about this love. "If God loved us," he says, "we ought to love one another." His love does not end with our salvation, but with our obligation to share His love with others. It begins a pattern of self-sacrificing love that Christians must live by sharing His mercy and grace with others.

Prayer: Lord, we often forget how responsible we are to share Your gifts of love, mercy and salvation with others. Give us no peace until we share Your gifts. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: 1 John 4:11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

2018 Groton SD Community Events

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

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

News from the Associated Press

More than \$600,000 spent on police gear for pipeline protest

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON**, Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — North Dakota law enforcement purchased more than \$600,000 worth of body armor, tactical equipment and crowd control devices during the height of protests against the Dakota Access oil pipeline, state invoices show.

The purchases, tallied by The Associated Press from invoices obtained through a public records request, included pepper spray, flash-bang and smoke grenades, riot helmets, gas masks, night-vision goggles, more than 2,000 rounds of non-lethal ammunition and more.

The equipment ultimately made up a small share of the \$35 million in policing costs associated with the pipeline, and state officials defend the purchases as reasonable for a protest that attracted thousands of “water protectors” to southern North Dakota who skirmished — sometimes violently — with law enforcement.

“There was a legitimate, deliberate plan that was put together that said, ‘OK, how can we do this and do it safe for folks on both sides?’” state Homeland Security Director Greg Wilz said. “At the end of the day we were successful.”

Most of the purchases were in September, October and November of last year, when confrontations near a protest encampment grew most heated. Authorities established their own operations center a short distance away and manned it for months, making 761 arrests. About 75 officers were deployed on a typical day, though the number jumped to as many as 540 during one skirmish.

Invoices show Minneapolis-based police equipment company Streicher’s was paid nearly \$613,000 for gear.

One civil liberties advocate said all that gear may have added to the violence.

“Having police officers show up looking like Stormtroopers seems in many ways only exacerbated clashes that did occur,” said Lauren Regan, founder and executive director of the Civil Liberties Defense Center. “When police officers anonymize themselves, when they put on all that Rambo gear and face shields and no one can identify them, it tends to incite that mob mentality.”

Two experts on policing — Michigan State University Intelligence Program Director David Carter and John Jay College of Criminal Justice professor Eugene O’Donnell — both said the purchases seemed reasonable.

“(Police) may not have the ready availability of massive numbers of people and resources, so there may be more of a need to go over the top in being ready just because of the geographical factor,” O’Donnell said.

Wilz, the state homeland security director, said North Dakota found no model for responding to such a large protest in a rural area, received no help from federal law agencies and basically came up with its own plan.

Authorities feared guns were in the protest camp based on social media postings, and area stores had alerted police that protesters were buying products such as wasp spray to use against officers, he said.

“That’s why the helmets and the shields and the protection came out,” he said. The heavily armed police force “did look like an escalation,” he acknowledged, “but largely it was there to protect the officers who were trying to protect the general public on all sides of this issue.”

Police did not report any serious injuries to officers, though they say officers were subjected to thrown objects and in one instance gunshots. Protesters who have filed an excessive force lawsuit against police allege that hundreds of protesters were injured.

The equipment wasn’t shared with private pipeline security in the protest area, Wilz said. All of it has been stored at state facilities for future use, he said.

The state also spent \$12,350 on a subscription to Geofeedia, which collects, maps and stores information from social media posts. Police around the U.S. have used it to aid surveillance during protests, but it has drawn criticism from civil liberties groups. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter all have restricted access to Geofeedia in the past year under pressure from the American Civil Liberties Union.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 13 of 53

Bills for protest-related expenses are still coming in. Much of the \$35 million went to payroll, but restaurants, hotels and supply businesses in the Bismarck area received millions for services and product sales.

All of the spending will be audited by the state at some point, according to Secretary of State Al Jaeger and state Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Ray Holmberg, two members of the state's Emergency Commission, which approved borrowing money to cover the protest policing costs.

At least \$10 million of the expense is being funded by taxpayers. Texas-based pipeline developer Energy Transfer Partners has given North Dakota \$15 million to help with the bills. The state also has received a \$10 million grant from the U.S. Justice Department for the same purpose.

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

Sign up for the AP's weekly newsletter showcasing our best reporting from the Midwest and Texas: <http://apne.ws/2u1RMfv>

Friday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Roncalli 63, Milbank Area 27
Arlington 63, DeSmet 53
Bon Homme 59, Scotland 35
Chamberlain 49, Parkston 34
Chester 51, Tri-Valley 38
Clark 63, Britton-Hecla 52
Colman-Egan 57, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 36
Dakota Valley 72, Canton 53
Dell Rapids St. Mary 63, Estelline 47
Deubrook 52, Lake Preston 44
Gayville-Volin 68, Alcester-Hudson 34
Gordon/Rushville, Neb. 68, Bennett County 28
Great Plains Lutheran 73, Wilmot 48
Hanson 33, Menno 32, OT
Harrisburg 61, Brookings 35
Irene-Wakonda 64, Viborg-Hurley 56
James Valley Christian 73, Sunshine Bible Academy 35
Jones County 55, Wall 50
Kadoka Area 58, Dupree 32
McCook Central/Montrose 64, Howard 51
Miller 53, Winner 41
Morrill, Neb. 65, Edgemont 41
Newell 51, Tiospaye Topa 30
Potter County 60, Northwestern 58
Rapid City Central 68, Mitchell 43
Rapid City Christian 65, Lyman 64
Rapid City Stevens 53, Huron 51
Sioux Falls Christian 72, Elk Point-Jefferson 27
Sioux Falls Lincoln 69, Sioux Falls O'Gorman 66
St. Thomas More 55, Alliance, Neb. 48
Sturgis Brown 63, Douglas 57
Tea Area 68, Dell Rapids 63, 2OT
West Central 62, Wagner 38

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 14 of 53

Lakota Nation Tournament (Makosica Bracket)
Consolation Semifinal
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 80, Lower Brule 64
Red Cloud 66, Tiospa Zina Tribal 62, OT
Semifinal
Crow Creek 72, McLaughlin 41
Lakota Nation Tournament (Paha Sapa Bracket)
Consolation Semifinal
Custer 70, Standing Rock, N.D. 65
St. Francis Indian 87, Crazy Horse 31
Semifinal
Little Wound 84, Marty Indian 24
Todd County 71, Omaha Nation, Neb. 67
Stateline Shootout
Belle Fourche 52, Sundance, Wyo. 37
Newcastle, Wyo. 59, Lead-Deadwood 53

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Beach, N.D. 62, Lemmon 46
Chamberlain 32, Parkston 30
Clark/Willow Lake 54, Britton-Hecla 18
Dakota Valley 62, Canton 31
Dell Rapids 72, Tea Area 42
Dupree 58, Kadoka Area 54
Gayville-Volin 49, Alcester-Hudson 43
Gordon/Rushville, Neb. 56, Bennett County 31
Harrisburg 46, Brookings 45
Ipswich 42, Langford 27
Irene-Wakonda 68, Viborg-Hurley 42
Lyman 45, Rapid City Christian 33
McCook Central/Montrose 61, Howard 32
Menno 53, Hanson 46, OT
Mitchell 50, Rapid City Central 40
Moorhead, Minn. 58, Sioux Falls Washington 53
Morrill, Neb. 63, Edgemont 44
Platte-Geddes 52, Gregory 40
Rapid City Stevens 68, Huron 36
Redfield/Doland 52, Groton Area 38
Sioux Falls Christian 57, Elk Point-Jefferson 40
St. Michael-Albertville, Minn. 70, Sioux Falls Lincoln 47
Sunshine Bible Academy 50, James Valley Christian 34
Tiospaye Topa 58, Newell 47
Wall 52, Jones County 40
West Central 57, Wagner 19
Wilmot 56, Great Plains Lutheran 40
Lakota Nation Tournament (Makosica Bracket)
Consolation Semifinal
Lower Brule 67, Little Wound 53
Todd County 50, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 46
Semifinal

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 15 of 53

Crow Creek 57, Red Cloud 49
Pine Ridge 63, Custer 30
Lakota Nation Tournament (Paha Sapa Bracket)
Consolation Semifinal
Marty Indian 71, Tiospa Zina Tribal 54
St. Francis Indian 77, Crazy Horse 70
Semifinal
Omaha Nation, Neb. 62, White River 54
Standing Rock, N.D. 61, McLaughlin 41
Stateline Shootout
Belle Fourche 60, Sundance, Wyo. 16
Newcastle, Wyo. 35, Lead-Deadwood 33

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Mega Millions

04-12-36-44-57, Mega Ball: 19, Megaplier: 4

(four, twelve, thirty-six, forty-four, fifty-seven; Mega Ball: nineteen; Megaplier: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$208 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$250 million

Comedy clubs struggle to stay open in Sioux Falls

By JEREMY J FUGLEBERG, Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sioux Falls appears to have a problem with humor. Or at least comedy. More specifically, comedy clubs. Over the last 15 years, a string of comedy clubs have closed, their names now line up like gravestones of the local comedy scene.

Funny Bone. Closed. Fat Daddy's. Closed. Nitwits. Closed. Rookies. Closed. Wacko's. Closed.

One could almost forgive the frustration of Kellen Marson, owner of the now-defunct Wacko's Comedy Club, who vented via Facebook after he closed his club in July. One of his claims: Sioux Falls just didn't support his comedy club.

"When I opened the club, the promise I made for myself was that, if Sioux Falls supports the club. I'll keep it open," he said, in a video to fans. "If Sioux Falls doesn't support the club. Then I'm going to close it."

And yet, improbably, Sioux Falls' comedy scene is arguably doing better than ever, fueled by a rising tide of young comedians, older comedians fighting to keep the scene alive and several open-mic nights that provide the chance to hone comedic chops.

"We have a small scene, but it's surprisingly good," said local comedian Nate Hults. "I've been to a lot of other places to do comedy, and I think Sioux Falls has a high concentration of good comics."

Sioux Falls comes with a specific set of problems for comedy clubs. The city is an expensive location for out-of-town comedians. The area's short summers distract potential patrons, meaning a comedy club is essentially a seasonal business, requiring business savvy so bills get paid during lean months.

"A lot of the clubs in the Midwest are seasonal, because it's hard to compete with outside activity," said veteran local comedian Dan Bublitz Jr.

And the comedy club business model is usually based on up-front costs, things like two-drink minimums, that aren't common in Sioux Falls, the Argus Leader reported .

"Midwesterners are not used to paying a lot of money for things," jokes Joe Medema, another veteran

local comic.

Medema has long seen all the recent clubs come and go, and he pointed out another pitfall of comedy clubs: the vibe. Comedy clubs often try to get too shiny, he said.

"If you look at all these comedy clubs across the countries, they're not nice places," he said. "They're not in bad places of town, but they're not nice buildings, they're not nice settings."

Some of the recent clubs have had their share of red flags. Wacko's, which opened in the former home of Nitwits on East 10th Street, was in a nice, newer building, with room for a lot of people. Room can be a bad thing.

"If you have a really big room and there's hardly anybody in it, there's a really weird vibe," said Bublitz Jr. "It's a really awkward feeling."

At Rookies, comics would get interrupted by noise from the bar on the other side of the wall. You want an intimate setting that is relatively small, Medema said, so the comic is comfortable and connects with the crowd.

And don't make the place too nice, he said. It doesn't have to be bad. But not too nice.

"You don't want it to look like Granite City in there, you know what I mean?" He said.

Hults put his money where his mouth is — literally. He teamed up with Jeremy Seefeldt, owner of Boss' Pizza and Chicken, to open a comedy club in the restaurant's side room at its South Minnesota Avenue storefront.

Seefeldt, a long-time comedy supporter, had hosted a regular weekly open-mic night on Wednesday, but the new Boss' Comedy Club is humming on weekends as well, with local and out-of-state comedians doing Saturday night shows.

"I believe Sioux Falls can support a comedy club," Hults said. "Because if I didn't, I'd be an idiot, because I opened up a comedy club."

Open-mic nights are thriving in Sioux Falls, with opportunities at Fernson on Eighth, Wiley's and Boss, among others, and there are still a lot of independent comedy shows to be found.

The local comedy comedian supports each other, Bublitz Jr. said, which isn't always common in other parts of the country.

"Those bigger scenes, everyone is about themselves," he said. "In a scene like ours, we're out to make the scene look good, and out to make each other look good."

Bublitz Jr. just recently launched a Facebook page — Sioux Empire Comedy — to serve as a home for the local scene. And he and others are preparing for the next annual Sioux Falls Sno Jam Comedy Festival in February, featuring 30 comedians from around the country.

"There are a lot of things in the community that say the opposite of what people think, that the community doesn't support comedy," Bublitz Jr. said. "There are too many variables that prove that wrong."

Even if comedy clubs struggle here, Sioux Falls loves to laugh. And a comedy club is a go-to source for the giggles.

"It's a viable option," Hults said. "We've got to have it, because comedy is definitely going to save the world, especially in these times."

South Dakota high school athlete returns after head injury

By **ROBB GAROFALO**, Aberdeen American News

IPSWICH, S.D. (AP) — I'm thankful I'm alive.

Those words tend to grab attention.

To know Taylor Maurer's story, it's pretty easy to understand why she'd say it.

Maurer, a junior from Ipswich, suffered a serious, life-threatening head injury in May. It was during a Tigers track and field practice session while pole vaulting inside the Barnett Center on the campus of Northern State University. Her injury was diagnosed as a blood clot between the skull and membrane of her brain. Doctors in Sioux Falls had to drain the clot, the Aberdeen American News reported.

Maurer vaguely remembers warming up prior to the accident, but of the actual fall and subsequent in-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 17 of 53

jury and operation she has no memory. She does, however, recall one of her first goals when she found herself sitting in her hospital room.

"I thought I would definitely be back. Playing, competing," Maurer said. "I didn't think there was a chance I wouldn't be back."

She wasn't wrong.

Maurer was recently cleared to return to competition — and it is the season for her Aberdeen Cougars girls' hockey team. She hasn't been practicing for much longer than a week, but she's noticed that, from a physical standpoint, things are getting much better.

"For a little while (during recovery) I went through a lull where I was getting headaches pretty often and couldn't focus," Maurer said. "After a while I went back and the doctors re-did my concussion test and gave me a stress test, kind of like they give heart patients. They gave me a running program, to try and give my brain a higher tolerance while I'm being active. I finished (the program), went back, and the doctors told me they were going to let me start doing things."

Maurer's biggest relief about getting back out onto the field — and in this case, on the ice — wasn't so much about reaching the end of the long recovery road. For her, the most anticipated moment was rejoining the faces she had competed with but from which she was taken away for a time.

"Being out was really difficult, especially seeing my team on the ice and not doing what they were able to do," Maurer said. "It felt like I was letting them down because I wasn't out there, so I'm really glad to be back with them."

Even more profound was her acknowledgment that if an accident like that was going to happen, better that it happened to her than someone else.

"I'm thankful that the accident didn't happen to anyone else," Maurer said, "Because I know I can tolerate what happened."

Of course, as soon as Maurer finished that thought, she was quick to add something.

"I'm still a little out of shape though, so I'll need to keep working on that," Maurer said.

While her endurance may need to be built up slightly, confidence in her ability and readiness by her coach was something that wasn't going to be flatly accepted.

Shelby Edwards, who begins her first season as head coach for the Cougars, knew the type of player Maurer was. Edwards was assistant coach last year and was Maurer's head coach for the South Dakota Under-19 team.

Edwards did believe that once the recovery process began, Maurer could get better and back in shape, competing in whatever she wanted to do. It was also because of that intense desire to want to succeed that Edwards had to be particularly observant of Maurer's physical behavior.

"Taylor's not the type of player who is going to come off the ice and say, 'I need to sit down because I have a headache,'" Edwards said. "It was more of me telling her to sit and take some time."

Edwards knew doctors were going to clear Maurer to return. She also knew what she needed to look for and how cognizant she'd need to be as Maurer continues to get in game shape.

