

Groton Daily Independent

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Monday

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m., Groton Community Center

GBB hosts Britton-Hecla: 7th grade at 5 p.m., 8th grade at 6:30 p.m., varsity game to follow (NO JV Game)

Hanlon Brothers
Gravel Hauling

New & Cleaning of Stockdams with our 60' reach trackhoe

605/395-6531

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!

Open: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave.

The cardboard/paper
recycling trailer at the school is **Open**

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Kenny Jones Leads Wolves Wrestling, Advances to Second Day of Midwest Classic

Indianapolis – The Northern State University wrestling team qualified one wrestler for the second day of the Midwest Classic in Kenny Jones. The Wolves tallied 15.5 team points with eight wrestlers competing.

Jones opened the day with a 16-0 technical fall victory over Emery Cline of Emmanuel. The freshman fell in the second round but bounced back for two straight wins by fall over Diamonte Perry of Coker and Weston Cronan of Quachita Baptist.

Jay Maxville took the mat for the Wolves at 125 pounds, going 2-2 overall. Maxville fell in his opening match of the day, but bounced back with two straight wins. He tallied a 15-0 technical foul victory over Max Newbury of Drury, and defeated Jaret Singh of Maryville in a medical forfeit.

Paxton Mewes also went 2-2 on the day at 174 pounds. After falling in the first round, Mewes bounced back for two straight wins as well. He defeated Anthony Renforth of Wheeling Jesuit in a 2-0 decision, and Jimmy Sandlin of Limestone in a 14-5 major decision. Billy Holtan notched a win at 157 pounds defeating Michael Milam of Coker Collee in a 13-3 major decision.

Jones will wrestle tomorrow for the Wolves from Indianapolis, vying for third place.

NEW SIGN-ON BONUSES!

☆☆☆ **\$1,500 for CNAs** ☆☆☆

☆☆☆ **\$3,000 for LPNs** ☆☆☆

☆☆☆ **\$4,500 for RNs** ☆☆☆

Alzheimer's Care Unit Director Medication Aid

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



GROTON
CARE & REHABILITATION CENTER

1106 N. 2nd Street, Groton

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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")**

Anderson takes third at Madison

Brandyn Anderson placed third at the Madison Invitational wrestling tournament held Saturday. Three Groton Area wrestlers went to the tournament as Groton Area scored 24 points.

160: Thomas Cranford was pinned by Tashon Clark, Spearfish, 3:03; he pinned Berent Tarabelsi, Sioux Falls O'Gorman, 0:32; and was pinned by Jake Sailer, Sturgis Brown, 0:49.

220: Wyatt Locke decisioned Ruger Forester, Chamberlain, 3-2; he was pinned by Joel Carpenter, Sturgis Brown, 1:06; and he was decisioned by Marc Williams, Spearfish, 3-2.

285: Brandyn Anderson scored a major decision over Thomas Fischer, Lennox, 12-3; he was pinned by Nash Hutmacher, Chamberlain, 1:47; he pinned Nick Palmer, Dell Rapids, 1:30; and in the third place match, he pinned Dawson Lensing, Wagner, 2:01.

Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

December 18, 2017 – 7:00pm

Groton Community Center

1. Minutes
2. Bills
3. November Finance Report
4. 2nd Reading 2017 Supplemental Appropriation #717
5. Fund transfers
6. Resolution to authorize FO to file LWCF Grant Application
7. South Dakota Retailers Association
8. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)

Gov. Daugaard Approves FirstNet Opt-In For South Dakota

PIERRE, S.D. – Gov. Dennis Daugaard has given approval for the establishment of a public safety broadband network that will provide South Dakota’s first responders with advanced communication technologies. The new wireless broadband network will be built, operated and maintained by FirstNet using AT&T’s existing infrastructure as a foundation.

“We deal with our fair share of severe weather and natural disasters in South Dakota. Our first responders need to have access to communication technologies that work whenever and wherever needed,” Gov. Daugaard said. “FirstNet will create a single, interoperable system across our state to aid first responders in protecting citizens.”

FirstNet was established by Congress in 2012. The decision on opting in is left to each governor and states participate at no cost.

Local entities will be able to choose whether or not to subscribe to the services. AT&T has yet to announce specific rates for those wanting to participate, but says that they will establish a highly competitive pricing structure for public safety entities.

S & S Lumber

of Groton

will be closing at Noon
on Wednesday, Dec. 20th
for Inventory

Will reopen at regular hours on
Thursday, Dec. 21st

Thank you for your patronage!

Retention rate strong at state technical institutes; new programs added

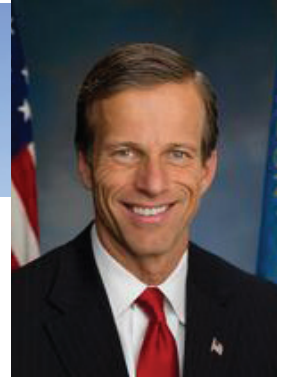
PIERRE, S.D. – The retention rate at South Dakota’s four technical institutes is 78 percent, an all-time high. Since 2012, the retention rate has increased four percent. The state Board of Technical Education heard a report on the retention rates at its meeting earlier today.

“Students and staff at our state’s technical institutes should be proud of this retention rate,” said Nick Wendell, executive director of the Board of Technical Education. “The students behind these numbers represent a growing workforce, trained with the skills and credentials South Dakota employers need.”

Southeast Technical Institute received board approval of a one-year veterinary assistant diploma and a two-year associate of applied science veterinary technician degree starting in fall 2018. Veterinary assistants help in evaluation and treatment of basic health, injuries and/or illness of large and small animals. They also provide office support and customer service, typically working in animal hospitals, clinics or other animal facilities. In addition to the duties of veterinary assistants, veterinary technicians can perform medical tests under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian to assist in diagnosing animal injuries and illnesses. They can also provide support to biomedical researchers and other scientists. Veterinary technicians can work in agricultural production settings, labs, research facilities, animal hospitals and clinics.