"There is some hesitancy, sure," Edwards said. "But with how well I know her from coaching her last year, I kind of know when she's not acting like herself, and that's a big indicator for me to tell her, 'Look Taylor, you need to take it easy and sit down for a bit.' From the beginning of our Cougars season, she was cleared to do about 30 minutes of exercise, so we're slowly bringing her back in. If we're doing high-impact, higher-contact drills, I'll have her sit for a while, just to try to ensure she will get up to game-speed and won't get any headaches or anything like that."

Hockey is a nice release for Maurer, but the pole vault is entirely different.

It's hard to imagine that revisiting the event that could have claimed your life wouldn't bring with it some trepidation. Maybe it's the fact that she doesn't remember what happened, or that she is just so ready to get on with her life academically, socially and athletically. Whichever it may be, when asked about the pole vault, Maurer answered before the question was completed.

"I'm actually thinking about starting pole-vaulting here within, like, the next month," Maurer said. "Just

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 18 of 53

warm-ups, practice, work on my posture. I'm not going to do anything big yet, but, yeah, I'll get (pole vault) going soon."

Support throughout her recovery from the Ipswich community and beyond has been more than Maurer could have hoped for. Her pole vault coach, Kayla Nilsson, helped set up a GoFundMe account to help alleviate some of the insurance costs, and there was a benefit 5K walk/run held in her home town of Ipswich.

"I definitely think it helped me through my accident," Maurer said. "I had people coming into my house every day, just to see how I was doing. They would call me, text my dad. Coach (Todd) Thorson would get messages asking how I was. I really did get a lot of support and I'm very grateful for that."

So far, Maurer is showing no signs of any lingering effect following the accident and surgical procedure. It really does seem like business as usual for the high school student-athlete. Class in the morning, afternoon, and then hockey practice in the early evening. Mind you, she has to drive the 29 miles from Ipswich to the Odde Ice Center and back each time she laces up her skates.

However, it's safe to say this is how Maurer planned her year — and life — to be at this point. A high school student who loves to compete doing exactly that. So, it makes sense that Maurer does not hesitate when asked "what are you thankful for?"

"I'm thankful I'm alive."

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

Colorado overcomes Daum, South Dakota State 112-103 in 2OT

By DENNIS GEORGATOS, Associated Press

BOULDER, Colo. (AP) — Tyler Bey hit his stride offensively in overtime.

Bey scored eight of his 12 points in the second OT period, including all four of his free throws, and Colorado overcame a 37-point performance by Mike Daum to beat South Dakota State 112-103 on Friday night.

"I was just flowing, going with the flow," Bey said. "I'm more confident going into this season and getting more confident as I keep playing."

Colorado coach Tad Boyle said Bey's defense on Baum in the late going was just as important as his offensive contribution.

"When (Daum) catches it, you have to be solid and play without fouling," Boyle said. "Make him take tough shots. And he did. He made him take some tough shots in the lane."

Bey's strong finish was just part of the story. McKinley Wright led Colorado (8-3) with 30 points. He added 11 assists and nine rebounds. George King added 17 points.

"This was obviously a huge win for us. We needed that for our confidence," added Boyle, whose young squad was upset Tuesday by San Diego. "We had some guys really grow up tonight. We overcame some things, even though we were playing at home, and beat a really good team."

Daum also had 12 rebounds for South Dakota State (9-5). David Jenkins added 31 points for the Jackrabbits.

In the first extra period, South Dakota State took a 94-88 lead on Skyler Flatten's layup. But Wright hit a pair of jumpers around two missed free throws by Daum, pulling the Buffaloes to 94-92 with 51.2 seconds left in overtime.

Deleon Brown's fastbreak layup tied it at 94 with 26 seconds remaining and Jenkins missed a jumper in the final moments, sending the game into the second extra period.

The Jackrabbits tied it 99-all in the second overtime on a 3-pointer by Jenkins but Wright and Bey then hit successive baskets to retake the lead and the Buffaloes made the bulk of their free throws in the final 90 seconds to secure the victory.

"I think it was our defensive stops," Daum said. "They scored the last eight out of nine, and we just couldn't get that one stop we needed to get over the hump."

Down by seven at the half, the Jackrabbits got back-to-back 3-pointers from Reed Tellinghuisen to pull to 60-59 with 9:57 left to play.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 19 of 53

Tellinghuisen again connected from 3-point range again and Chris Howell followed with a driving layup to put South Dakota State up 66-65 with 7:33 remaining, the Jackrabbits' first lead of the game.

The teams were trading scores down the stretch and no more than three points separated them for most of the rest of the way.

Jenkins made an 81-all tie with a 3-pointer but Namon Wright answered for Colorado with one of his own, giving the Buffaloes an 84-81 lead with 1:44 left.

With 41.2 seconds left, Jenkins hit another 3-pointer to re-tie it.

McKinley Wright hit a putback layup but Daum hit two free throws with 6.5 seconds left in regulation and the game went into overtime tied at 86-all after McKinley Wright missed a contested mid-range jumper at the buzzer.

Daum and Jenkins each had three of their 3-pointers in the first half, though the Jackrabbits trailed at halftime 43-36.

Colorado did not trail in the first half, getting a combined 14 points in the period from Namon Wright and McKinley Wright.

The Jackrabbits were without forward Ian Theisen, who suffered an ankle injury in practice earlier this week.

THE TAKEAWAY

South Dakota State: The Jackrabbits got a pair of 30-point performances from Daum and Jenkins and had two others score in double figures in an offensive show that would have been enough on most nights. They just couldn't get a couple of shots to drop in the second extra period, allowing the Buffaloes to regain command.

Colorado: The Buffaloes registered an impressive bounce-back victory after 69-59 setback to San Diego on Tuesday in which they shot a season-low 25.9 percent from the field. Their point total represented a season high and they seemed to regain their shooting touch, converting 54.1 percent of their shots from the field. Their 3-point shooting also reflected their newfound confidence as they made 13 of 27 after hitting just 3 of 18 in the loss to San Diego.

PLAYING SHORT-HANDED

The Jackrabbits felt the absence of the injured Theisen, who typically is the first player off the bench to spell Daum. Among the 20 players from both teams to see action, Daum played the most at a game-high 48 minutes. "We knew a lot of guys would have to step up, because Ian really makes up for about two or three guys," Jenkins said. "I felt like we really missed him tonight. I felt like it would have been a lot different game if he was in."

FROSH PHENOM

McKinley Wright had the fourth 30-point game by a freshman in Colorado's history. It was the first since Chauncey Billups had 33 points against Colorado State in 1995.

UP NEXT

South Dakota State: Returns home to host Drake on Tuesday night.

Colorado: Plays at Iowa on Tuesday night.

Regional board criticizes Dakota Southern Railroad

CHAMBERLAIN, S.D. (AP) — A regional railroad authority board in South Dakota has issued a warning to the Dakota Southern Railroad to resolve several issues, including a dispute with a landowner and a violation regarding hazardous materials.

The Mitchell to Rapid City Regional Railroad Authority Board gave stern recommendations to Dakota Southern officials during a meeting Thursday, the Daily Republic reported .

"We're sliding downhill with Dakota Southern," said Ken Cotton, the board's attorney. "If you guys want to operate here, you need to resolve your issues."

Brule County officials brought Dakota Southern's violation regarding rail cars containing liquefied petroleum gas to the board's attention during the meeting. An investigation found that the trainmaster instructed a

crew to place the train cars in an unauthorized location, which violated federal regulations.

"When you bring 88 cars of butane into my county and let me know the day after you drop them, it's going to get blown out of proportion," said Kathryn Benton, Brule County's emergency manager.

"It was just a lapse," said Heath Haden, Dakota Southern's vice president of operations. "We had some issues with that crew and the crew is no longer with us."

The ongoing dispute regarding a 2014 fire that destroyed 120 trees on a couple's property was also discussed. The couple's attorney, Steve Fox, said Dakota Southern has yet to reach an agreement on reimbursement.

The board plans to recommend a timeline to reach an agreement and to present the issue to the state rail board at its Dec. 20 meeting.

"It looks like you've been shuffling this matter under the rug and you could give a rat's rip about what happens," Cotton said. "It's time to get some really big stuff done."

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

South Dakota's longest-serving education secretary retires

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The longest-serving education secretary in South Dakota history is retiring. Melody Schopp retired from her role at the state's Department of Education Friday after serving as secretary since 2011. She worked for the department for about 17 years.

"I'm having a really hard time because this is my life, this has been my life for almost 20 years," Schopp told the Argus Leader. "It's very bittersweet."

Schopp said the highlight of her career was working to pass legislation in 2016 that increased teacher pay.

During her term in office, problematic financial practices came to light after a Platte education cooperative misused funds from Gear Up, a federal program aimed at helping low-income middle and high school students prepare for college. Several lawmakers criticized Schopp by saying she could have prevented the embezzlement scheme. Schopp maintains that the issue was handled properly.

"We took the right steps," she said. "The department did make the right decisions back then and I don't think that's always been what people see."

While in office, Schopp managed the state's transition from No Child Left Behind to the Every Student Succeeds Act. Schopp also introduced new teacher and principal evaluation models.

"Prior to that, we had random checklists that districts used," said Mary McCorkle, president of the state's largest teachers' union. "There was nothing that truly described what a good teacher was, what good practice was."

Schopp also worked to reduce achievement gaps for Native American students by creating a task force.

"Dr. Schopp really had a heart for trying to make it better for those students," said former state Rep. Jacqueline Sly.

Don Kirkegaard will take over Schopp's role in January. Kirkegaard currently serves as president of the state Board of Education Standards.

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

Man accused of assault during escape sentenced to 15 years

LAKE ANDES, S.D. (AP) — An inmate accused of assaulting a guard before escaping from a county jail has been sentenced to 15 years in prison.

The Daily Republic reports that 19-year-old Jubal Grant Jr. was sentenced on felony charges of aggravated assault, aggravated assault against a law enforcement officer and escape.

Authorities say Grant stole a car after escaping from the Charles Mix County Jail on Aug. 30. He and the car were found the next day at a Vermillion residence, and he was taken into custody after a standoff

that lasted about seven hours.

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

Custer park officials expect fire containment to increase

CUSTER, S.D. (AP) — Custer State Park officials expect containment of a South Dakota wildfire to increase after day shift crews complete their rotation.

The park said in a statement Friday that the fire remains at 50 percent containment. The blaze has consumed than 84 square miles (218 square kilometers).

Officials say snow is predicted Saturday across the Black Hills. They have demobilized two heavy air tankers, but a helicopter is staying on scene for air recon.

Custer State Park is a top tourist destination just south of Mount Rushmore National Memorial in the southwest part of the state. Officials say the park and roads within it remain closed.

The historic fire began Monday, and officials have attributed the cause of the blaze to a downed power line.

Driver's license changes coming in January

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Driver's license and state ID cards in South Dakota will look a little different beginning in January.

Officials say the changes are being made to make the cards easier to read. The headline on the current license says "Operator License." The new cards will say "Driver License."

KOTA-TV says the gold star on the right upper corner will be a white star with gold around it. That change reflects the new federal ID guidelines for using licenses for air travel and other activities. Another change includes a heart symbol for organ donors.

New equipment is being installed at driver's licensing stations statewide, beginning with Pierre.

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

Lake Andes man killed in Charles Mix County crash ID'd

WAGNER, S.D. (AP) — Authorities have identified a Lake Andes man who died in a two-vehicle crash in Charles Mix County.

The Highway Patrol says 54-year-old Melvin Hopkins Sr. was driving a car that failed to stop at a rural intersection north of Wagner and collided with a pickup truck about 6 a.m. Tuesday.

Hopkins was pronounced dead at the scene. The pickup driver wasn't hurt.

Small Wyoming town on road to Devils Tower to get new owners

By BOB MOEN, Associated Press

CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP) — A small town in northeast Wyoming that features a historic mercantile building will see a change in ownership soon but not in its charm.

The couple who owns Aladdin - population 15 - have accepted an offer from a group of investors led by an Arizona businessman to buy most of the town. Rick and Judy Brengle have owned the town for 31 years.

"My husband bought it for me because all my kids were in college and I had the empty nest syndrome — and now I don't have it anymore," Judy Brengle, 73, said.

The sale to Rob DeMaranville, of Scottsdale, Arizona, and his partners will close next April, Brengle said. DeMaranville cited his long family ties to the area, noting that he spent many summers in the area working on the family ranch and elsewhere, for his interest in buying the town.

"The goal is to keep Aladdin alive and well," he said. "And since I spent all of my summers out here, I want to protect the charm and the character of the town, but also put some new energy into it."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 22 of 53

Brengle and DeMaranville declined to disclose a purchase price.

The town was put up for auction last summer, but Brengle said the winning bidders couldn't get the financing and the sale fell through, opening the way for DeMaranville to make an offer.

The deal involves a total of 30 acres (12 hectares) and includes a general store in a building built 125 years ago that still has the original candy bins and fixtures. A bar, post office, small trailer park, rodeo arena and a two-bedroom house are also included in the deal.

Aladdin is located near the South Dakota border and sits along a two-lane highway that leads to Devils Tower National Monument, about 20 miles (32 kilometers) to the west.

The town usually is quiet and peaceful, attracting tourists visiting Devils Tower. But it can get hopping during the annual motorcycle rally in nearby Sturgis, South Dakota, and during hunting season.

"If Aladdin is going to be Aladdin 20 years from now, we're going to have to make some improvements," DeMaranville said.

DeMaranville is looking to tap more into the tourist business by making some additions, such as a public restroom and a campground, and establishing an annual festival and holding weekly chuck wagon cook-outs during the summer.

He emphasized that the changes won't alter the small-town character.

"Everyone we meet, they're happy a local bought it, but they also, in a roundabout way, let us know not to change it," DeMaranville said. "And that's our goal."

Brengle gave her blessing to DeMaranville's plans.

"It's still going to be our quaint little village."

Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press

Rapid City Journal, Rapid City, Dec. 14

Sexual harassment training needed at Legislature

Sexual harassment, misconduct and even assault are no longer confined to the offices, homes and hotel rooms of powerful men. America's dark secret is being exposed. Now, it needs to be confronted.

Before Harvey Weinstein, Matt Lauer, Al Franken and a growing list of others were seen in a new light, sexual harassment really wasn't taken seriously. The behavior was dismissed as men being men or worse yet blamed on women whose very existence tempted men who lacked self-control.

Now, however, a new viewpoint is emerging that is changing the rules of the game in the workplace — men are being held accountable. Weinstein and Lauer were dismissed by their employers. Franken was forced to announce his resignation from the U.S. Senate.

Companies and institutions are taking stronger steps to protect women in the workplace. The U.S. House of Representatives and Senate, which have a secret fund for sexual misconduct settlements, have voted to require sexual harassment training for their members and staffs — an important step toward protecting women in the workplace.

It is a step the South Dakota Legislature needs to take as well. In the past year, state residents have learned that female lawmakers and lobbyists have felt the pain of being victims of sexual harassment.

Sen. Angie Buhl O'Donnell of Sioux Falls said she had to endure comments about her breasts when Brian Gosch of Rapid City was the House majority leader. Gosch said he was only joking and asked for a hug. Ro Ann Redlin was a lobbyist supporting a bill that required a third person to be in a room when a woman was getting a Pap smear. She said a male lawmaker asked her to describe the procedure in detail. "I felt so dirty I wanted to take a shower," she told the Argus Leader.

Another lobbyist, Tiffany Campbell, was discussing legislation at a bar when she said a lawmaker asked if he could watch her go to the bathroom. The next day, a female lawmaker said members of the House Republican Caucus found the incident funny. In January, a Madison lawmaker resigned after having admitting to having sex with two interns, who are typically college-aged. Other allegations of groping and

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 23 of 53

inappropriate touching were made by women who worked in various capacities at the Legislature.

When asked about the report, Gov. Daugaard said those who are victims of sexual harassment or misconduct should report it but added that he didn't believe it was a problem in Pierre. Maybe that is the case, but one also has to wonder what makes the most powerful man in state government the authority on the sexual harassment of women.