The board also approved an expansion of Lake Area Technical Institute’s agricultural aviation program into a standalone associate of applied science aviation program with three options: agricultural aviation, professional helicopter pilot and professional fixed-wing pilot. The expanded offerings would be available beginning in summer 2018. The new degree options are designed for students interested in a career in the commercial pilot industry.

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



Home for the Holidays

As Congress enters the homestretch here in 2017, I'm looking forward to the opportunity to head back to South Dakota in the coming weeks to spend the holiday season with my friends and family. There are few things in life that are as important as spending time with those you love. There's no better time than now, and there's no better place than South Dakota.

A lot of things have changed over the years, to be sure. Most notably, my family has grown. Brittany and Larissa are both married and now have kids of their own. Many things have also remained the same. We still get together to share old stories and memories, as well as make some new ones along the way. Most importantly, though, we still celebrate God's gift to mankind, Jesus, who embodies the true meaning of Christmas.

Thinking of years past, I can still smell the lutefisk and lefse that my grandmother would make every Christmas Eve when I was a kid. It's funny how memories like that stick with you for a lifetime, but I'm glad they do. Like many traditions I had as a kid, my family's holiday meals, for example, have evolved over the years, and we've replaced the traditional Norwegian lutefisk and lefse with clam chowder – a Thune family favorite.

It wouldn't be the holiday season without all of the festive decorations that adorn community buildings and neighborhood homes, large and small. South Dakota has so many talented holiday decorators that several were chosen this year for a special assignment at the White House in Washington, D.C. Jeremy J. from Emery and Candace S. from Watertown were both among a small group of volunteers who were selected to help decorate one of the most famous and well-recognized homes in the world. It's quite an accomplishment, and I know their families and communities are proud.

Speaking of families, there isn't a holiday season that goes by that I don't think about the brave men and women around the world who are defending freedom on our behalf and the families who are missing them while they are away. While most people are concerned about getting the season's most popular gifts, beating holiday traffic, or figuring out how many vacation days they need to use before the new year, our troops are putting it all on the line, sometimes thousands of miles away from the comfort of their friends and family.

There's plenty in the world today to be down about, but there's so much more for which we can be thankful. I'm glad, as always, to be living in the greatest country, surrounded by the greatest people in the world. My wish this holiday season is that you and your family have safe and happy travels, wherever you're headed, and that your journey is filled with all of the joy and happiness that make this time of year so special.

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Celebrating Christmas in South Dakota

As we approach the end of the year, I have been reflecting on the highlights of 2017. Between Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day, the holiday season provides a good opportunity to recount our blessings and celebrate the birth of Jesus, and the promise of a loving God who offered to us his only Son.

At the top of our family's list of blessings this year is the birth of our ninth grandchild, Cohen. For Jean and me, family is our greatest gift, and we are looking forward to spending additional time with them over the holidays.

We are also forever grateful to the men and women in uniform who sacrifice so much to protect our country and all of the freedoms we enjoy. Without their service, we wouldn't be free to celebrate the holidays with our family and friends safely and freely here at home. We thank members of the armed forces and their families, especially those who have to spend the holidays away from the ones they love, and we pray for their safe return home.

I'm thankful to the people of South Dakota for putting your trust in me to represent our great state in the United States Senate. I have appreciated hearing from you as the Senate works on legislation that's important to our state and our nation. As I wrap up my third year, I'm proud of the work we've done to make life better for South Dakotans. There's still plenty more to be done to change the way Washington works, and I look forward to making even more progress in the year to come.

Just this year, we've accomplished some pretty important items: We confirmed the exceptionally qualified Judge Neil Gorsuch to be a Supreme Court Justice, where he will serve a lifetime appointment and will apply the law as it was written. We've also confirmed 12 conservative Circuit Court Judges, the most in the first year of a presidency in over half-a-century.

The Senate passed legislation I introduced to repeal outdated and offensive laws against Native American citizens so we can work toward mending relations. We recognize this is one small step forward, but it's a move in the right direction. We have introduced a number of provisions that will roll back parts of the Dodd-Frank Act to help financial institutions better serve their customers, which passed out of the Banking Committee this month and now heads to the full Senate for action.

The Senate also passed historic tax reform legislation—the first overhaul of our tax system in more than 30 years—that will allow South Dakota families to keep more of their hard-earned paychecks while growing our economy. We've also halted 15 major Obama-era regulations through the Congressional Review Act in our effort to provide regulatory relief to American families and businesses. This is just a snapshot of the work we've done in 2017, and we look forward to continuing our work in the upcoming year.

My Christmas wish list includes reforms to the broken budget process in Congress, which hasn't worked in more than 43 years. It's incredibly frustrating, and I'm continuing to put pressure on Senate leadership to make major changes to the way we manage federal spending.

This holiday season, Jean and I wish South Dakotans a very merry Christmas and a happy new year. We're looking forward to hosting Christmas Eve dinner at our home in Fort Pierre, where we'll be joined by some of our kids, grandkids, my dad Don and his wife Rosemary, and family members from my side of the family and Jean's, along with family friends. We hope that you too will be able to spend this special time of year with family, friends and loved ones celebrating your traditions.

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Today in Weather History

December 17, 1993: A prolonged period of snow occurred from December 15th through the 19th over the western half of South Dakota. Several accidents leading to injuries occurred due to ice on the 15th, and many vehicles slid into ditches. Snowfall amounts were 4 to 10 inches. McIntosh received three inches of snow; Timber Lake, Murdo, and Selby received five inches of snow; and six inches accumulated at McLaughlin. Eagle Butte recorded seven inches of new snow.

December 17, 1903: Wilbur and Orville Wright made four brief flights at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina with their first powered aircraft on this day. After having success with their 5-foot biplane kite, the brothers realized the weather conditions in Dayton were not ideal for their flying experiments. They wrote the Weather Bureau in Washington, D.C. requesting a list of suitable places on the east coast where winds were constant. Below is the response the Wright Brothers received from Joseph Doshier, who staffed the Weather Bureau office, wrote in August of 1900 regarding the suitability of Kitty Hawk.

"Mr. Wilbur Wright

Dayton Ohio

Dear Sir,

In reply to yours of the 3rd, I will say the beach here is about one mile wide clear of trees or high hills, and islands for nearly sixty miles south. Conditions: the wind blows mostly from the North and Northeast September and October which is nearly down this piece of land. Giving you many miles of a steady wind with a free sweep. I am sorry to say that you could not rent a house here. So you will have to bring tents. You could obtain frame.

The only way to reach Kitty Hawk is from Manteo Roanoke Island N.C. in a small sail boat. From your letter I believe you would find it here like you wish. Will be pleased at any time to give you any information. Yours very respectfully

JJ. Doshier"

On December 17, with the winds were averaging more than 20 mph, Orville took a flight that lasted 12 seconds for a total distance of 120 feet.







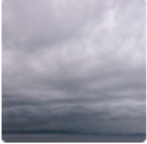
December 17, 1924: From the Monthly Weather Review, "a severe glaze storm occurred in west-central Illinois on December 17 and 18, the area of great destruction embracing a territory about 75 miles in width and 170 miles in length. In the affected area, trees were badly damaged, wires broken, and thousands of electric poles went down. Electric services were paralyzed, and it required weeks to restore operation and months to permanently rebuild the lines.


The street railway company and the Illinois Traction System resumed complete operation 17 days after the storm. Electric light service was completely restored January 10. The ice had practically disappeared from the trees and wires by January 4, but on January 20, there was still considerable ice on the ground.

The Western Union Telegraph Co. lost 8,000 poles and the Illinois Bell Telephone Co. about 23,000. The total damage to wire service in Illinois probably equaled or exceeded \$5,000,000." If the loss of business, the damage to trees and possible injury to winter grains, the storm may be considered one of the most disastrous of its kind in the history of Illinois."

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Today	Tonight	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
						
Patched Fog then Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Cloudy
High: 40 °F	Low: 25 °F	High: 46 °F	Low: 25 °F	High: 38 °F	Low: 21 °F	High: 36 °F




Warm Conditions Continue
through Wednesday



Today

 **near 40°**
morning fog over eastern SD/western MN
clouds diminishing northwest to southeast

Monday

 *warmer*
43 to 55°
Coolest along the SD/MN border

National Weather Service

weather.gov/Aberdeen  National Weather Service Aberdeen  @NWSAberdeen

Graphic Created 12/17/2017 3:36 AM
Published on: 12/17/2017 at 3:41AM

Expect areas of fog this morning over portions of eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota. With temperatures hovering below freezing early this morning, freezing fog could result in slick roadways. Otherwise, warm conditions will continue through Wednesday. Highs will be near 40 degrees today, and in the 40s and 50s Monday.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 40.9

Low Outside Temp: 28.2

High Gust: 16

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 53° in 1939

Record Low: -30° in 2016

Average High: 25°F

Average Low: 5°F

Average Precip in Dec: 0.28

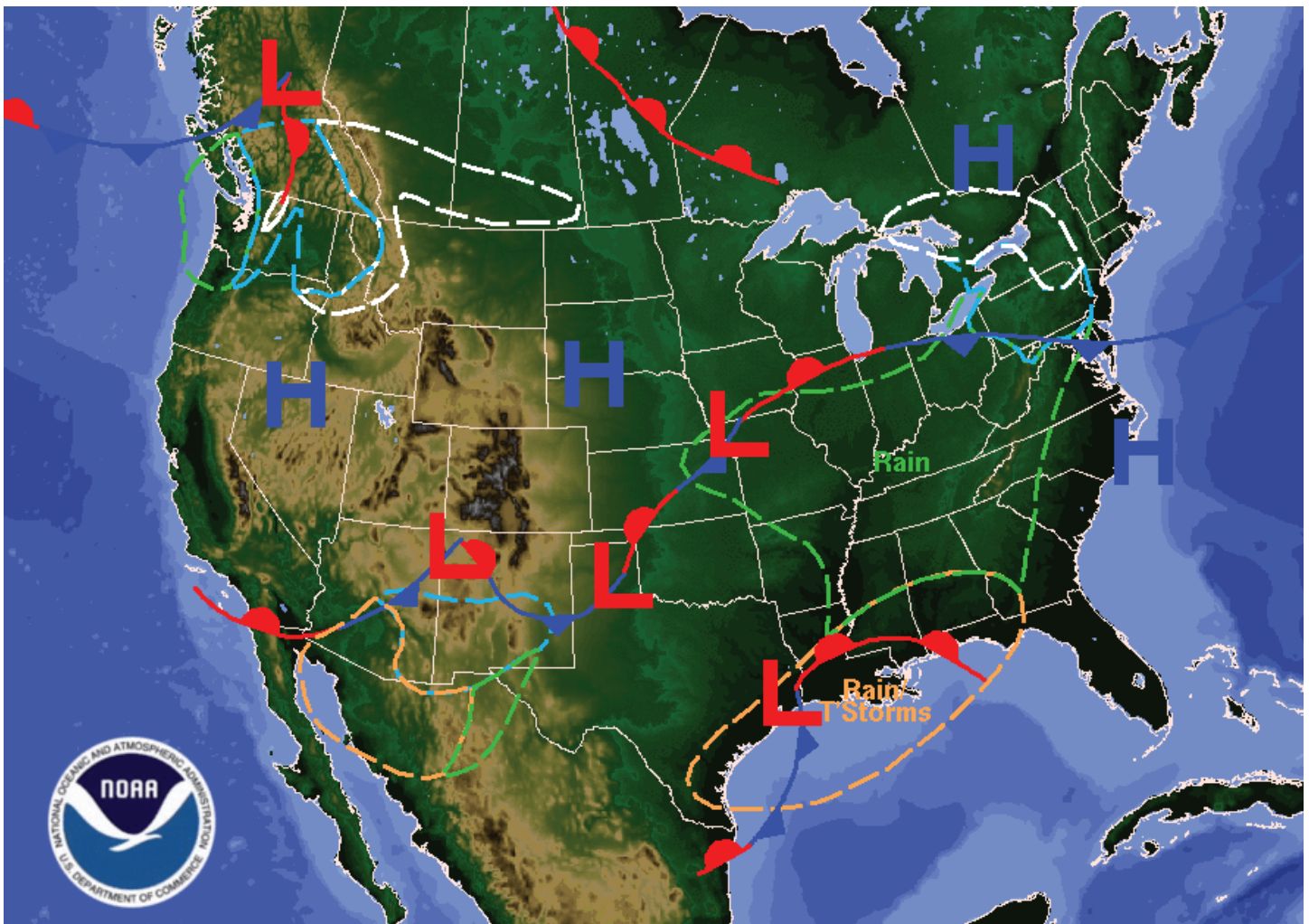
Precip to date in Dec: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 21.48