The unfortunate reality is this insidious and harmful behavior will continue to exist unless steps are taken that include education and training on what constitutes sexual harassment and misconduct.

The Legislature needs to take this step in the 2018 session and then hold those accountable who persist in the behavior. It is the right thing to do, and now is the time.

The Daily Republic, Mitchell, Dec. 12

Keep an open mind about the restoration of Lake Mitchell

It seems like everywhere we go in Mitchell someone has the answer to addressing water quality issues at the city's lake.

Now, armed with three preliminary scenarios to solve Lake Mitchell's algae woes, Omaha-based water quality specialist Fyra Engineering is the latest to throw its hat into the restoration ring, aiming to answer a decades long problem.

But let's not go ahead and treat Fyra Engineering like a snake oil salesperson looking to make a quick buck from a city desperate to fix its lake.

It's been a week since we got our hands on Fyra's report, and we've done our best to lay their data out for the public without bias. That said, we understand if locals are hesitant.

One proposal, albeit one Fyra does not recommend, features a plan to dump aluminum sulfate in the lake. If that sounds familiar, it's because it is. Mitchell tried this approach about a decade ago, to no avail.

But at around \$6 million, it's by far the most affordable plan, so we'd be open to Fyra at least giving it a closer look.

Another plan features a "by-pass" system that would divert some nutrient-rich, algae-feeding water away from the lake and into the James River. That approach, at an estimated \$31.2 million, makes us wonder how those downstream would feel about the city of Mitchell pumping its worst water directly to the James River.

However, the cost of the plan, especially if the majority of funding comes from sources other than city dollars, feels like it's worth considering compared to the final scenario.

At \$81 million, a major watershed restoration plan feels like an insurmountable cost — something that would burn a hole in the pockets of all Mitchell residents. But if it saves the dying manmade reservoir, it should be considered.

Another approach Fyra tossed out at a meeting last week involves draining the lake. That would allow for more cost-effective dredging, but we suspect lakeside residents wouldn't love the idea of sitting next to a massive hole in the ground for a long period of time.

These plans all come with major benefits and downfalls, but the economic benefit of having a clean and clear recreational lake in Mitchell are immense.

So whether this plan goes to a public vote or not, as some city officials have suggested, we hope as many locals as possible can take a look at Fyra's report or speak with a neighbor or friend on one of the three Lake Mitchell committees. Those folks have become a valuable source of insight on the lake restoration, and we wonder if the city would even be this far in the process without their voluntary help.

We're looking forward to the refined plan Fyra presents to the public in January, and hope the costs are much lower than the initial projections. We also hope Mitchell residents attend that meeting with open ears and open minds.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 24 of 53

The Capital Journal, Pierre, Dec. 15

Schools need more help in dealing with juvenile justice reform side effects

Can schools deal effectively with students who refuse to show up or who get caught selling drugs, using drugs or otherwise breaking the law? Should teachers and other school staff be asked to put up with students who simply don't or won't respect their peers or school.

Since 2015, schools have been asked by default to shoulder more of the burdens associated with truant or otherwise problematic students, thanks to a set of juvenile justice system reforms made that year.

So far, the reforms have done almost exactly what they were designed to do. Fewer kids are being taken out of their communities and placed at such facilities as the former Star Academy near Custer State Park in the Black Hills. The number of juveniles being held at county level juvenile detention centers also has fallen.

As reported in today's Capital Journal, according to a draft of the annual report required by the 2015 legislation, the initial data indicate a decrease in juvenile recidivism, less frequent revocation of probation, and positive impacts of Functional Family Therapy.

That's really good news.

The kids who used to be sent to places such as the Star Academy didn't just disappear, though. In fact, they're remaining in their schools that often don't have the staff or programs they need to handle those kids. Pierre School District Superintendent Kelly Glodt said Monday during the Pierre School Board's December meeting that a recent survey found that not one of the state's school superintendents felt that the juvenile justice reforms had had a positive impact on schools.

Why? Well, kids that cause problems or fall behind because they don't come to school, tend to take up an inordinate amount of teachers', administrators' and counselors' time. One or two students who cause problems can crowd out other students who don't cause problems but still need help, thus making an educator's already difficult job that much harder.

The 2015 legislation did indeed provide additional funding for outside counseling services. Of course South Dakota has a chronic shortage of trained counselors. A program can be fully funded, but if it can't be fully staffed, it's still not going to work. The counselors the state does have typically don't live in rural areas.

School superintendents also are saying that more students are in need of counseling for non-academic issues. More students are suffering from emotional and social problems, which school counselors are having to help address. Here again, there just aren't enough counselors to go around.

Juvenile justice reform was a necessary step for the state to take and it has, mostly, been successful. But it might be time to recognize the initiative's shortcomings and give schools more tools to deal with the extra burden it has caused.

A good step would be for the legislature to find a way to help schools pay for more guidance counselors.

Mitchell Tech grad donates \$1.1 million to alma mater

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — Mitchell Technical Institute has received the single largest gift in its nearly 50 year history.

Dick and Darlene Muth have given the tech school \$1.1 million — a combination of endowed funds, in-kind contributions and past donations. Dick Muth is a graduate of the school.

The school also announced Thursday night that the technology and campus centers will be named for the Muths, who own Muth Electric. They started the business in 1970 soon after Dick Muth graduated from Mitchell Tech.

The Daily Republic says about a-fourth of the company's 400 employees are Mitchell Tech graduates.

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

Man accused of stabbing woman 40 times pleads guilty

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Rapid City man has admitted fatally stabbing a 30-year-old woman at a motel last spring.

Twenty-four-year-old Vincent Mousseaux pleaded guilty Thursday to first-degree manslaughter in the killing of his roommate Deziree Martinez.

Police say Martinez was found dead March 8 in a room at the Price Motel in Rapid City following an argument involving Mousseaux. Authorities have said the mother of six children was stabbed 40 times.

The Rapid City Journal reports that Mousseaux is to be sentenced Jan. 16. He could face life in prison.

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

Snowmobile trails across South Dakota open; conditions poor

SPEARFISH, S.D. (AP) — Snowmobile trails across South Dakota are opening.

The Black Hills Pioneer reports that the snowmobile season runs from Friday through next March.

Officials in the Black Hills say the majority of trails are in poor condition, since not much snow has accumulated.

Black Hills Trails Manager Shannon Percy says snowmobilers should pick up a 2018 trail map because there a number of re-routes each year.

Snowmobilers also are encouraged to check local conditions before riding.

Information from: Black Hills Pioneer, <http://www.bhpioneer.com>

AP-NORC Poll: 52 percent say country worse off under Trump

By JULIE PACE and EMILY SWANSON, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans are painting a pessimistic view of the country and President Donald Trump as 2017 comes to a close.

That's according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. The survey shows less than a quarter of Americans think Trump has made good on the pledges he made to voters.

Among Republicans, just half say Trump has kept his promises, which included vows to overhaul his predecessor's health care law, withdraw the U.S. from a nuclear accord with Iran and invest millions in new projects to fix the nation's aging infrastructure. None of those steps have been taken.

Just three in 10 Americans said the U.S. is heading in the right direction, and 52 percent said the country is worse off since Trump became president.

Romanians join European royals for king's state funeral

By ALISON MUTLER, Associated Press

BUCHAREST, Romania (AP) — Tens of thousands of Romanians joined European royals to pay their respects to late King Michael who was remembered for his dignity and morality, as he was given a state funeral Saturday.

Michael, who ruled Romania twice before being forced to abdicate by the communists in 1947, died at age 96 in Switzerland on Dec. 5.

Britain's Prince Charles, Swedish King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia, and Spain's former King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia, were among those at a pre-funeral service at the Royal Palace where Michael's body had been laying in state for the past two days. The Swedish king saluted as Michael's coffin was placed on a dais.

Non-European royals attending the funeral included Princess Muna al-Husseini, mother of King Abdullah II of Jordan.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 26 of 53

Other royals including Henri, the Grand Duke of Luxembourg, Princess Astrid and Prince Lorenz of Belgium were joined by Romanian President Klaus Iohannis for a sung funeral service, led by the head of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Daniel.

Bishops wafted incense in the small cathedral where Michael was crowned for the second time on Sept. 6, 1940. Michael, who was a great-great grandson of Queen Victoria, first became king aged 5 after his father Carol II eloped with his mistress and abdicated.

A funeral procession carrying his coffin drove slowly through the Romanian capital to a railway station, where accompanied by a phalanx of priests, the casket was put on a royal train. It will arrive in the central town of Curtea de Arges for burial next to his wife Anne de Bourbon-Parme who died last year.

In the hours before Michael's coffin was taken out of the palace, Romanians gathered silently, many in tears, in Revolution Square. Church bells tolled around the country and a choir of priests sang as the coffin was taken out and was laid on a dais in the square.

Mourner Georgeta Anastasiu, 60, said the late king had been "demonized by the communists, but in the end we found out the truth about him."

She called the king "the last moral example for Romanians."

Earlier, the crowd cheered and shouted "King Michael!" as the coffin, led by Orthodox priests and a guard of honor, was transported by an army jeep toward the cathedral.

Michael's five daughters and his estranged grandson Nicholas Medforth-Mills, who was stripped of his title for allegedly fathering a child out of wedlock, walked behind the coffin.

Journalist Vlad Mixich summed up the mood on social media.

"Today Romania is burying what it could have been; today is the funeral of a dream," he tweeted.

'This is happening': GOP revels in all-but-certain tax deal

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

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans working to execute their first major legislative achievement of Donald Trump's presidency appear to have secured the votes to pass a massive tax overhaul that Trump hoped to present to the American people for Christmas.

"This is happening. Tax reform under Republican control of Washington is happening," House Speaker Paul Ryan of Wisconsin told rank-and-file members in a conference call Friday. "Most critics out there didn't think it could happen. ... And now we're on the doorstep of something truly historic."

It's the widest-ranging reshaping of the tax code in three decades and is expected to add to the nation's \$20 trillion debt. The tax cuts are projected to add \$1.46 trillion over a decade. The GOP plans to muscle it through Congress next week before its year-end break.

Under the bill, today's 35 percent rate on corporations would fall to 21 percent, the crown jewel of the measure for many Republicans. Trump and GOP leaders had set 20 percent as their goal but added a point to free money for other tax cuts that won over wavering lawmakers in final talks.

The legislation would lower taxes on the richest Americans. Benefits for most other taxpayers would be smaller.

The bill would repeal an important part of President Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act — the requirement that all Americans have health insurance or face a penalty — as the GOP looks to unravel a law it failed to repeal and replace this past summer.

Only on Friday did Republicans cement the needed support for the overhaul, securing endorsements from wavering senators.

Marco Rubio of Florida relented in his high-profile opposition after negotiators expanded the tax credit that parents can claim for their children. He said he would vote for the measure next week.

Rubio had been holding out for a bigger child credit for low-income families. After he got it, he tweeted that the change was "a solid step toward broader reforms which are both Pro-Growth and Pro-Worker."

Sen. Bob Corker of Tennessee, the only Republican to vote against the Senate version earlier this month, made the surprise announcement that he would back the legislation. Corker, the chairman of the Senate

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 27 of 53

Foreign Relations Committee, has repeatedly warned that the nation's growing debt is the most serious threat to national security.

"I realize this is a bet on our country's enterprising spirit, and that is a bet I am willing to make," Corker said.

The White House said Trump "looks forward to fulfilling the promise he made to the American people to give them a tax cut by the end of the year."

The bill embodies a long-standing Republican philosophy that a substantial tax break for businesses will trigger economic growth and job creation for Americans in a trickle-down economy.

Skeptical Democrats are likely to oppose the legislation unanimously.

"Under this bill, the working class, middle class and upper middle class get skewered while the rich and wealthy corporations make out like bandits," said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York. "It is just the opposite of what America needs, and Republicans will rue the day they pass this."

The bill would drop today's 39.6 percent top rate on individuals to 37 percent. The standard deduction — used by around two-thirds of households — would be nearly doubled, to \$24,000 for married couples.

The \$1,000-per-child tax deduction would grow to \$2,000, with up to \$1,400 available in IRS refunds for families who owe little or no taxes. Parents would have to provide children's Social Security numbers to receive the child tax credit, a measure intended to deny the credit to people who are in the U.S. illegally.

Those who itemize would lose some deductions. The deduction that millions use in connection with state and local income, property and sales taxes would be capped at \$10,000. That's especially important to residents of high-tax states such as New York, New Jersey and California. Deductions for medical expenses that lawmakers once considered eliminating would be retained.

The bill would allow homeowners to deduct interest only on the first \$750,000 of a new mortgage, down from the current limit of \$1 million.

People who inherit fortunes would get a big break. The bill would double the exemption, meaning the estate tax would apply only to the portion of an estate over \$22 million for married couples.

Members of a House-Senate conference committee signed the final version of the legislation Friday, sending it to the two chambers for final passage next week. They have been working to blend the different versions passed by the two houses.

Republicans hold a slim 52-48 majority in the Senate, and two ailing GOP senators missed votes this past week.

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.

This week in odd news: Fatberg on display and a 'java jam'

BY RICHARD A. SOMMA, Associated Press

HOLY COW! WANDERING BOVINE RETURNED TO PHILLY NATIVITY SCENE

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — A cow in Philadelphia apparently wanted to be away from the manger, as it escaped twice Thursday morning from a church's live nativity scene.

Stormy, the 7-year-old brown and white Hereford, was back munching hay at Old First Reformed Church of Christ by 7:15 a.m. after two sets of adventures on snowy downtown streets.

Police first got reports of a cow near an Interstate 95 on-ramp around 2 a.m. Thursday.

One of the state police troopers who responded has a cattle ranch in New Jersey and knew how to handle the situation, WPVI-TV reports. Officers put a lead rope on the cow and walked her to a nearby parking lot with police vehicles helping shepherd Stormy back to church. Some lanes of the highway had to be shut down as the cow was wrangled.

But for Stormy, all was not calm and bright. She fled again around 6 a.m., despite Rev. Michael Caine's best efforts to stop the 1,500-pound animal. She then ambled toward a major thoroughfare as the morning rush got underway.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 28 of 53

"If you're in the area of 4th and Market, beware of traffic delays. A cow is loose. Again. No, we can't believe we are tweeting this either," the police department tweeted just before 7 a.m.

This time, the bovine was tracked down on the fourth floor of a parking garage about a block south of the church.

By late morning, Stormy was loaded into a trailer to head back to the Manatawna Saul Farm, which is a high school 4-H club that owns her.

Scott Moser, who helps the students with the animals, told The Associated Press because Stormy figured out how to push open the gate — despite its beefed up latch system — it seems to have become a bit of a game for her.

They decided to use her understudy, a cow about half her size named Ginger.

As for Stormy, Moser said she has never been a troublemaker before.

"She's a very calm cow," he said. "Nothing really fazes her."

C-A-T NAMED D-O-G IS STAR CANINE TRAINER

ST. LOUIS (AP) — A cat with an unlikely name has an important job at a training center for dogs.

Support Dogs, Inc. in St. Louis took in the black and white cat over the summer and named him D-O-G (dee-OH'-jee). He's more than a mascot - officials say he plays a key role getting the dogs comfortable around other animals. Assistance dogs need to be well-behaved and not be distracted in their job helping people who are deaf or have mobility problems.

Support Dogs president and CEO Anne Klein says D-O-G is "fearless" around the larger canines and plays with their tails, sleeps in their beds and eats and drinks from their bowls instead of his own.

The dogs go through a two-year training program before they're given to clients for free.

REVERSE CHRISTMAS TALE: RED-SUITED MAN ON SLED SAVES DEER ON FROZEN POND

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — Reindeer are supposed to pull Santa Claus' sleigh, but in Oregon recently, a red-suited man on a sled wound up pushing a deer.

The reverse-reality Christmas-season tale played out when a deer wandered onto a frozen golf course pond in Sunriver, Oregon, on Friday and then lost its footing.