Precip Year to Date: 13.47

Sunset Tonight: 4:51 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:08 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Sun, Dec 17, 2017, issued 4:08 AM EST

DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center

Prepared by Santorelli with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts



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NEVER QUIT!

"Don't let this be you!" said a coach to his football team after a difficult loss. He was pointing to a picture of a player sitting in front of his locker. His helmet was between his feet. His elbows were on his knees and his head was between his hands with a look of sadness in his eyes. Under his helmet were the words, "I quit!"

As we look into the manger this Christmas we can rejoice together and say, "Thank You, God, that You never quit!"

Whenever we think of the eternal love that God has for us we often forget about the disappointments He must have endured. Imagine, if you can, what must have entered into His mind and heart when Adam and Eve rejected His path. Consider, if you will, the many agreements He made with people who promised to obey Him and then abandoned their word when they thought He was out of sight. We will never know the grief He suffered because of the hope He had that people would love Him and be obedient to Him.

But, He never gave up. He never quit. Finally, John wrote, "We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world!"

All of us have suffered many losses in life. None, however, can ever be compared to God's losses. But He refused to give up even though it cost the life of His Son.

Prayer: We thank You, Father, for Your unfailing love and determination to rescue us. We are overwhelmed when we think that You would sacrifice Your Son for us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: 1 John 4:14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.

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2018 Groton SD Community Events

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

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

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News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Dakota Cash

04-11-17-28-32

(four, eleven, seventeen, twenty-eight, thirty-two)

Estimated jackpot: \$40,000

Lotto America

05-16-27-34-44, Star Ball: 5, ASB: 2

(five, sixteen, twenty-seven, thirty-four, forty-four; Star Ball: five; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$16.53 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$223 million

Powerball

09-35-37-50-63, Powerball: 11, Power Play: 2

(nine, thirty-five, thirty-seven, fifty, sixty-three; Powerball: eleven; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$250 million

Saturday's Scores

By The Associated Press

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Central 40, Sturgis Brown 38

Brandon Valley 63, Watertown 49

Britton-Hecla 82, Wilmot 46

Burke/South Central 59, Stuart, Neb. 38

Colome 69, Cody-Kilgore, Neb. 47

Dakota Valley 68, Woodbury Central, Merville, Iowa 45

Eureka/Bowdle 61, Edmunds Central 46

Flandreau Indian 77, Hills-Beaver Creek, Minn. 76

Hettinger/Scranton, N.D. 73, Lemmon 41

Hill City 47, Hot Springs 42

Iroquois 54, Centerville 45

Kimball/White Lake 63, James Valley Christian 56

Langford 66, Hitchcock-Tulare 52

Lyman 67, Bennett County 55

Mitchell Christian 63, Wessington Springs 27

Pierre 45, Yankton 34

Rapid City Central 73, Huron 48

Rapid City Stevens 68, Mitchell 43

Scotland 55, Andes Central 52

Sioux Falls Christian 90, Chamberlain 38

Sully Buttes 63, Winner 49

Walthill, Neb. 83, Freeman Academy 52

Webster 58, Ipswich 52

Western Christian, Hull, Iowa 59, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 51

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Lakota Nation Tournament (Makosica Bracket)

Fifth Place

Red Cloud 71, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 52

Championship

White River 33, Crow Creek 16

Lakota Nation Tournament (Paha Sapa Bracket)

Seventh Place

Standing Rock, N.D. 73, Crazy Horse 42

Fifth Place

St. Francis Indian 57, Custer 37

Third Place

Omaha Nation, Neb. 67, Marty Indian 45

Stateline Shootout

Lead-Deadwood 52, Sundance, Wyo. 44

Newcastle, Wyo. 74, Belle Fourche 62

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Central 71, Sturgis Brown 55

Andes Central/Dakota Christian 55, Scotland 44

Brandon Valley 58, Watertown 38

Burke/South Central 58, Stuart, Neb. 23

Dell Rapids 46, Hamlin 38

Edmunds Central 54, Eureka/Bowdle 48

Faith 42, New Underwood 32

Freeman 62, Platte-Geddes 39

Hettinger/Scranton, N.D. 70, Lemmon 59

Hills-Beaver Creek, Minn. 71, Flandreau Indian 30

Hitchcock-Tulare 41, Langford 37

Ipswich 55, Webster 31

Kimball/White Lake 52, James Valley Christian 23

Lyman 62, Bennett County 42

Madison 64, DeSmet 60

Mitchell Christian 40, Wessington Springs 34

Northwestern 57, Miller 56

Parker 44, Wynot, Neb. 43

Philip 68, Oelrichs 42

Rapid City Central 77, Huron 45

Rapid City Stevens 62, Mitchell 34

Sully Buttes 58, Winner 45

Walthill, Neb. 55, Freeman Academy 48

Western Christian, Hull, Iowa 55, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 54