Try as it might, it couldn't get all its legs underneath him. It skidded and slithered, and its legs buckled.

Along came firefighter Jeff "JJ" Johnston, astride a new ice-rescue sled that was as bright red as the suit he wore, and as the nose on Rudolph the reindeer, which guided Santa's sleigh one foggy Christmas Eve.

Benjamin O'Keefe, a captain in the fire department of the resort and residential community, had his camera rolling. His video has become a sensation, garnering millions of views and picked up by broadcasters in the United States and overseas.

The young deer's hind legs began pumping, but it couldn't get up on its front legs. It was on an icy treadmill, going nowhere.

Johnston got close, spoke calming words to the deer and — slipping a bit himself as he tried to gain traction — gently pushed it with the front of the sled to the edge of the pond. Even then, the deer needed some coaxing. It seemed to have enjoyed the slippery ride.

Johnston tapped it on the head with the back of his gloved hand, then scratched the top of its head and ears, like you'd pet a dog.

The deer tried to get onto the sled before it turned around. Pushed once more to the snowy ground, it gained solid footing and, with a wave from Johnston, scampered off, presumably to join its mates in some deer games.

"JJ was talking to it the whole time," said Tammie Waters, office manager for the Sunriver Fire Department. "The deer played along pretty good."

It was the inaugural rescue mission for the sled, which was purchased with a grant from Firehouse Subs, a sandwich restaurant chain, she said. She hopes it never happens, but when someone falls through the ice or is stuck on thin ice, the sled will be put to use.

"It was a great way to get training, and rescue a deer," Waters said.

HO-HO-HOLE! CHRISTMAS TREE PLANTED IN MISSISSIPPI SINKHOLE

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — There's only one thing under the Christmas tree decorating Poplar Boulevard in

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 29 of 53

Jackson — a pothole that residents hope will get fixed soon.

WLBT-TV reports somebody placed a tree fully decorated with ornaments and lights in the sinkhole that appeared weeks earlier in the Belhaven neighborhood. A sign on the tree says: "From our sinkhole to yours."

Resident Kelsey Berry says the pothole posed a hazard to unsuspecting motorists because the street isn't lit very well. The tree's lights turn on at night to help warn drivers to swerve around it.

Many Jackson residents are all too familiar with holes in the roads. On one street where a pothole blew out several tires recently, people built a makeshift graveyard of hubcaps.

BELLY BUMP: DAD-TO-BE STAGES PREGNANCY PHOTO SHOOT, SHOWS BELLY

PEABODY, Mass. (AP) — An expecting father in Massachusetts has shown off his paternal glow with a pregnancy photo shoot.

Peabody resident Nick Roberts surprised his pregnant girlfriend with the photos at their gender reveal party in June before their son Logan was born. Some of the photos show Roberts posing at a beach in the town of Nahant, cradling his visible belly.

The couple's son has since been born.

Roberts says he and his friend, who is a photographer, grabbed some fast food before the shoot to "try to look a little pregnant."

Roberts' girlfriend, Brianna Magee, tells WHDH-TV she flipped through the pictures and "just started laughing harder and harder."

Roberts says the photo shoot was "extremely difficult because we just kept laughing."

POLICE: MAN'S BAG OF CHEESEBURGERS STOLEN IN ARMED ROBBERY

HAMDEN, Conn. (AP) — Connecticut police are looking for the suspect in the theft of a bag of cheeseburgers.

Hamden Police Capt. Ronald Smith says the 23-year-old victim was walking on the street carrying the bag of cheeseburgers Saturday night.

The New Haven Register reports he was then held up by an armed man who fled on foot with the victim's cheeseburgers.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Hamden police.

JAVA JAM: POLICE SAY MAN POSED AS OFFICER, TRIED TO GET DISCOUNTED COFFEE

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Police in western New York have charged a man who they say impersonated a police officer in an attempt to get discounted coffee.

WIVB-TV reports the man flashed a fake badge and gun at a Starbucks in Buffalo around 11 p.m. Friday. Police say the man claimed he was a detective and asked for a discount.

Authorities say the man then left Starbucks and tried to get into Spot Coffee after closing time by claiming he was a police officer. He was later arrested.

Police say the man was carrying a BB gun.

Police have charged the 48-year-old Buffalo man with criminal trespassing, criminal impersonation of a police officer and menacing.

ANCIENT PENGUIN WAS AS BIG AS A (HUMAN) PITTSBURGH PENGUIN

NEW YORK (AP) — Fossils from New Zealand have revealed a giant penguin that was as big as a grown man, roughly the size of the captain of the Pittsburgh Penguins.

The creature was slightly shorter in length and about 20 pounds (9 kilograms) heavier than the official stats for hockey star Sidney Crosby. It measured nearly 5 feet, 10 inches (1.77 meters) long when swimming and weighed in at 223 pounds (101 kilograms).

If the penguin and the Penguin faced off on the ice, however, things would look different. When standing, the ancient bird was maybe only 5-foot-3 (1.6 meters).

The newly found bird is about 7 inches (18 centimeters) longer than any other ancient penguin that has left a substantial portion of a skeleton, said Gerald Mayr of the Senckenberg Research Institute and Natural History Museum in Frankfurt, Germany. A potentially bigger rival is known only from a fragment of leg bone, making a size estimate difficult.

The biggest penguin today, the emperor in Antarctica, stands less than 4 feet (1.2 meters) tall.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 30 of 53

Mayr and others describe the giant creature in a paper released Tuesday by the journal Nature Communications. They named it Kumimanu biceae, which refers to Maori words for a large mythological monster and a bird, and the mother of one of the study's authors. The fossils are 56 million to 60 million years old.

That's nearly as old as the very earliest known penguin fossils, which were much smaller, said Daniel Ksepka, curator at the Bruce Museum of Greenwich, Connecticut. He has studied New Zealand fossil penguins but didn't participate in the new study.

The new discovery shows penguins "got big very rapidly" after the mass extinction of 66 million years ago that's best known for killing off the dinosaurs, he wrote in an email.

That event played a big role in penguin history. Beforehand, a non-flying seabird would be threatened by big marine reptile predators, which also would compete with the birds for food. But once the extinction wiped out those reptiles, the ability to fly was not so crucial, opening the door for penguins to appear.

Birds often evolve toward larger sizes after they lose the ability to fly, Mayr said. In fact, the new paper concludes that big size appeared more than once within the penguin family tree.

What happened to the giants?

Mayr said researchers believe they died out when large marine mammals like toothed whales and seals showed up and provided competition for safe breeding places and food. The newcomers may also have hunted the big penguins, he said.

FETID ATTRACTION: LONDON FATBERG TO GO ON MUSEUM DISPLAY

LONDON (AP) — Part of a monster fatberg that clogged one of London's sewers is destined for fame in a museum.

The Museum of London says it will put the only remaining chunk of the 130-metric-ton (143-U.S.-ton) mass of oil, fat, diapers and baby wipes on display early next year.

Workers for utility company Thames Water spent weeks this year dislodging the smelly 250-meter-long (820-foot-long) blob by breaking it up with high-powered hoses.

The museum's shoebox-sized chunk is all that remains. The rest has been converted to biofuel.

Curator Vyki Sparkes said Tuesday that it will be "one of the most fascinating and disgusting objects we have ever had on display."

It has been air-dried to reduce the smell and will be displayed in a sealed unit.

RAFFLE BAFFLE: POLICE CHARGE MAN ACCUSED OF STEALING RAFFLE PRIZES

SOUTHINGTON, Conn. (AP) — Police have charged a man they say rigged a parent-teacher organization raffle so he won two prizes and then stole a third prize.

Officials say 35-year-old Alexander Stewart, of Southington, is charged with forgery and three counts of sixth-degree larceny. He pleaded not guilty at his arraignment this week and was freed on \$1,000 bond.

Police say Stewart placed almost 200 tickets he didn't buy into a drawing at a PTO event in October and as a result won prizes worth \$40 and \$45. He then allegedly took a third prize he hadn't won and walked to his car. He told police he inadvertently took the third prize.

He was arrested after not responding to requests to settle the matter out of court.

POLICE: MAN STRIPS NAKED, JUMPS ON CAR AFTER ROAD CRASH

FAIRFAX, Va. (AP) — Fairfax County police say a man stripped off his clothes and jumped on a passing vehicle after a road accident near Washington Dulles International Airport.

A statement from the Fairfax County Police Department says the bizarre incident occurred Tuesday afternoon and caused "major traffic delays" during rush hour around the major international airport.

The man, who was not immediately identified, is facing multiple charges.

Officials say the naked suspect was found on Dulles airport property after fleeing the accident scene. He was taken to the hospital with minor injuries.

Nobody else was injured during the road accident or what the police describe as an assault on a passing vehicle.

'I WANT A HIPPOPOTAMUS FOR CHRISTMAS' WISH GRANTED, AGAIN

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Oklahoma City native Gayla Peevey has welcomed another hippopotamus to the city's zoo, more than 60 years after her song about wanting one for Christmas helped the facility

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 31 of 53

purchase its first.

The singer was on hand as the 26-year-old pygmy hippopotamus Francesca made her first Oklahoma public appearance since moving from the San Diego Zoo.

In 1953, the then-10-year-old Peevey sang the novelty hit, "I Want a Hippopotamus For Christmas." It led to a statewide fund drive in which children donated dimes to purchase and bring a pachyderm to the zoo.

Peevey also was there in December 1953 when the Nile hippopotamus Mathilda arrived.

Francesca joins 43-year-old Wolee in the zoo's pachyderm exhibit.

Pygmy hippos are listed as endangered, with fewer than 3,000 remaining in the wild.

OKLAHOMA VET REMOVES 21 PACIFIERS FROM DOG'S BELLY

EDMOND, Okla. (AP) — An Oklahoma mother and father couldn't figure out what was happening to their child's pacifiers until the baby's grandmother saw the family dog swipe one off a counter.

One nauseous pooch and a trip to their veterinarian's office confirmed the couple's hunch: Dovey had 21 pacifiers lodged in her stomach.

The couple told the veterinarian Dovey had slowed her eating and was vomiting for a few days, but other than that, they thought she seemed fine.

KFOR-TV reports that at first, the veterinarian thought there were only seven to nine pacifiers in Dovey's stomach, but the surgery proved otherwise.

Dovey is on the mend and has already gone home.

The veterinarian cautioned pet owners in a recent Facebook post that "dogs will eat anything, anytime and at any age."

LONG ISLAND TOWN COMES TOGETHER TO RESCUE CAT IN TREE

GREENPORT, N.Y. (AP) — A cat that scaled a tree on Long Island and became trapped for five days has been rescued following a townwide effort to save it.

Newsday reports the Shamrock Tree Co. and the North Fork Animal Welfare League were finally able to coax a stressed cat down from a tree in Greenport in Suffolk County on Tuesday. The freed feline ran away after it was saved.

Southold Animal Shelter manager Gabby Stroup says residents and town officials had worked to free the cat to no avail. The cat ran farther up the large tree when a bucket truck tried to reach the cat Friday.

Shamrock owner Jonath Shipman says he has rescued cats and a red-tailed hawk with his 60-foot bucket truck. Shipman says the rescue only took a couple minutes.

PILOT TRACES VIRTUAL CHRISTMAS TREE IN GERMAN TEST FLIGHT

BERLIN (AP) — A pilot has traced a virtual Christmas tree over Germany on a test flight with an Airbus A380.

Airbus spokesman Heiko Stolzke told news agency dpa Thursday that the nearly 5½-hour flight the previous day was "a standard internal Airbus test flight before the delivery of a new aircraft."

He said the idea for the Christmas tree pattern of the flight, which took off from and landed at the company's plant in Hamburg, came from the pilot and engineers on the flight and it was carried out in cooperation with air traffic control.

The plane turned several corners and loops during its flight to produce a pattern in the shape of a tree complete with baubles.

GOLD COINS FOUND IN SALVATION ARMY HOLIDAY KETTLE IN FLORIDA

POMPANO BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Officials say they found gold coins among the donations in a Salvation Army kettle in Florida.

A Sun Sentinel report says it's the fourth consecutive year that someone has dropped gold 1947 Mexican 50-peso coins into the kettle outside a store in Pompano Beach.

The Salvation Army of Broward County said two of the coins were discovered Wednesday. Another one was found Nov. 27.

Officials said all the coins were wrapped in dollar bills.

Each coin is worth a little more than \$1,300.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 32 of 53

Allyse Gossman, the Salvation Army of Broward County's director of development, says a donor typically purchases the coins after the Christmas season.

The organization says holiday donations in the red kettles help provide meals, shelter, clothing and social services to more than 25,000 people in the county.

HOMELESS MAN FINDS \$354,000 IN ROOM AT PARIS AIRPORT

PARIS (AP) — French police say a homeless man found a huge amount of cash last week at Paris' Charles de Gaulle Airport and was able to leave the complex with 300,000 euros (\$354,000).

Two police officers, who are not allowed to speak publicly on the case, said Thursday that video surveillance showed the man looking in the trash and leaning against a nearby door.

Airport police union official Jean-Yann William Airport told France Info television that "to his surprise, the door is opening, he's entering and finds out there's huge amount of money" in the room of cash transport company Loomis.

Video then shows the man leaving the airport with two big bags.

Police recognized him as a homeless man living in the airport area. He is being actively sought.

GAZA EATERY OFFERS DISCOUNTS TO NORTH KOREANS BUT NO TAKERS

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — A Gaza eatery is offering massive discounts to North Korean diners but there is just one problem — there are no North Koreans in Gaza.

Ibrahim Raba, manager of a shawarma restaurant in Gaza's Jabaliya refugee camp, says he is offering the 80 percent discounts to show his appreciation for North Korea's rejection of President Donald Trump's recent recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

He has also placed a large photo of reclusive North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on the glass door entrance to his restaurant.

A new Kim fan, Raba likes to quote the North Korean leader, saying: "Trump proved he is mentally deranged."

And though Raba knows there are no North Koreans in Gaza, he hopes they will come someday, perhaps after joining other foreign aid workers.

OLDEST POLAR BEAR IN US CELEBRATES 37TH BIRTHDAY

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — The Philadelphia Zoo has thrown a birthday party for 37-year-old Coldilocks, the oldest polar bear in captivity in the United States.

The zoo says they celebrated her birthday Thursday with a peanut butter, honey, raisin and fish cake. Guests at the party braved a cold, icy day to sing "Happy Birthday" to the bear.

Zoo officials say the average lifespan for polar bears in captivity is 23 years. They credit Coldilocks' long life to the care she receives from her keepers and veterinary staff.

Coldilocks lived with her partner Klondike for more than three decades before the bear died in 2015 at age 34.

Polar bears as a species are listed as vulnerable. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimated in January that about 26,000 specimens remain in the wild.

Moore tells supporters 'battle is not over' in Senate race

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — Alabama Republican Roy Moore on Friday told supporters that the "battle is not over" in Alabama's Senate race even though President Donald Trump and others have called on him to concede.

Moore sent a fundraising email to supporters asking for contributions to his "election integrity fund" so he could investigate reports of voter fraud.

"I also wanted to let you know that this battle is NOT OVER!" he wrote.

Democrat Doug Jones on Tuesday defeated Moore by about 20,000 votes, or 1.5 percent, according to unofficial returns. But Moore, who has been accused of sexual misconduct with teenage girls when he was in his 30s, has not yet conceded the heated Alabama race to fill the seat that previously belonged to U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 33 of 53

Moore told supporters that the race was "close" and some military and provisional ballots had yet to be counted. Those are expected to be counted next week.

Moore said his campaign is collecting "numerous reported cases of voter fraud" to send to the secretary of state's office.

Secretary of State John Merrill has said it is unlikely that the last-minute ballots will change the outcome of the election or even trigger a recount.

Merrill said his office has investigated reports of voting irregularities, but "we have not discovered any that have been proven factual in nature."

Trump, who had endorsed Moore, called Jones to congratulate him on his win. Trump on Friday said that he believed Moore should concede the race.

The results of Alabama's Senate race will be certified between Dec. 26 and Jan. 3 after counties report their official totals.

Army of firefighters takes on still-growing California fire

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. (AP) — The fourth-largest wildfire in California history continues to grow and threaten thousands of homes despite armies of fire crews and fleets of bulldozers and aircraft.

Although Santa Ana winds eased on Friday amid the blaze northwest of Los Angeles, they are expected to return with a vengeance over the weekend. And the fire is so large that winds on one end may be gustier than those on the other side.

The 11-day-old Thomas fire surging through Ventura and Santa Barbara counties had devoured some 400 square miles (1,000 square kilometers) of brush and timber and burned more than 1,000 buildings, including well over 750 homes.

Another 18,000 buildings are still in jeopardy, including mansions in the wealthy enclave of Montecito.

The fire is only 35 percent surrounded despite efforts by some 8,000 firefighters, 32 helicopters and 78 bulldozers.

Santa Barbara has had only a tiny amount of rain since Oct. 1, the start of the new water year, and is more than 3 inches (7.6 centimeters) below normal to date.

The fire already has destroyed more than 1,000 buildings, including well over 700 homes, and threatens 18,000 more structures.

Another focus of firefighting was on the eastern flank in canyons where a state firefighter was killed Thursday near the agricultural town of Fillmore.

Officials have released no details on the death of 32-year-old Cory Iverson.

The National Weather Service forecast extreme fire danger or "red flag" conditions through at least Saturday evening, with winds gusting to 40 mph in the Santa Barbara County mountains where the fire is burning. Firefighters were facing first northerly "sundowner" winds through the night that could turn into northeasterly Santa Ana winds, driving the flames in another direction.

Everything about the fire was massive, from a footprint larger than that of many cities to the sheer scale of destruction that cremated entire neighborhoods or the legions attacking it: more than 8,000 firefighters from nearly a dozen states, aided by 32 helicopters and 78 bulldozers.

Firefighting costs were approaching \$89 million.

Major media players start commission for sexual misconduct

By ANDREW DALTON, Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The biggest figures and institutions in entertainment have established a commission to be chaired by Anita Hill that intends to combat sexual misconduct and inequality in the industry in the wake of the huge wave of revelations spurred by allegations against Harvey Weinstein.

A statement Friday announced the founding of the Commission on Sexual Harassment and Advancing Equality in the Workplace, a group that grew out of a meeting called by "Star Wars" producer Kathleen Kennedy and several other prominent women in the industry.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 34 of 53

"The Commission will not seek just one solution, but a comprehensive strategy to address the complex and interrelated causes of the problems of parity and power," Kennedy said in a statement.

The chief executives of nearly every major Hollywood studio, TV network and record label attended the meeting and agreed to found and to fund the group, the statement said. The long list includes Disney CEO Bob Iger, Paramount CEO Karen Stuart, Universal Music Group CEO Sir Lucian Grange and CBS chief executive Leslie Moonves.

The movie and music academies and many of the major agencies and unions that represent entertainers also signed on.

"The fact that so many industry leaders_across film, television, music, digital, unions, agencies ... and guilds_came together, in one room, to explore solutions speaks to a new era," Kennedy said.

The group chose as its chair the law professor Hill, who brought the concept of sexual harassment to national consciousness in 1991 when she testified during the Supreme Court confirmation hearings of Clarence Thomas.

"It is time to end the culture of silence," Hill said in a statement. "I've been at this work for 26 years. This moment presents us with an unprecedented opportunity to make real change."

The commission said in its statement that it would reconvene immediately after the first of the year to hone its mission, scope and priorities.

The revelations about Weinstein in The New York Times and the New Yorker in October have brought on two months unlike any the media world has ever seen, with nearly daily allegations of sexual harassment assault and abuse that have ensnared some of the most prominent players in entertainment including Kevin Spacey, Louis CK, Dustin Hoffman and Russell Simmons.

Hill has been making appearances in Southern California in recent days before Friday's announcement, speaking to a gathering of entertainers and executives in Beverly Hills last week.

She said there that she knew that despite Thomas' confirmation to the Supreme Court, the issue would one day return.

"I never believed 1991 was the end," she said, "and I was going to make sure in my life that I never saw that as the defining moment for me or for this issue."

AP Entertainment Writer Sandy Cohen contributed to this story.

Follow Andrew Dalton at www.twitter.com/andyjamesdalton

Deadly California wildfire continues to grow

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. (AP) — Calming winds Friday gave firefighters a chance to gain ground against a huge wildfire in coastal mountains northwest of Los Angeles but the blaze continued to surge west, endangering thousands of homes, as forecasts called for a renewal of gusty winds.

The so-called Thomas Fire, the fourth-largest in California history, was 35 percent contained Friday night after sweeping across 400 square miles (about 1,036 sq. kilometers) of Ventura and Santa Barbara counties since it erupted Dec. 4.

Between Thursday night and Friday morning, the blaze claimed another 3,000 acres as it fed on brush and timber killed by California's long drought or a week of hot, dry weather.

Santa Barbara has had only a tiny amount of rain since Oct. 1, the start of the new water year, and is more than 3 inches (7.6 centimeters) below normal to date.

Firefighters continued to carve firebreaks above the communities of Santa Barbara, Carpinteria, Summerland and Montecito and state fire officials said evacuations would be called as needed as flames advanced.

The fire already has destroyed more than 1,000 buildings, including well over 700 homes, and threatens 18,000 more structures.

Another focus of firefighting was on the eastern flank in canyons where a state firefighter was killed Thursday near the agricultural town of Fillmore.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 35 of 53

The death of Cory Iverson, 32, was announced by Chief Ken Pimlott of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection but he released no information about the circumstances, citing an ongoing investigation by an accident review team.

Iverson was an engineer with a strike team from the San Diego area and had been with Cal Fire since 2009. He is survived by his wife, who is pregnant, and a 2-year-old daughter, as well as his parents and other family.

The National Weather Service forecast extreme fire danger or "red flag" conditions through at least Saturday evening, with winds gusting to 40 mph in the Santa Barbara County mountains where the fire is burning. Firefighters were facing first northerly "sundowner" winds through the night that could turn into northeasterly Santa Ana winds, driving the flames in another direction.

Everything about the fire was massive, from a footprint larger than that of many cities to the sheer scale of destruction that cremated entire neighborhoods or the legions attacking it: more than 8,000 firefighters from nearly a dozen states, aided by 32 helicopters and 78 bulldozers.

Firefighting costs were approaching \$89 million.

Meanwhile, firefighters continued to deal with the loss of their own. All 17 of the firefighters on Cory Iverson's five-engine strike team were pulled off the fire lines after his death.

On Thursday night, Ventura County Sheriff Geoff Dean called for a moment of silence during a meeting for Fillmore residents.

"As I was up in the canyon and I watched his fire brethren remove his flag-draped body from the canyon in the hills above where we sit right here, I couldn't help but think about his pregnant wife and his young daughter who will never see their husband and father again," Dean said.

It was the second death linked to the fire. The body of a 70-year-old woman was found in a crashed car on an evacuation route last week.

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

Americans pessimistic about Trump, country: AP-NORC Poll

By JULIE PACE and EMILY SWANSON, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump frequently casts his first year in office as a string of successes and campaign promises fulfilled. But less than a quarter of Americans think Trump has made good on the pledges he made to voters while running for president, according to a new poll by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Among Republicans, just half say Trump has kept his promises, which included vows to overhaul his predecessor's health care law, withdraw the United States from a nuclear accord with Iran and invest millions in new projects to fix the nation's aging infrastructure. None of those steps have been taken.

"Everything has stalled out," said Mark Krowski, 37, an independent from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, who leans Republican but didn't vote for Trump last year.

As 2017 comes to a close, the majority of Americans painted a broadly pessimistic view of Trump's presidency, the nation's politics and the overall direction of the country. Just three in 10 Americans said the United States is heading in the right direction, and 52 percent said the country is worse off since Trump became president — worrisome signs both for the White House and Republicans heading into a midterm election year where control of Congress will be at stake.

Along with the 23 percent who think Trump has kept his promises, another 30 percent think he has tried and failed and 45 percent think he hasn't kept them at all.

In a second AP-NORC poll conducted this month, Trump's job approval rating sits at just 32 percent, making him the least popular first-year president on record. A quarter of Republicans say they're among those who disapprove of the president.

One relative bright spot for Trump? The improving economy.

With a soaring stock market and unemployment hovering around 4 percent, 40 percent of Americans

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 36 of 53

approved of Trump's handling of the economy. That's higher than the three in 10 Americans that approved of the president's handling of health care, foreign policy or taxes.

Still, Trump continues to talk about his presidency with lofty rhetorical flourishes, declaring that his first months in office outshine those of his predecessors. But there's no doubt that 2017 has been devoid of any significant legislative accomplishments, though Republicans are urgently trying to pass a sweeping overhaul of the nation's tax system. The package would give generous tax cuts to corporations and the wealthiest Americans, and more modest tax cuts to low- and middle-income families.

"We're very, very close to a historic legislative victory, the likes of which rarely has this country seen," Trump said during a meeting with lawmakers earlier this week.

Republicans are banking on the tax overhaul being enough to carry them through next year's House and Senate contests, elections that will largely be a referendum on Trump's first two years in office and the GOP's stewardship as the majority party on Capitol Hill. But with the legislation rushed through Congress and negotiated largely in private, Trump and lawmakers may have more work to do to sell the public on its benefits.

"There's so much back and forth and so many adjustments being made. It's just so uncertain," Edward Hale, a 72-year-old independent, said of the tax legislation.

One thing Hale, a retired federal government employee from Clarion, Pennsylvania, is certain of in the proposal? "It definitely favors Mr. Trump and his wealthy friends," he said.

The survey results suggest that with or without a tax overhaul, Trump has work to do in convincing the public that his presidency is benefiting them. Just 25 percent of Americans think the country is better off since Trump took office — and only 20 percent say they personally are doing better.

By contrast, an AP-NORC poll conducted a year ago found that Americans were more likely to think the country had become better off over the course of Barack Obama's presidency than worse off, 46 percent to 33 percent.

Only 9 percent think the country has become more united as a result of Trump's presidency, while 67 percent think the country is more divided because of Trump. That's far higher than the 44 percent of Americans who said in a poll one year ago that Obama's presidency had served to divide the country further.

Even Republicans are more likely to say Trump has divided America than united it, 41 percent to 17 percent.

Notably, the deep-seated pessimism about the president and national politics doesn't extend to local communities. Overall, about half of Americans said they feel optimistic about their local communities. And that feeling is shared across the political spectrum: 55 percent of Democrats and 50 percent of Republicans feel optimistic about the way things are going locally.

The AP-NORC polls surveyed 1,444 adults from Nov. 30-Dec. 4 and 1,020 adults from Dec. 7-11 using samples 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 3.7 percentage points for the first survey and plus or minus 4.3 percentage points for the second.

Interviews were conducted online and using landlines and cellphones.

This version corrects voter Mark Krowski's age to 37.

Online:

Poll results: http://www.apnorc.org/PDFs/AP-NORC%20December%202017/AP%20Custom%20Poll%20Topline%20December_Trump.pdf

Follow Julie Pace at <http://twitter.com/jpaceDC> and Emily Swanson at http://twitter.com/EL_Swan

Strong earthquake rattles Indonesia's Java island; 2 dead

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — A strong earthquake shook Indonesia's densely populated Java island on Friday night, killing two people and severely damaging dozens of homes near the epicenter.

The magnitude 6.5 quake struck at 11:47 p.m. and was felt across the island, including about 200 kilometers (124 miles) away in the capital Jakarta, where office towers and apartment buildings swayed. Powerful tremors lasted as much as 30 seconds in places.

Panicking people ran out of buildings in many areas and roads were clogged with motorbikes, cars and trucks as people fled coastal areas in fear of a tsunami.

Ahmad Solihin, a food vendor in a coastal area of the Sukabumi region, said his village was jolted by a 20-second tremor that cracked walls in his home. He fled on his motorbike with his wife and two children after neighbors shouted that water was coming, he said.

"People suddenly started running so I joined them," said Solihin. More than 1,000 villagers in his area evacuated to higher ground and didn't return until Saturday morning after authorities convinced them it was safe, he said.

A 62-year-old man and an 80-year-old woman were killed in building collapses, said National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesman Sutopo Purwo Nugroho.

Damage was heaviest in the Tasikmalaya, Pangandaran and Ciamis regions of West Java Province near the epicenter.

More than 40 houses collapsed and about 65 suffered severe damage, said Nugroho.

The earthquake was about 91 kilometers (56 miles) deep and located just inland, the U.S. Geological Survey said. It triggered a tsunami warning for parts of Java's coastline that was lifted about two hours later. No significant waves were reported.

Several hospitals were damaged by the shaking and patients evacuated.

Indonesia sits on the "Pacific Ring of Fire" and has frequent earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

Female candidate quits Kansas race over 2005 harassment suit

By JOHN HANNA, AP Political Writer

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — A female congressional candidate dropped out of the Kansas race Friday over a 12-year-old lawsuit accusing her of sexually harassing a male subordinate, an unusual case of a woman facing the sort of misconduct allegations that have forced numerous men out of their jobs in recent weeks.

Andrea Ramsey announced in a Facebook post that she was ending her campaign, calling allegations that she harassed her former employee and then retaliated against him "a lie." The employee, Gary Funkhouser, filed the lawsuit against OneLab Inc., the Kansas City-area company where Ramsey worked as a vice president. The two parties agreed to dismiss the lawsuit after settlement talks.

Ramsey was seeking the Democratic nomination in the 3rd District in the Kansas City area, hoping to win the right to challenge four-term incumbent Republican Kevin Yoder next year. The district contains a mix of affluent, GOP-leaning suburbs and poorer, heavily Democratic city neighborhoods. Democrat Hillary Clinton carried it in last year's presidential election.

The Kansas City Star first reported about the lawsuit and said Ramsey dropped out after it asked her about the case.

Ramsey said "real change" has come in handling harassment complaints and timely and thorough investigations are "a very good thing." But, in her own case, she said, "These false allegations are disgraceful and demean the moment this country is in."

"On balance, it is far more important for me that women are stepping forward to tell their stories and confront their harassers than it is to continue our campaign," she said.

Funkhouser filed the federal lawsuit in October 2005, four months after he was fired as a human resources manager at OneLab. Ramsey, then known as Andrea Thomas, was the company's executive vice president for human resources, a position she left in April 2006 for another job.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 38 of 53

Funkhouser said he rebuffed sexual advances from Ramsey and, after he did, she shunned him, moved his office, criticized his work and then fired him in June 2005. The company denied those allegations, and Ramsey was not named as a defendant.

In her Facebook post, Ramsey said she "eliminated an employee's position," calling Funkhouser "vindictive."

Court records show that Funkhouser and the company agreed that the case should be dismissed in July 2006 but provide no details. There was no answer at a home telephone listing for Funkhouser in the Kansas City area, and one of his lawyers declined to comment.

Ramsey, also an attorney, said because she was not a defendant in the case, she did not participate in its resolution and would have "fought to exonerate my name and my reputation."

She was among five Democratic candidates but the only woman actively campaigning. Online finance records show she raised almost \$319,000 in contributions through September and loaned her campaign \$125,000.

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee has not endorsed a candidate. But Ramsey said in her Facebook posting that the 2005 lawsuit was enough for the committee not to support her.

"We are in a national moment where rough justice stands in place of careful analysis, nuance and due process," Ramsey said.

In an email, Meredith Kelly, the DCCC's communications director, said members of Congress and candidates "must all be held to the highest standard."

"If anyone is guilty of sexual harassment or sexual assault, that person should not hold public office," Kelly said.

Editors: This story has been corrected to show that the years of the man's firing and the dismissal of the lawsuit were 2005 and 2005, not 2015 and 2016.

Follow John Hanna on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/apjdhanna> .