Wilmot 47, Britton-Hecla 34

Yankton 49, Pierre 36

Entringer Classic

Dell Rapids St. Mary 43, Estelline 40

Sioux Valley 69, Elkton-Lake Benton 51

Lakota Nation Tournament (Makosica Bracket)

Championship

Crow Creek 66, Pine Ridge 49

Lakota Nation Tournament (Paha Sapa Bracket)

Seventh Place

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Tiospa Zina Tribal 74, Crazy Horse 44
Fifth Place
Marty Indian 72, St. Francis Indian 58
Third Place
White River 50, McLaughlin 48
Sanford Classic
Dakota Valley 59, Warner 54
Ethan 64, Viborg-Hurley 26
Moorhead, Minn. 46, Sioux Falls O'Gorman 45
Sioux Falls Lincoln 55, Crofton, Neb. 42
St. Michael-Albertville, Minn. 58, Sioux Falls Washington 41
St. Thomas More 47, Lennox 27
Vermillion 43, Worthington, Minn. 26
Western Christian, Hull, Iowa 55, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 54
Stateline Shootout
Belle Fourche 63, Newcastle, Wyo. 26
Lead-Deadwood 52, Sundance, Wyo. 44

Defending champ James Madison returning to FCS title game

HARRISONBURG, Va. (AP) — James Madison enjoyed a memorable night in a game that one can only imagine South Dakota State will want to forget.

Marcus Marshall broke loose on a pair of long touchdown runs, Jimmy Moreland made three interceptions and defending FCS national champion James Madison returned to the title game with a 51-16 victory Saturday night over South Dakota State, which gave up 10 turnovers.

The top-seeded Dukes (14-0) won their FCS-tying 26th straight game to return to the championship game against No. 2 seed North Dakota State, a 55-13 winner over Sam Houston State on Friday night. James Madison beat the Bison in the semifinals last year, ending NDSU's run of five consecutive national championships. The championship game will be played in Frisco, Texas, on Jan. 6. James Madison also won a title in 2004.

"For our team to compete the way it did, gives us a special memory and special night (we) will remember for a long, long time," JMU coach Mike Houston said.

"We had a lot of adversity throughout the year, but the kids stuck together, kept on working, kept their faith and belief in each other and just time and time have been able to overcome different kind of obstacles, and to have the opportunity to return to go back to Frisco and compete for another national championship is truly an honor."

Marshall, who helped set up a last-minute touchdown in the first half with a 38-yard kickoff return, raced up the middle to score twice to begin a 30-point third period that broke the game open. First he went 65 yards to score, and on the Dukes' next possession he sprinted for a career-best 87 yard TD run and a 35-10 lead.

"The thing that crushed it was the two long runs right out of the chute (in the third quarter)," SDSU coach John Stiegelmeier said. "I would say we broke down there. ... When you're playing that type of athlete, you've seen it, it's going to happen."

South Dakota State (11-3), the fifth seed, was making its sixth straight playoff appearance and first semifinal. The Jackrabbits came in averaging 38.8 points per game and boasting a regular-season win over Missouri Valley Football Conference rival and champion NDSU but went up against a Dukes team giving up only 10.3 points per game.

Jackrabbits quarterback Taryn Christian was intercepted six times, including a pick-6, and lost three fumbles, two coming after the ball slipped from his hand. All five of the Jackrabbits' first-quarter possessions ended with turnovers but the only points the Dukes managed came on a 2-yard pass from Bryan

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Schor to Riley Stapleton that was set up when Christian dropped the ball and Brandon Herferd picked it up at the SDSU 15 and carried it to the 5.

"Panicked," Stiegelmeier said when asked what happened to an offense that gave up 10 turnovers. "I'm certain it started with their pass rush, and that's best up front we've seen and we could have done better but they're a good football team.

"Taryn pressed some. He's a winner in every sense of the word; tonight he struggled."

Houston pointed to his defense, which had five sacks, and its pressure on the quarterback, as the turning point.

"I thought it was the difference of the ballgame, especially with the talent they have at receiver and tight end we want to try take away the run game and get him uneasy in the pocket..." Houston said. "We got a hit on him on the first play of the game and we kind of kept on through the game."

The Jackrabbits turned their fortunes on their first possession of the second quarter, driving 74 yards on eight plays with Christian throwing 9 yards to Jake Wieneke. The TD catch was Wieneke's 59th of his career, snapping a tie for second in the FCS. He also broke a tie for first with former Eastern Washington University and current Los Angeles Rams receiver Cooper Kupp for most consecutive games with a catch with 54.

James Madison responded on its next possession with a 10-play, 75-yard drive that culminated with a 15-yard TD catch by Stapleton.

The Jackrabbits used over seven minutes in going 55 yards before Chase Vinatieri kicked a 37-yard field goal with 56 seconds left in the half. However, the Dukes needed only 40 seconds to go 58 yards, after a 37-yard kickoff return by Marshall, to go up 21-10 at halftime. Sparked by 30-yard completion to Stapleton and a pass interference penalty, the Dukes scored on Schor's sneak with an assist from running back Trai Sharp, who gave the QB a shove into the end zone.

JMU, who gave up a season-high 28 points to Weber State before winning 31-28 on a final-play field goal, didn't let the Jackrabbits get back into this game, tacking on Taylor Woods' 3-yard run, an Ethan Ratke field goal and Raven Greene's 59-yard pick-6 in a 30-point third quarter.

Besides Green's school-record 14th career pick and Moreland's three interceptions, Jordan Brown also snagged two.

Marshall finished with a career-high 203 yards on 15 carries. Schor threw for 203 yards and two scores, both to Stapleton.

Christian was 18 of 43 for 234 yards passing and TD passes to Wieneke, who had 105 yards receiving, and Dallas Goedert. Goedert, a two-time All-American tight end and considered a potential first-round NFL pick, played after aggravating an ankle injury on the first play and sitting out the rest last week's victory over New Hampshire.

Wildfire burns beloved burros in South Dakota's Custer park

By AMY FORLITI, Associated Press

Nine burros that are a favorite of visitors to South Dakota's Custer State Park have been burned in a wildfire and it's not known if all of them will survive, a park official said Saturday.

The park reported Saturday morning that all nine burros had been found — a day after three of them were reported missing and feared dead in the wildfire that has consumed more than 84 square miles (218 square kilometers). But all nine were burned and are being treated by a veterinarian. Some were not injured as badly as others, but their chances of survival and the severity of their injuries might not be known for some time, said park visitor services program manager Kobee Stalder.

"It's a very sensitive situation at the moment," Stalder said. "We're treating them and we are trying to do everything we can to help them, and it's kind of a waiting game."

Stalder said the burros are getting antibiotics and pain medication, as well as food and water.

The burro herd was affected by the fire more than any other herd in the park. By Friday, the majority of the park's popular bison herd, which numbers about 860, had been located and appeared to be doing

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fine. The majority of elk herds were also found and pronghorn antelope are now starting to come out of the woods and have been seen grazing, Stadler said.

He said that for the wildlife, "their animal instincts kick in and they know to evade the danger area." Still, the full effects of the fire might not be known for weeks.

"Obviously we'll still be assessing all of our herds over time," Stadler said. "But at first glance, we are very fortunate. ... Some animals have some minor burns and things like that, but overall health is good."

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

Since the fire started Monday from a downed power line, park fans have been going to social media to get updates on the fire and ask about wildlife. Many people posted messages of concern about the missing burros, which Stadler called a visitor favorite.

The burros' lineage dates back to the 1930s, when the animals were used to give pack tours up to the top of a peak in the Black Hills park. The number in the herd ranges from year to year, and every November, some burros are sold at auction to control the population. They are purchased by farmers, ranchers or even sentimental tourists. Stadler said a dozen burros were sold at last month's auction.

Officials said that as of Saturday, the wildfire was 90 percent contained.

Follow Amy Forliti on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/amyforliti> . More of her work at: <https://apnews.com/search/amy%20forliti>

Suicide bombers attack church in Pakistan, killing 8

By **ABDUL SATTAR, Associated Press**

QUETTA, Pakistan (AP) — Two suicide bombers attacked a church in the Pakistani city of Quetta on Sunday, killing eight people and wounding 42 others, officials said.

Sarfraz Bugti, home minister for the southwestern Baluchistan province, said hundreds of worshippers were attending services at the church ahead of Christmas. He said the attackers clashed with security forces, with one assailant killed at the entrance while the other made it inside.

Baluchistan police chief Moazzam Ansari praised the response of security forces guarding the church, saying the attacker who made it inside was wounded and unable to reach the main building. "Otherwise the loss of lives could have been much higher," he told reporters.

Quetta police chief Abdur Razzaq Cheema said a search is underway for two suspected accomplices who escaped.

Wasim Baig, spokesman for Quetta main hospital, confirmed the attack's toll, updating earlier accounts from officials.

No one immediately claimed the attack. Muslim extremists have targeted Pakistan's small Christian minority in the past.

Local television showed ambulances and security patrols racing to the scene while women and children were being led out of the church's main gate.

Hospital officials said two women were among the dead while another five women and two children were among the wounded.

A young girl in a white dress sobbed as she recounted the attack to Geo television, saying many people around her were wounded.

Aqil Anjum, who was shot in his right arm, told The Associated Press he heard a blast in the middle of the service, followed by heavy gunfire. "It was chaos. Bullets were hitting people inside the closed hall."

Dozens of Christians gathered outside a nearby hospital to protest the lack of security.

Pakistan's president and other senior officials condemned the attack.

Associated Press writer Ishtiaq Mahsud in Dera Ismail Khan contributed to this report.

Defiant Theresa May: UK 'proving doubters wrong' on Brexit

LONDON (AP) — British Prime Minister Theresa May said Sunday her government is “proving the doubters wrong” after European Union leaders agreed that Brexit negotiations can finally move on to their next phase in the new year.

Leaders of the other 27 EU nations gave a boost to May on Friday when they agreed that the protracted talks over Britain’s exit from the bloc can proceed to the issues of transition and future trade relations between the two sides.

Writing in the Sunday Telegraph, May declared that “the last 10 days have marked a watershed in our negotiations to leave the European Union.” Striking a defiant note, she added that her Brexit plans won’t be “derailed” by anti-Brexit campaigners.

“Amid all the noise, we are getting on with the job,” she wrote. “In the face of those who want to talk Britain down, we are securing the best and most ambitious Brexit deal for our whole United Kingdom.”

May, who is already struggling to maintain her authority amid the fractious exit process, suffered a significant political defeat in Parliament on Wednesday when the House of Commons voted to give lawmakers the final say on any Brexit agreement.

The prime minister said negotiations would now begin on an “implementation period” immediately after Britain formally leaves the bloc in March 2019 — but some of her Conservative party members have already signaled that they won’t accept arrangements that closely resemble continued EU membership during the transition to a new relationship.

With so little time before Britain’s expected exit date, negotiators face a tight deadline to carve out a wide-ranging separation deal. A transition phase of about two years, aimed at easing Britain out of the EU and providing some certainty to business, is expected to be an early point of discussion.

SpaceX capsule back at space station with pre-Christmas haul

By MARCIA DUNN, AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — A recycled SpaceX capsule is back at the International Space Station, just in time for Christmas.