N. Korea unmoved as world unites against its nuke ambitions

By EDITH M. LEDERER, Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — North Korea's friends and enemies joined forces Friday in opposing its determination to be recognized as a nuclear weapons state and calling on leader Kim Jong Un to negotiate the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula — but the North gave no sign of budging on its nuclear ambitions.

In a very rare appearance by a North Korean at the U.N. Security Council, Ambassador Ja Song Nam told a ministerial meeting that the country's possession of nuclear weapons was "an inevitable self-defensive measure" to defend the country against "the U.S. nuclear threat and blackmail."

Ja never mentioned the possibility of talks. Instead, he called the council meeting "a desperate measure plotted by the U.S. being terrified by the incredible might of our republic that has successfully achieved the great historic cause of completing the state nuclear force."

He pointed to the Nov. 29 launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile, which experts say could reach the U.S. mainland.

South Korea's Vice Foreign Minister Cho Hyun told the council that North Korea is "in the final stages of nuclear weaponization" and warned that if it can put a nuclear warhead on an intercontinental ballistic missile "it will fundamentally alter the security landscape in the region and beyond."

He urged the international community to grasp the urgency of the threat this poses and find ways to halt the North's nuclear program — including by maximizing pressure and uniting in answering "absolutely no" to North Korean attempts to be recognized as a nuclear-weapons state.

U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson declared: "We will never accept a nuclear North Korea."

Earlier this week, Tillerson stunned many by proposing talks with North Korea without preconditions. But he stepped back Friday, after the White House rebutted the proposal, telling the council "North Korea must earn its way back to the table."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 39 of 53

The U.S. and close allies South Korea and Japan called for increased pressure on the North to get Kim's government to negotiate the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

North Korea's Ja said his country has been the target of 11 U.N. sanctions resolutions. The United States, the European Union, South Korea, Japan and other countries have imposed additional measures. But all these bans haven't stopped Kim's nuclear and missile tests, or led to negotiations.

Japan's Foreign Minister Taro Kono urged the international community to maximize pressure on North Korea "by all means available," saying there is no other way to get Pyongyang to curb its escalating nuclear and missile programs. He announced that Japan has just ordered the assets of 19 North Korean entities to be frozen.

Kono said last week's visit to Pyongyang by U.N. political chief Jeffrey Feltman "only reconfirmed the dire reality" that North Korea "is nowhere near ready" to abandon its nuclear and missile programs, "nor is it interested in returning to a meaningful dialogue."

Feltman said after briefing the council Tuesday that North Korea's foreign minister and others told him "that it was important to prevent war" — and how we do that was the topic of more than 15 hours of discussions. Council diplomats said Feltman told them the North Koreans kept repeating that the time was not right for talks.

In his briefing to Friday's meeting, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres offered his "good offices" to avoid the dispute over the "alarming and accelerated pace" of North Korea's nuclear and missile program accidentally escalation into conflict.

The U.N. chief warned that "the risk is being multiplied by misplaced over-confidence, dangerous narratives and rhetoric, and the lack of communication channels." He urged an immediate re-establishment and strengthening of government and military communications.

Speaker after speaker at the ministerial meeting expressed concern about possible conflict.

Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia said "military rhetoric accompanied by a test of strength by the participants has led to a situation where around the world people have begun to wonder whether there will be war or not."

He questioned the U.S. commitment to peace on the Korean peninsula, saying 2 1/2 months of quiet from North Korea was answered by Washington and its allies with unscheduled and unprecedented military exercises in their scale, unilateral sanctions, and a declaration that the North is a state sponsor of terrorism.

"All of these steps force us to wonder about the sincerity of statements that suggest that there is a preference for a peaceful approach to resolving the crisis" by the United States, Nebenzia said.

He said North Korea won't halt its nuclear and missile programs "while it feels a direct threat to its security" and urged practical steps to de-escalate the situation, including cancellation of planned new U.S.-South Korean exercises and a halt to North Korean nuclear and missile tests.

China's deputy U.N. ambassador Wu Haitao said "the core of the nuclear issue is security."

"There is no military option, and resort to force can only bring disastrous consequences," he said.

As a close neighbor, Wu said China has made great efforts to promote dialogue and denuclearization.

But he pushed back against U.S. insistence that China holds the key to resolving the crisis.

"The current situation on the (Korean) Peninsula is not caused by any one party alone, and it is not possible to impose on any one party the responsibility of solving the problem," he said.

DA not filing charges over alleged assault at KU men's dorm

LAWRENCE, Kan. (AP) — Sexual assault charges won't be filed over a report that a 16-year-old girl was raped in December 2016 in the dorm that houses the Kansas men's basketball team, the local prosecutor announced Friday.

Douglas County District Attorney Charles Branson's office released a statement saying it does not have enough evidence to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that a sexual assault occurred. Branson's office called its seven-month review of reports, evidence and witnesses' statements "exhaustive."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 40 of 53

"Furthermore, no suspect for an alleged sexual assault was developed through the investigation," the statement said.

Branson's statement said his office still could file misdemeanor alcohol-related charges, but he did not provide additional details.

The Lawrence Journal-World first reported Branson's decision Friday. He told the newspaper that the 16-year-old girl is represented by an attorney and it's not clear whether she is willing to testify.

The university police department finished its investigation of the incident in May. Its report said rape, contributing to a child's misconduct and furnishing alcohol to a minor were reported and allegedly occurred at the dorm.

The report listed five players as witnesses. But police have said that means the players had pertinent information, not necessarily that they were eyewitnesses to criminal activity.

The 16-year-old girl, who was not a student at the University of Kansas, was visiting the dorm and wasn't from the area, according to police.

The same morning the rape was reported, a runaway was reported at the dorm. Police have not said whether the runaway and the girl were the same person.

During the investigation, police uncovered two glass smoking devices with residue inside. Then-sophomore forward Carlton Bragg Jr. was charged with misdemeanor possession of drug paraphernalia in that case. He was eventually granted a diversion in municipal court and later transferred to Arizona State.

Huge tax bill heads for passage as GOP senators fall in line

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

WASHINGTON (AP) — After weeks of quarrels, qualms and then eleventh-hour horse-trading, Republicans revealed the details of their huge national tax rewrite late Friday — along with announcements of support that all but guarantee approval to give President Donald Trump the Christmas legislative triumph he's been aching for.

The legislation would slash tax rates for big business and lower levies on the richest Americans in a massive \$1.5 trillion bill that the GOP plans to muscle through Congress next week before its year-end break. Benefits for most other taxpayers would be smaller.

"This is happening. Tax reform under Republican control of Washington is happening," House Speaker Paul Ryan of Wisconsin told rank-and-file members in a conference call. "Most critics out there didn't think it could happen. ... And now we're on the doorstep of something truly historic."

According to the 1,097-page bill released late Friday, today's 35 percent rate on corporations would fall to 21 percent, the crown jewel of the measure for many Republicans. Trump and GOP leaders had set 20 percent as their goal, but added a point to free money for other tax cuts that won over wavering lawmakers in final talks.

The legislation represents the first major legislative achievement for the GOP after nearly a full year in control of Congress and the White House. It's the widest-ranging reshaping of the tax code in three decades and is expected to add to the nation's \$20 trillion debt. The tax cuts are projected to add \$1.46 trillion over a decade.

The bill would repeal an important part of President Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act — the requirement that all Americans have health insurance or face a penalty — as the GOP looks to unravel a law it failed to repeal and replace this past summer.

Only on Friday did Republicans cement the needed support for the overhaul, securing endorsements from wavering senators.

Marco Rubio of Florida relented in his high-profile opposition after negotiators expanded the tax credit that parents can claim for their children. He said he would vote for the measure next week.

Rubio had been holding out for a bigger child credit for low-income families. After he got it, he tweeted that the change was "a solid step toward broader reforms which are both Pro-Growth and Pro-Worker."

Sen. Bob Corker of Tennessee, the only Republican to vote against the Senate version earlier this month,

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 41 of 53

made the surprise announcement that he would back the legislation. Corker, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has repeatedly warned that the nation's growing debt is the most serious threat to national security.

"I realize this is a bet on our country's enterprising spirit, and that is a bet I am willing to make," Corker said.

The White House said Trump "looks forward to fulfilling the promise he made to the American people to give them a tax cut by the end of the year."

The bill embodies a longstanding Republican philosophy that a substantial tax break for businesses will trigger economic growth and job creation for Americans in a trickle-down economy.

Skeptical Democrats are likely to oppose the legislation unanimously.

"Under this bill, the working class, middle class and upper middle class get skewered while the rich and wealthy corporations make out like bandits," said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York. "It is just the opposite of what America needs, and Republicans will rue the day they pass this."

The bill would drop today's 39.6 percent top rate on individuals to 37 percent. The standard deduction — used by around two-thirds of households — would be nearly doubled, to \$24,000 for married couples.

The \$1,000-per-child tax deduction would grow to \$2,000, with up to \$1,400 available in IRS refunds for families who owe little or no taxes. Parents would have to provide children's Social Security numbers to receive the child tax credit, a measure intended to deny the credit to people who are in the U.S. illegally.

Those who itemize would lose some deductions. The deduction that millions use in connection with state and local income, property and sales taxes would be capped at \$10,000. That's especially important to residents of high-tax states such as New York, New Jersey and California. Deductions for medical expenses that lawmakers once considered eliminating would be retained.

The bill would allow homeowners to deduct interest only on the first \$750,000 of a new mortgage, down from the current limit of \$1 million.

People who inherit fortunes would get a big break. The bill would double the exemption, meaning the estate tax would apply only to the portion of an estate over \$22 million for married couples.

Members of a House-Senate conference committee signed the final version of the legislation Friday, sending it to the two chambers for final passage next week. They have been working to blend the different versions passed by the two houses.

Republicans hold a slim 52-48 majority in the Senate, including two ailing senators who have missed votes this past week.

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.

Border arrests surge, erasing much of Trump's early gains

By ELLIOT SPAGAT, Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The U.S. government on Friday announced a seventh straight monthly increase in people being arrested or denied entry along the Mexican border, erasing much of the early gains of President Donald Trump's push to tighten the border.

Denials of entry for people at official crossings and border arrests reached 39,006 in November, up 12 percent from 34,855 in October and more than double the 15,766 who were stopped or arrested in April. But November's figure was still down 38 percent from 63,361 for November of 2016, shortly before Trump took office.

Border arrests don't capture how many people got away from agents but are widely used to understand trends in how many attempt to enter the country illegally.

Trump touted the dramatic decline in arrests during the early months of his presidency as evidence that his administration was making the border more secure. Reasons for the drop and recent rise are unclear but Trump's pledge to build a wall with Mexico may have initially discouraged people from trying and now

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 42 of 53

be having less impact.

Administration officials said last week that they were concerned about an increase in families and unaccompanied children showing up at the U.S. border with Mexico. Customs and Border Protection asked for changes to a 2008 law that gave new protections to children entering the country who are not from Canada or Mexico and prevents them from quickly being sent home.

Tyler Houlton, a Homeland Security Department spokesman, said illegal immigration has declined over the last year.

The uptick since April "underscores that Congress must act immediately to close immigration loopholes, fund the border wall, terminate outdated visa programs and provide the necessary tools for DHS officials to carry out their mission," he said.

November's count was far below the number of people who were stopped trying to enter the U.S. during the Obama administration's final months and the summer of 2014, when large numbers of families and children from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras crossed through southern Texas. Still, it was higher than five months in 2014 and in 2015 and four months in 2013.

Border Patrol arrests of people traveling as families totaled 7,018 in November, up 45 percent from 4,839 in October. Arrests of unaccompanied children reached 4,000, up 26 percent from 3,168 a month earlier.

Trump made his pledge for a "big, beautiful wall" with Mexico a centerpiece of his presidential campaign. Last week, the government announced that Border Patrol arrests plunged to a 45-year low in the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30.

Congressional Democrats have balked at Trump's request for \$1.6 billion to build or replace 74 miles (118 kilometers) of wall in San Diego and Texas' Rio Grande Valley by October.

Disney-Fox deal may create a new nerdy nirvana

By RYAN NAKASHIMA and MATT O'BRIEN, AP Technology Writers

MENLO PARK, California (AP) — The coming union of the Disney and Fox media empires is set to create a new nirvana for fanboys and -girls, one that reunites superheroes and sci-fi characters long separated by an energy barrier of corporate legalism.

Take, for instance, the fractured world of Marvel superheroes. For years, the X-Men (Wolverine, Storm, Professor X and the crew) and the Fantastic Four (Thing, Invisible Woman, et al) have battled bad dudes from the studios of 20th Century Fox. Meanwhile Iron Man, Black Widow and other Avengers vanquished villains in another corner of the galaxy run by Disney. Almost ne'er the twain did meet — though that could soon change.

In a related fashion, rights to the various "Star Wars" films have been scattered all over a galaxy far, far away; those will soon be unified under a powerful Galactic Emp-- er, well, Magic Kingdom.

THE MOUSE THAT ATE THE FOX

Disney's announcement Thursday that it's buying most of movie goliath Fox for \$52.4 billion in stock brings these once disparate franchises together, possibly for as-yet unplanned intergalactic dust-ups. Add the "Avatar" franchise to the blockbuster mix, and the company that launched Mickey Mouse will be an unavoidable presence at the box office and online if the deal goes through.

The combined company will account for more than a third of theatrical revenues in the U.S. and Canada, an \$11 billion business last year, not to mention a huge chunk of the global theater-going pie, according to Daniel Ives, chief strategy officer at market research firm GBH Insights.

That would make the Disney juggernaut a more powerful theatrical force to be reckoned with than ever before. Online, Disney has announced plans to launch its own streaming service in 2019, after pulling titles like "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story" and Disney's "Moana" from Netflix's streaming platform to move onto its own. After Fox's deal to send its movies to HBO ends reportedly in 2022, its films will also move to the Disney streaming platforms.

"Creating a direct-to-consumer relationship is vital to the future of our media businesses and it's our highest priority," Disney CEO Bob Iger told investors in a Thursday conference call detailing the Fox deal.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 43 of 53

ONE BIG HAPPY DEATH STAR

Those old enough to remember the blaring 20th Century Fox opening to the original "Star Wars" (Episode IV) may no longer have to search far, far, away to find the other titles. The original was made and distributed by Fox, but it was a quirk of the series.

Episodes V, VI, I, II, and III were owned by Lucasfilm (bought by Disney in 2012) and distributed by Fox. You can only stream those first six movies endlessly if you buy them and register them through the not-terribly-popular UltraViolet system backed by several studios. (You can also rent them digitally.) "The Force Awakens" — Episode VII — is available to streaming subscribers, though only if you have Starz.

The Force may finally put these titles in one place.

Buying Fox will also give Disney a majority stake in streaming platform Hulu. The addition of Fox's regional sports TV networks and National Geographic video programming in the deal could let the new service bundle hugely popular movie and TV franchises, local sports broadcast rights, and distribution platforms into one live online video empire.

That would recreate online what the U.S. Supreme Court broke apart in the 1940s. That's when the court forced Hollywood studios to divest ownership of theater chains to keep content producers from controlling every step along the way to the consumer.

"This moves Disney from an afterthought in streaming to a legitimate contender," Ives said.

SCRAPPY REBELS

At the same time, tech companies — particularly Netflix, Amazon, Facebook, Google, and Apple — are making big investments in video streaming. Hollywood-centered entertainment companies have struggled as people drop traditional TV packages, shifting the nexus of power in entertainment from the Hollywood Hills toward Silicon Valley and Seattle.

That marketplace dynamic could help pave the way for regulators to clear the deal, aimed to close within the next 12 to 18 months.

"These guys are up against Facebook and Google, not Warner Bros. and MGM," said Mike Kelly, the former Weather Channel CEO who is now CEO of investment and advisory firm Kelly Newman Ventures. "If you look at it that way, I don't think the government would have that big of an issue with it."

Iger said he anticipates a "significant amount of regulatory scrutiny both in the United States and internationally" because of the deal's size, but he said authorities should quickly approve it because it makes sense for consumers.