NASA astronauts used the space station’s big robot arm to grab the Dragon capsule out of orbit Sunday. It’s the second visit for this particular supply ship, which made a delivery for NASA back in 2015 as well, and only the second time a Dragon has had a repeat performance 250 miles up.

“It’s a great day to see Dragon back at ISS again,” Mission Control radioed.

Replied spaceman Joe Acaba: “It’s a beautiful spacecraft, and we’re looking forward to digging into it and getting some science on board.”

Acaba assisted Mark Vande Hei in capturing the Dragon as the two spacecraft raced over the Pacific, midway between Australia and New Guinea.

SpaceX launched the Dragon from Cape Canaveral on Friday, using a previously flown Falcon rocket. It was the first time SpaceX had flown a recycled rocket with a recycled capsule on top, at the heart of the company’s effort to drive down launch costs.

The Dragon holds nearly 5,000 pounds of station goods, including lab mice and barley seeds, the latter a Budweiser experiment. The beer maker — eager to serve the first brews on Mars — wants to see how well the 20 barley seeds sprout in weightlessness.

As for Christmas presents, NASA isn’t saying, in true Santa style.

The two Americans and one Russian on board will be joined Tuesday by another trio — U.S., Russian and Japanese — who launched earlier Sunday from Kazakhstan.

SpaceX plans to keep its Dragon at the orbiting outpost until mid-January. The Dragon is the only supply ship capable of returning experiments to Earth; all the others burn up on re-entry.

NASA has been relying on commercial shippers SpaceX and Orbital ATK to keep the space station well-

stocked, ever since the shuttles retired in 2011. Russia also has a fleet of cargo carriers.

Online:

SpaceX: <http://www.spacex.com/>

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

A CDC ban on 'fetus' and 'transgender?' Experts alarmed

By MIKE STOBBE, AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Health leaders say they are alarmed about a report that officials at the nation's top public health agency are being told not to use certain words or phrases in official budget documents, including "fetus," "transgender" and "science-based."

The health community was reacting to a story in The Washington Post published late Friday citing an anonymous source who said the prohibition was made at a recent meeting of senior budget officials at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The seven words and phrases — "diversity," "entitlement," "fetus," "transgender," "vulnerable," "evidence-based" and "science-based" — were not to be used in documents that are to be circulated within the federal government and Congress in preparation of the next presidential budget proposal, the paper reported.

On Saturday a CDC official confirmed CDC officials were given "feedback" from higher ranks of the federal government at a recent meeting to reconsider certain language in draft budget documents. But she said she did not know if there was any specific prohibition about using those seven words. She spoke on condition of anonymity, saying she was not authorized to talk about what happened.

A spokesman at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which oversees CDC, said in a statement that it's a mischaracterization to say the CDC was banned from using certain words. But HHS officials did not clarify or answer any other questions.

In an email to the agency's employees on Saturday night, CDC Director Dr. Brenda Fitzgerald noted the media report and wrote; "I want to assure you that CDC remains committed to our public health mission as a science- and evidence-based institution. As part of our commitment to provide for the common defense of the country against health threats, science is and will remain the foundation of our work."

The Atlanta-based CDC is in charge of responding to infectious disease outbreaks, like Ebola and Zika, and tracking a wide range of chronic diseases and other health problems.

For decades, the agency has had a mostly sterling reputation as a source of scientific information. That the agency could be censoring certain language sparked alarm and anger from some science and public health experts.

"Here's a word that's still allowed: 'ridiculous,'" said Rush Holt, chief executive officer of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, in a statement reacting to the report.

Dr. Sandro Galea, dean of Boston University's School of Public Health, says these things matter "because the words that we use ultimately describe what we care about and what we think are priorities."

"If you are saying you cannot use words like 'transgender' and 'diversity,' it's a clear statement that you cannot pay attention to these issues."

The CDC official who spoke to The Associated Press said the feedback to reconsider budget language came from "higher-ups" in the federal government, and not from anyone at the CDC. She said she was informed of the meeting but she was not there, and did not know who made the language suggestions.

Since President Donald Trump took office, a number of federal agencies have moved to downscale data collection on topics like climate change and homeless people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender and to remove information on such topics from some government websites.

The CDC has in the past seemed to signal an interest in less talk and data on certain subjects. Earlier this year, for example, the HHS proposed deleting a question of sexuality from a federal data-collecting survey. It was restored after an outcry by advocates for the LGBT community.

In a statement responding to the Post story,

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An HHS official did not respond to any additional questions. A White House official referred questions to HHS.

The CDC is in a sensitive position. The White House and some Republican lawmakers have proposed dramatic reductions to the agency's \$7 billion discretionary budget.

"Everybody in the public health community recognizes that there is a slowly growing timidity by colleagues whose budgets are dependent on the federal government. I have a deep sympathy for the predicament that they are in," Dr. Galea said.

One medical leader from an outside agency, who works closely with CDC employees, said a CDC ban on certain words and terms may not be limited to budget documents. He said two CDC employees told him agency workers have been told not to use the term "health equity" in presentations or public talks. The term refers to a goal of removing obstacles like poverty and racial discrimination in making sure people have an equal chance to be healthy.

There's no written directive about not using the term; it's only been communicated verbally, said the medical leader, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he did not want to jeopardize a working relationship with CDC officials.

"What is clearly happening is those people are afraid to use those words in any talks or papers. Everybody's afraid to do their job right now," he said.

A CDC spokeswoman said she is not aware of any guidance that prohibits CDC scientists from using "health equity" or any other words or phrases in presentations or talks.

Special counsel obtains thousands of Trump transition emails

By **STEPHEN BRAUN** and **CHAD DAY**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian contacts with President Donald Trump's campaign has gained access to thousands of emails sent and received by Trump officials before the start of his administration, according to several people familiar with Trump's transition organization.

But the investigators did not directly request the records from Trump's still-existing transition group, Trump for America, and instead obtained them from the General Services Administration, a separate federal agency that stored the material, according to those familiar with the Trump transition organization.