He said Disney's current thinking is to split its streaming services into three different brands, such as a Disney-labeled family service that would fold in NatGeo, Marvel, Pixar and Lucasfilm; an ESPN-led sports service; and an adult-oriented service that would incorporate Hulu and some of Fox's TV shows.

Disney also aims to expand the global audience of its cast of characters as it pulls in Fox's London-based pay-TV broadcaster Sky, which has a pan-European audience, and Mumbai-based Star India.

OH, THAT LONELY WEB-SLINGER

But there's one part of the comic book world that will escape Disney's sizable web: Spider-Man, whose rights Marvel partially farmed out to Sony.

Although Sony and Disney cut a deal to include Spidey in Avengers tales starting with "Captain America: Civil War" last year, Sony continues to develop its own alternate reality with movies like the animated "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-verse" as well as spin-offs "Venom" and "Silver & Black" starting in 2018.

O'Brien reported from Providence, Rhode Island.

Judge temporarily blocks new Trump rules on birth control

By JOSH CORNFIELD and SUDHIN THANAWALA, Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — A federal judge in Philadelphia on Friday ordered the Trump administration not to enforce new rules that could significantly reduce women's access to free birth control.

Judge Wendy Beetlestone issued the injunction, temporarily stopping the government from enforcing

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 44 of 53

the policy change to former President Barack Obama's health care law.

The law required most companies to cover birth control at no additional cost, though it included exemptions for religious organizations and some private companies.

The new policy would allow more categories of employers, including publicly traded companies, to opt out of providing free contraception to women by claiming religious objections. It would allow any company that is not publicly traded to deny coverage on moral grounds.

Beetlestone, appointed to the bench by Obama, called the Trump administration's exemptions "sweeping" and said they are the "proverbial exception that swallows the rule."

She was particularly critical of the power to object on moral grounds, saying it "conjured up a world where a government entity is empowered to impose its own version of morality on each one of us. That cannot be right."

Attorneys for the Trump administration had argued in court documents that the rules are about "protecting a narrow class of sincere religious and moral objectors from being forced to facilitate practices that conflict with their beliefs."

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issued the new policy in October. It marked another step in the Trump administration's rollback of the Affordable Care Act, and supporters say it promotes religious freedom.

Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro, a Democrat, said that Trump broke the law to undermine women's health and that the ruling will protect women.

"This is just the first step, but today is a critical victory for millions of women and families and for the rule of law," Shapiro said.

The injunction will block the rule from being implemented around the country while the case brought by Shapiro moves forward in Pennsylvania. Shapiro's suit said the rules violate the Fifth Amendment because they pertain to women and not men and the First Amendment, by putting employers' religious beliefs over the constitutional rights of women.

California, Washington and Massachusetts have also sued the Trump administration over the rules. Delaware, Maryland, New York and Virginia joined California in its effort.

A federal judge in Oakland, California, heard arguments on Tuesday on the state's request to block the new rules and is expected to issue a ruling in that case soon.

Fatima Goss Graves, president of the National Women's Law Center, praised the decision and said the group will continue to fight against the rules.

"Employers' religious beliefs should never determine the care a woman receives," she said.

Thanawala reported from San Francisco.

This story has been corrected to show that only companies that are not publicly traded could rely on the moral exemption.

SpaceX 1st: Recycled rocket soars with recycled capsule

By MARCIA DUNN, AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — SpaceX racked up another first on Friday, launching a recycled rocket with a recycled capsule on a grocery run for NASA.

The unmanned Falcon rocket blasted off with a just-in-time-for-Christmas delivery for the International Space Station, taking flight again after a six-month turnaround. On board was a Dragon supply ship, also a second-time flier.

It was NASA's first use of a reused Falcon rocket and only the second of a previously flown Dragon.

Within 10 minutes of liftoff, the first-stage booster was back at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, standing upright on the giant X at SpaceX's landing zone. That's where it landed back in June following its first launch. Double sonic booms thundered across the area. At SpaceX headquarters in Hawthorne, California,

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 45 of 53

cheers erupted outside the company's glassed-in Mission Control, where chief executive Elon Musk joined his employees.

The Dragon reaches the space station Sunday. The capsule last visited the 250-mile-high outpost in 2015.

This time, the capsule is hauling nearly 5,000 pounds of goods, including 40 mice for a muscle-wasting study, a first-of-its-kind impact sensor for measuring space debris as minuscule as a grain of sand and barley seeds for a germination experiment by Budweiser, already angling to serve the first beer on Mars.

Ven Feng, a NASA manager, said he had "a little sense of déjà vu" watching Friday's launch and landing of the same rocket he saw take off and return in June.

"Quite an achievement," he said.

For the past two years, the private SpaceX has been salvaging as much as possible from rockets following liftoff. Rather than letting first-stage boosters sink in the Atlantic, as other orbital rocket makers do, SpaceX flies them back to Cape Canaveral for vertical touchdowns or, when extra rocket power is needed to propel a satellite extra high, to a floating ocean platform.

Reusability is the future for spaceflight, according to NASA's station program manager Kirk Shireman.

"The reality is, the business of space is dominated by launch costs ... so getting the costs down is important for everyone," Shireman said.

NASA flew its first reused capsule back in June. But managers waited until SpaceX had three rocket reflights under its belt, before putting NASA's station equipment and experiments on a secondhand Falcon. After extensive reviews, the risk of flying a reused rocket, versus a brand new one, was judged to be pretty much equal, he said.

Friday's booster recovery was the 20th for the company.

Jessica Jensen, a SpaceX manager, said the company aims to reuse rockets — and capsules — far more than twice. The only way to get thousands of people into space — the ultimate goal of Musk — is by drastically cutting launch costs, she said.

This was the first launch from the SpaceX-rented Complex 40 in more than a year. The last time a Falcon rocket stood at the pad ready to fly, in September 2016, it blew up during a fueling drill. SpaceX spent \$50 million rebuilding the pad.

Friday's successful liftoff means SpaceX has now launched from all three of its pads — two in Florida and one in California — in the same year.

"This was a fantastic way to end the year for SpaceX East Coast launches," Jensen told reporters.

The space station is down to three astronauts until Sunday's launch of three more. The Dragon should arrive at the orbiting outpost a few hours after the fresh crew launches from Kazakhstan. Once back up to full capacity, the station will be home to three Americans, two Russians and one Japanese.

SpaceX — one of two private shippers contracted by NASA — has been making station supply runs since 2012.

Online:

NASA: https://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/station/main/index.html

White House signals Western Wall has to be part of Israel

By KEN THOMAS, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senior Trump administration officials outlined their view Friday that Jerusalem's Western Wall ultimately will be declared a part of Israel, in another declaration sure to enflame passions among Palestinians and others in the Middle East.

Although they said the ultimate borders of the holy city must be resolved through Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, the officials — speaking ahead of Vice President Mike Pence's trip to the region — essentially ruled out any scenario that didn't maintain Israeli control over the holiest ground in Judaism. The issue is sensitive because the wall is beyond Israel's pre-1967 borders and abuts some of the Islamic world's most revered sites.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 46 of 53

"We cannot envision any situation under which the Western Wall would not be part of Israel. But as the president said, the specific boundaries of sovereignty of Israel are going to be part of the final status agreement," a senior administration official said. Another official later added by email, "We note that we cannot imagine Israel would sign a peace agreement that didn't include the Western Wall."

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss details of the vice president's upcoming trip. Nabil Abu Rdeneh, a senior adviser to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, reacted indignantly to the comments.

"We will not accept any changes on the borders of east Jerusalem, which was occupied in 1967," Abu Rdeneh told The Associated Press. "This statement proves once again that this American administration is outside the peace process. The continuation of this American policy, whether the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, or moving the American embassy, or such statements, by which the United States decides unilaterally on the issues of the final status negotiations, are a violation of international law and strengthen the Israeli occupation. For us, this is unacceptable. We totally reject it. And we totally denounce it."

Pence plans to visit the Western Wall next week. The administration officials said he would be accompanied by a rabbi to preserve the spiritual nature of his planned visit to the hallowed wall in Jerusalem's Old City. The officials said Pence's Wednesday visit would be conducted in a similar manner to when President Donald Trump visited in May.

Jerusalem's status has been a central issue in the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Trump's announcement last week declaring Jerusalem to be Israel's capital shook up decades of U.S. foreign policy and countered an international consensus that Jerusalem's status should be decided in negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, who claim east Jerusalem as the capital of their future state.

Pence plans to depart for the Middle East on Tuesday after presiding over the Senate's vote on a sweeping tax overhaul. The vice president will meet Wednesday with Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi in Cairo and then travel to Israel. Pence's two-plus days in Israel will include meetings with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a speech at the Knesset and a visit to the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial.

Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital has sparked protests in the Middle East, and Abbas pulled out of a planned meeting with Pence. Abbas had originally been scheduled to host Pence, a devout Christian, in the biblical West Bank town of Bethlehem.

A third senior administration official noted the reaction to the Jerusalem decision and "a lot of the emotions that have been displayed on that." The official said Pence's trip is viewed as part of "the ending of that chapter and the beginning of what I would say the next chapter."

Trump officials said Pence would reinforce Trump's announcement on Jerusalem, but the administration also understands the Palestinians may need a cooling-off period.

Israel captured the Old City, home to important Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious sites, along with the rest of east Jerusalem in the 1967 war. The U.S. has never recognized Israeli sovereignty over territory occupied in 1967, including east Jerusalem. For this reason, U.S. officials have refused to say explicitly that the wall is part of Israel.

The Western Wall, a retaining wall from the biblical Jewish Temple, is considered the holiest site where Jews can pray. Israel controls the wall and treats it like Israeli territory, routinely holding solemn state ceremonies there.

It is widely assumed that Israel would retain control over the site under a potential peace deal. But complicating any deal is the adjacent hilltop site revered by Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary and Jews as the Temple Mount. The compound is home to Al Aqsa Mosque, the third-holiest site in Islam, and is where the Jewish Temple once stood. It is considered the holiest site in Judaism.

Tillerson retreats on offer of unconditional NKorea talks

By MATTHEW PENNINGTON, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — America's top diplomat stepped back Friday from his offer of unconditional talks with North Korea, telling world powers the nuclear-armed nation must earn the right to negotiate with the United States.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's declaration before the U.N. Security Council marked a stunning reversal after he proposed discussions with Pyongyang without preconditions earlier this week. That overture was almost immediately rebutted by White House officials.

Still, Tillerson had planned to reiterate his call at a special U.N. ministerial meeting on North Korea at the council Friday morning. His prepared remarks suggested only that North Korea would have to undertake a sustained halt in its threatening behavior before talks could begin. But Tillerson changed the script.

"North Korea must earn its way back to the table," Tillerson told the foreign ministers. "The pressure campaign must and will continue until denuclearization is achieved. We will in the meantime keep our channels of communication open."

The debate over offering North Korea unconditional talks reflects the differences within the Trump administration as it runs out of time to prevent North Korea from perfecting a nuclear-tipped missile that can strike the U.S. mainland. President Donald Trump has vowed to prevent such capability, with military action if necessary.

So far, U.S.-led sanctions on North Korea and diplomatic isolation haven't compelled Kim Jong Un's government to stop its nuclear and missile tests, or to seek negotiations.

Asked Friday if he supported unconditional talks, Trump did not answer directly.

"Well, we're going to see what happens with North Korea. We have a lot of support. There are a lot of nations that agree with us — almost everybody," Trump told reporters. He credited China — which accounts for about 90 percent of North Korea's external trade — with helping on pressuring North Korea, while Russia was not.

"We'd like to have Russia's help — very important," said Trump. He raised it in a Thursday phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

On the issue of starting talks with North Korea, Tillerson's tone was significantly different from three days earlier.

On Tuesday, Tillerson said at the Atlantic Council think tank in Washington that "we are ready to have the first meeting without preconditions." He had also called it "unrealistic" to expect North Korea to enter talks ready to relinquish a weapons of mass destruction program it invested so much in developing, although that remained the ultimate goal.

The White House quickly distanced itself from Tillerson's remarks. On Wednesday, a National Security Council spokesperson said North Korea must not only first refrain from provocations but take "sincere and meaningful actions toward denuclearization" for talks to happen. The spokesperson, who was not authorized to be quoted by name and requested anonymity, said that given North Korea's most recent missile test, now was not the time for talks.

Tillerson and Trump have appeared to clash before on North Korea, amid questions about the former ExxonMobil executive's future as top diplomat. In October, Trump said Tillerson was "wasting his time" trying to negotiate with the North. Trump's tweet followed Tillerson's talk about Washington maintaining back-channel communications with Pyongyang.

Asked Friday if he and Trump were on the same page, Tillerson denied they were at odds: "The president's policy on North Korea is quite clear and there's no daylight at all between the president's policy and the pursuit of that policy."

He said U.S. communication channels with North Korea remain open and the North knows that.

"They know where the door is. They know where to walk through that door when they want to talk," he told reporters.

North Korea's U.N. ambassador, Ja Song Nam, did not mention the possibility of talks with the U.S. in

his very rare appearance before the Security Council on Friday. He said its possession of nuclear weapons was self-defense against "U.S. nuclear threat and blackmail."

Tillerson called on China and Russia to go beyond U.N.-mandated economic sanctions imposed on North Korea over its nuclear and missile tests. He said North Korean laborers were toiling in "slave-like conditions" in Russia for wages used to fund nuclear weapons, while China was still allowing crude oil to flow into North Korean refineries.

Russia's U.N. ambassador, Vassily Nebenzia, said North Korean workers in Russia were guaranteed their rights, and he questioned U.S. commitment to a peaceful resolution of the crisis. China's deputy U.N. ambassador, Wu Haitao, called for early resumption of dialogue, saying "the parties concerned should move towards each other" instead of directing blame.

North Korea has conducted more than 20 ballistic missile tests during 2017 and its most powerful nuclear explosion to date. Its more recent missile test in late November fired a projectile that experts say could carry a nuclear warhead to the U.S. Eastern Seaboard.

Tillerson said the North's growing capabilities were a "direct threat to our security and the security of the entire world. We do not regard this claim as an empty threat."

He said the U.S. does not want war, but "will use all necessary measures to defend itself against North Korean aggression." He said "our hope remains that diplomacy will produce a resolution."

Associated Press writer Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations contributed to this report.

Grand jury: Penn State showed 'shocking apathy' to drinking

By MARC LEVY, Associated Press

BELLEFONTE, Pa. (AP) — A grand jury's report in the wake of a fraternity pledge's drinking death said Friday that Penn State officials displayed "a shocking apathy" to dangers from excessive drinking and that its inaction allowed criminal acts to occur.

Penn State strongly objected to that characterization in a 144-page report released by a district attorney in Pennsylvania, saying it made extraordinary efforts to combat drinking and hazing.

The report recommends a series of changes that the school should undertake in the wake of the death of 19-year-old Tim Piazza in February.

It pointed to numerous assaults, injuries or alcohol-related emergencies in the last several years involving fraternities, and said it is unreasonable for Penn State to disavow all accountability for its failure to reform the fraternity system.

Centre County District Attorney Stacy Parks Miller said the grand jury found that Penn State officials knew enough about the abuse of drinking and hazing in the fraternity system to have been more proactive to stop it.

"They found that they knew a great deal of it, and that they should know the rest. If they didn't know, it was a deliberate, like, 'don't want to know,'" Parks Miller said at a news conference.

As far back as 2009, Penn State officials were "remarkably undisturbed" by allegations of heavy alcohol consumption at one particular fraternity and showed a "shocking apathy to the potential danger associated with doing nothing."

In a 70-page response to the report submitted to the judge, Penn State said it has aggressively promoted safety and accountability in the fraternity system, in 2009 and before that, and should not be criticized for not doing more.

However, Penn State said its efforts are limited by the unwillingness of national fraternities, their associations, undergraduate members and alumni "to challenge behavior that has been accepted for years across the nation" and accept major change.

It said parents have at times aided fraternity efforts to violate school rules and state laws over underage drinking. State hazing and underage drinking laws are weak, Penn State said, and contended that the grand jury had struggled to provide a single recommendation to help the university fight dangerous student drinking and hazing.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 49 of 53

Parks Miller called Penn State's response to the report "defensive and somewhat demeaning."

Penn State permanently banned Beta Theta Pi in March, saying its investigation after Piazza's death found a persistent pattern of excessive and forced drinking, hazing and drug use and sales. Piazza's death occurred two days after he suffered a series of falls and consumed a dangerous amount of alcohol during a pledge bid night.

Nationally, the deaths of at least four fraternity pledges this year have helped fuel a re-examination of Greek life at some colleges.

The report calls on state lawmakers to pass stronger laws to deter hazing and underage drinking. It also calls on Penn State to regulate drinking itself, rather than make a fraternity council responsible, and for the university to expel students involved in hazing after they are "afforded full due process rights."

"Anything less will fail to operate as a truly effective deterrent," the report said.

The fraternity council's system of monitoring fraternity parties employs a private security firm that is unable to stop dangerous behavior. Parks Miller called them "glorified baby-sitters" and the grand jury said the guards' testimony "paints the picture of a brazen Greek community who freely flout (fraternity council) regulations and criminal laws without any fear of reprisal."

When the fraternity council received reports of violations, it controlled whether to pass the information on to Penn State, and what sort of penalties to mete out, the grand jury said.

Penn State said it has taken over the primary role in monitoring and disciplining fraternities for alcohol-related violations, hazing, sexual assault and disruptive social gatherings. If it finds that a chapter jeopardized a student by hazing, the school will permanently revoke its recognition, it said. Penn State said it has revoked recognition of 13 fraternity and sorority chapters in the past two years, or one in six.

After Piazza's death, Penn State imposed an immediate ban on alcohol and social functions at fraternities.

A police lieutenant told the grand jury that, during the crackdown, the St. Patrick's Day holiday was quiet and without the usual reports of public urination, blowout parties and public disturbances.

Sign-ups show health law's staying power in Trump era

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A deadline burst of sign-ups after a tumultuous year for the Obama health law has revealed continued demand for the program's subsidized individual health plans. But the Affordable Care Act's troubles aren't over.

On the plus side for the overhaul, official numbers showed a sizable share of first-time customers, 36 percent, were among those rushing to finish HealthCare.gov applications in the run-up to Friday's enrollment deadline.

"People need health care, that is plain and simple," said Kevin Watkins of Florence, Alabama. A self-employed consultant helping small businesses sell online, Watkins re-enrolled for 2018. He'll pay under \$100 a month after subsidies.

Final national enrollment numbers aren't expected until next year because some states running their own insurance websites extended sign-ups to Jan. 31. States in charge of their own programs are striving to equal last year's enrollment.

Enrollment in the 39 states served by HealthCare.gov is expected to be lower, which could intensify criticism of the Trump administration's decision to cut the federal sign-up season in half. The administration has extended the deadline for some people to finish their health insurance: Callers to the HealthCare.gov service center on Saturday morning got a recorded message saying "don't worry" — if they had left their phone number before the deadline, they will get a return call and still can enroll for 2018.

Nationally, 12.2 million people had enrolled by the end of the Obama administration's final sign-up period. Under Trump, there could be 1 million to 2 million fewer sign-ups, said Larry Levitt of the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation.

Still, it was only a year ago that the health law seemed headed for oblivion as Donald Trump swept into the White House with a Republican-controlled Congress. Now its full repeal seems to be off the table.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 50 of 53

But the program for people who don't have job-based coverage faces the same old challenges of high premiums and declining insurer participation, along with some new ones.

One new challenge comes from the GOP tax bill, which repeals the law's requirement that people have health insurance or risk fines.

Parallel to that, the administration is preparing to issue rules facilitating the sale of lower-cost insurance plans that will deliver less than the law's "essential" benefits package.

Put the combination together and experts say it will draw healthy customers away from already shaky ACA insurance markets, raising premiums for those left behind and giving insurers new reasons to drop out.

The law's supporters were still upbeat as the shortened open enrollment season in most states wound down.

"What we are seeing is that this insurance is meeting people's needs and it is affordable if you receive financial assistance," said Elizabeth Colvin of Foundation Communities, a nonprofit in Austin, Texas, that helps low-income people enroll. "So much of the story has been telling people that the ACA is not working. That's not the reality in central Texas."

It was Trump who most notably predicted a spectacular collapse for the law.

"It's imploding, and soon will explode, and it's not going to be pretty," he said this year.

After a repeal failed in Congress, Trump stopped payments to reimburse insurers for subsidizing copayments and deductibles, thereby boosting premiums. His administration also cut the federal open enrollment season in half, slashed the ad budget and pulled back money for counselors who help people sign up.

But as premiums increased, financial assistance also went up for those eligible. Under the law, their premiums are limited to a percentage of household income, so those who qualify for help are cushioned from premium spikes.

Instead, the full impact of rising premiums hit an estimated 8 million to 9 million people who buy individual health plans but aren't eligible for income-based assistance.

"I am at my wits' end," said Kris Case. "I would love to have health insurance, but it's like a luxury. Every year it's gotten more expensive."

The Denver-area resident, who's in her 50s and doesn't have coverage through her job in client relations for a startup, says she's seen premiums as high as \$1,400 a month.

Ongoing turmoil will translate to demands for Congress to act. But with lawmakers divided by party and faction, it's not certain what can be done.

"Any thought of 'repeal and replace' is clearly gone," said health economist Gail Wilensky, who served in a previous GOP administration. Alabama voters' election of Democrat Doug Jones to the Senate underscores that, she said. "Undoing something that has been in place now for close to four years is not a practical way to resolve issues."

Pending legislation could have contradictory consequences.

Many experts believe the GOP tax bill's repeal of the insurance mandate will undermine markets by giving healthy people an out.

But other measures would tend to stabilize insurance markets. One is a bipartisan Senate bill that would restore insurer subsidies cut by Trump. The other proposals would provide money to help insurers cover the care of high-cost patients.

Meanwhile, one of the most visible symbols of the health law seems to be doing just fine. Once prone to crash, the HealthCare.gov website has been humming along amid the crush of deadline week sign-ups, according to a performance analysis by the technology firm Catchpoint for The Associated Press.

"It's like an e-commerce website on Black Friday," said Catchpoint CEO Mehdi Daoudi.

Tech companies lead US stocks higher as tax plan advances

By ALEX VEIGA, AP Business Writer

Wall Street capped the week with broad gains, propelling the major stock indexes to a new set of milestones Friday.

Investors welcomed signs that Congressional Republicans were solidifying support for a major overhaul of the nation's tax laws ahead of an expected vote next week.

Technology stocks led the gains, which more than wiped out the market's losses from the day before. Health care companies and banks also posted solid gains. Energy stocks were the only laggard.

Small-company stocks, which stand to benefit most from lower corporate tax rates, rose more than the rest of the market.

"The tax bill seems to be the driver right now," said Erik Davidson, chief investment officer at Wells Fargo Private Bank. "The market just thinks it will get done."

The Standard & Poor's 500 index rose 23.80 points, or 0.9 percent, to 2,675.81. The Dow Jones industrial average gained 143.08 points, or 0.6 percent, to 24,651.74. The Nasdaq added 80.06 points, or 1.2 percent, to 6,936.58. The Russell 2000 index of smaller-company stocks picked up 23.47 points, or 1.6 percent, to 1,530.42.

The Dow, S&P 500 and Nasdaq closed at record highs and finished the week with gains.

The indexes were headed higher early on as investors watched developments in Washington with the Republican-led tax overhaul bill. GOP leaders moved to placate Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, who had said Thursday that he would vote against the bill unless the child tax credit was beefed up.

By Friday afternoon, Congressional Republicans had finalized the bill, expanding the child tax credit, and winning Rubio's support. The move provided a major boost for the GOP lawmakers in the Senate who are trying to hold together a razor-thin majority to pass the bill in a vote next week.

Technology stocks, which are leading the market this year, notched solid gains. Intel rose \$1.30, or 3 percent, to \$44.56.

"We had seen some rotation out of it the last few weeks," said Jim Davis, regional investment strategist at U.S. Bank Wealth Management. "We're starting to see more of a change back to some of the sectors that have done well this year."

Banks and other financial companies were among the biggest gainers. Navient added 58 cents, or 4.6 percent, to \$13.20.

A batch of strong company earnings and outlooks also helped lift the markets Friday.

Costco Wholesale rose 3.3 percent after the warehouse club operator's latest quarterly earnings and sales came in well above financial analysts' expectations. The stock added \$6.20 to \$192.73.

Shares in Jabil gained 1.5 percent after the electronics manufacturer posted a bigger profit and better revenue than analysts had anticipated. The stock picked up 42 cents to \$27.87.

Oracle's latest quarterly results failed to impress investors. Its stock fell 3.8 percent after the second-quarter performance of the business software company's cloud-computing business and its forecast for its current quarter disappointed traders. Oracle slid \$1.89 to \$48.30.

CSX slumped 7.6 percent after the railroad operator said CEO Hunter Harrison is taking a medical leave. The stock was the biggest decliner in the S&P 500, shedding \$4.38 to \$52.93.

Bond prices were little changed. The yield on the 10-year Treasury held steady at 2.35 percent late Thursday.

Oil futures finished mixed. Benchmark U.S. crude rose 26 cents to settle at \$57.30 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange. Brent crude, used to price international oils, fell 8 cents to close at \$63.23 per barrel in London.

Gold added 40 cents to \$1,257.50 an ounce. Silver added 13 cents to \$16.06 an ounce. Copper gained 6 cents, or 2 percent, to \$3.13 a pound.

The dollar rose to 112.63 yen from 112.18 yen on Thursday. The euro weakened to \$1.1757 from \$1.1792. Bitcoin futures finished its first week of trading on the Cboe Futures Exchange on a high note, climbing

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 52 of 53

\$1,305, or 7.8 percent, to \$18,105.

The futures allow investors to make bets on the future price of bitcoin. The average price of an actual bitcoin was \$17,682 in trading Friday on private exchanges, according to Coindesk. The price of the digital currency has soared this year, having begun 2017 under \$1,000.

Bitcoin futures trading on the Cboe, which began late Sunday and had its first day of full trading on a major U.S. exchange on Monday, slowed a little bit after the first day, said Kalen Holliday, spokeswoman for Interactive Brokers, which handled half the volume on the initial day of trading.

All told, the weekly volume for the January contract was 9,588, according to FactSet.

At this point, it's too early to tell whether futures trading, which makes it easier to short bitcoin, will reduce the volatility of the digital currency.

"You have to have a pretty strong stomach at this point," Holliday said. "It's just right at the outset. Maybe things will settle down, maybe they won't. It's too early to tell."

Investors will get another option to trade in bitcoins Sunday, when the Cboe rival Chicago Mercantile Exchange is set to begin trade in bitcoin futures contracts.

In other energy futures trading, wholesale gasoline slipped 2 cents, or 1 percent, to \$1.65 a gallon. Heating oil lost a penny to \$1.90 a gallon. Natural gas fell 7 cents, or 2.7 percent, to \$2.61 per 1,000 cubic feet.

Major stock indexes in Europe finished mostly higher. Germany's DAX rose 0.3 percent, while France's CAC 40 shed 0.2 percent. Britain's FTSE 100 rose 0.6 percent after European Union leaders said they would allow the Brexit talks to move on to the next stage, including trade.

Earlier in Asia, Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 index dipped 0.6, while South Korea's Kospi climbed 0.5 percent. Hong Kong's Hang Seng shed 1.1 percent.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Dec. 16, the 350th day of 2017. There are 15 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 16, 1773, the Boston Tea Party took place as American colonists boarded a British ship and dumped more than 300 chests of tea into Boston Harbor to protest tea taxes.

On this date:

In 1653, Oliver Cromwell became lord protector of England, Scotland and Ireland.

In 1809, the French Senate granted a divorce decree to Emperor Napoleon I and Empress Josephine (the dissolution was made final the following month).

In 1811, the first of the powerful New Madrid earthquakes struck the central Mississippi Valley with an estimated magnitude of 7.7.

In 1917, science-fiction writer Sir Arthur C. Clarke was born in Minehead, Somerset, England.

In 1930, golfer Bobby Jones became the first recipient of the James E. Sullivan Award honoring outstanding amateur athletes.

In 1944, the World War II Battle of the Bulge began as German forces launched a surprise attack against Allied forces through the Ardennes Forest in Belgium and Luxembourg (the Allies were eventually able to turn the Germans back).

In 1950, President Harry S. Truman proclaimed a national state of emergency in order to fight "world conquest by Communist imperialism."

In 1960, 134 people were killed when a United Air Lines DC-8 and a TWA Super Constellation collided over New York City.

In 1976, the government halted its swine flu vaccination program following reports of paralysis apparently linked to the vaccine.

In 1985, at services in Fort Campbell, Kentucky, President Ronald Reagan and his wife, Nancy, offered condolences to families of 248 soldiers killed in the crash of a chartered plane in Newfoundland.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 160 ~ 53 of 53

In 1991, the U.N. General Assembly rescinded its 1975 resolution equating Zionism with racism by a vote of 111-25.

In 1997, singer Nicolette Larson, a recording artist who lifted Neil Young's pop hit "Lotta Love" to the top of the charts in the 1970s, died in Los Angeles at age 45.

Ten years ago: British forces formally handed over to Iraq responsibility for Basra, the last Iraqi region under their control. Singer-songwriter Dan Fogelberg died in Deer Isle, Maine, at age 56.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama visited Newtown, Connecticut, the scene of the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre; after meeting privately with victims' families, the president told an evening vigil he would use "whatever power" he had to prevent future shootings. Two Topeka, Kansas, police officers, Cpl. David Gogian and Officer Jeff Atherly, were shot to death in a grocery parking lot; the suspected gunman was later killed after an armed standoff. A 23-year-old woman was brutally raped and beaten on a bus in New Delhi, a crime that triggered widespread protests in India. (The woman died 13 days later.)

One year ago: President Barack Obama put Russia's Vladimir Putin on notice that the U.S. could use offensive cyber muscle to retaliate for interference in the U.S. presidential election, his strongest suggestion to date that Putin had been well aware of campaign email hacking. John Glenn's home state and the nation began saying goodbye to the beloved astronaut starting with a public viewing of his flag-draped casket inside Ohio's Statehouse rotunda in Columbus.

Today's Birthdays: Civil rights attorney Morris Dees is 81. Actress Joyce Bulifant is 80. Actress Liv Ullmann is 79. CBS news correspondent Lesley Stahl is 76. TV producer Steven Bochco is 74. Former Nevada Gov. Jim Gibbons is 73. Pop musician Tony Hicks (The Hollies) is 72. Pop singer Benny Andersson (ABBA) is 71. Actor Ben Cross is 70. Rock singer-musician Billy Gibbons (ZZ Top) is 68. Rock musician Bill Bateman (The Blasters) is 66. Actor Xander Berkeley is 62. Actress Alison LaPlaca is 58. Actor Sam Robards is 56. Actor Jon Tenney is 56. Actor Benjamin Bratt is 54. Country singer-songwriter Jeff Carson is 54. Actor-comedian JB Smoove is 52. Actress Miranda Otto is 50. Actor Daniel Cosgrove is 47. Rhythm-and-blues singer Michael McCary is 46. Actor Jonathan Scarfe is 42. Actress Krysten Ritter is 36. Actress Zoe Jarman is 35. Country musician Chris Scruggs is 35. Actor Theo James is 33. Actress Amanda Setton is 32. Rock musician Dave Rublin (American Authors) is 31. Actress Hallee Hirsh is 30. Actress Anna Popplewell is 29. Actor Stephan James is 24.

Thought for Today: "History never really says goodbye. History says, 'See you later.'" — Eduardo Galeano, Uruguayan writer (1940-2015).