The tens of thousands of emails in question pertain to 13 senior Trump transition officials. Many of the emails that Mueller's investigators have now include national security discussions about possible Trump international aims as well as candid assessments of candidates for top government posts, said those familiar with the transition. They spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because of the records' sensitivity.

On Saturday, Kory Langhofer, general counsel for the transition group, sent a letter to two congressional committees arguing that the GSA had improperly provided the transition records to Mueller's investigators. In the letter to the Republican chairmen of the House Oversight and the Senate Homeland Security committees, Langhofer contends that the disclosure by GSA was "unauthorized," and it considers the documents private and privileged and not government property.

Langhofer also said that a GSA official appointed by Trump in May had assured the transition in June that any request for records from Mueller's office would be referred to the transition's attorneys. According to Langhofer, the assurance was made by then-GSA General Counsel Richard Beckler, who was hospitalized in August and has since died. A copy of the letter was viewed by the AP.

But late Saturday, another GSA official present for the conversation told BuzzFeed News that there was nothing improper about the disclosure of the emails to Mueller's team. The GSA has provided office space and other aid to presidential transitions in recent years and typically houses electronic transition records in its computer system.

GSA Deputy Counsel Lenny Loewentritt told BuzzFeed that Beckler didn't make a commitment to the transition team that requests from law enforcement for materials would be routed through transition lawyers.

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Loewentritt said the transition was informed that by using government devices, the agency wouldn't hold back records from law enforcement. Transition officials signed agreements that warn them that materials kept on the government servers are subject to monitoring and auditing, he told BuzzFeed, and there's no expectation of privacy.

The documents were provided to Mueller's team by the GSA in September in response to requests from the FBI, but the transition wasn't informed at the time, according to people familiar with the transition organization. Officials with Trump for America learned last Wednesday that GSA officials had turned over the cache of emails to Mueller's team.

Late Saturday, Mueller's spokesman, Peter Carr, said the special counsel's office has followed the law when it has obtained documents during its investigation.

"When we have obtained emails in the course of our ongoing criminal investigation, we have secured either the account owner's consent or appropriate criminal process," Carr said.

Among the officials who used transition email accounts was former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn, who pleaded guilty to a count of making false statements to FBI agents in January and is now cooperating with Mueller's investigation. Flynn was fired by Trump in February for misleading senior administration officials about his contacts with Russia's ambassador to the U.S.

It's unclear how revelatory the email accounts maintained by the GSA will be for Mueller. Several high-level Trump advisers sometimes used other email accounts to communicate about transition issues between Election Day and the inauguration.

Flynn attorney, Robert Kelner, declined to comment. Jay Sekulow, an attorney on Trump's personal legal team, referred questions to the transition group. Spokespeople for GSA didn't immediately respond to AP's emailed requests for comment.

The media site Axios first reported on the transfer of the emails to Mueller's team.

Flames threaten rich California enclave, residents flee

By **ROBERT JABLON** and **CHRIS CARLSON**, Associated Press

MONTECITO, Calif. (AP) — Firefighters trying to prevent one of the biggest fires in California's history from consuming homes in Santa Barbara and the nearby wealthy enclave of Montecito were hoping less powerful winds would help them after they managed to stop it from burning thousands of residences.

After winds roared at around 30 mph (48 kph), with gusts to about 60 mph (97 kph) on Saturday, they were expected to ease Sunday with gusts of up to 35 mph (56 kph) on Sunday.

But even the lower intensity winds are still extremely dangerous, said fire spokesman Jude Olivas.

The fire that started 12 days ago has burned at least 700 homes and killed a firefighter, but Olivas said firefighters saved thousands of homes from being destroyed on Saturday.

The winds "will go down a little bit, hopefully we can do the same job (Sunday) that we did today," he said.

Earlier Saturday, residents piled into cars and fled on Saturday, turning downtown Santa Barbara into what one resident called "a ghost town."

There were mandatory evacuations around Montecito and neighboring Summerland came as firefighters sprayed water onto hot spots sparked by wind-blown embers. They also drove to the historic San Ysidro Ranch in yellow firetrucks as heavy smoke rose from the coastal hills, blotting out blue skies.

A portion of Santa Barbara was under mandatory evacuation. At the city's zoo, workers began putting some animals into crates and kennels, to ready them for possible evacuation.

In downtown Santa Barbara, Maya Schoop-Rutten, owner of Chocolate Maya, said she saw through the window of her chocolate shop smoke suddenly appear after strong winds blew through.

"It was absolutely incredible," she said. "There was a huge mushroom of smoke that happened in just a matter of a few minutes."

Restaurants and small stores on normally bustling State Street were shuttered.

"It's a ghost town. Everything is shut down," Schoop-Rutten said. "It's very, very eerie."

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The northbound lanes of U.S. Highway 101, coming up the coast from Los Angeles, were closed for a few hours south of Santa Barbara, with cars stopped on the freeway.

The 418-square-mile (1,083-square-kilometer) blaze called the Thomas fire was moving rapidly westward and crested Montecito Peak, just north of Montecito. Known for its star power, the enclave boasts the mansions of Oprah Winfrey, Ellen DeGeneres and many other celebrities.

"It is right above the homes," Olivas said.

Winfrey expressed her dismay on her Twitter account.

"Still praying for our little town. Winds picked up this morning creating a perfect storm of bad for firefighters," Winfrey tweeted. It was not clear if the former talk show host was in Montecito.

Pierre Henry, owner of the Bree'osh Bakery in Montecito, said he got a text to evacuate Saturday morning as the fire approached homes.

"The worst was the smoke," Henry said. "You couldn't breathe at all and it became worse when the wind started. All the ashes and the dust on the street were in the air. It was very, very frightening."

The day passed with no homes damaged or destroyed as firefighters dealt with "extreme and erratic" fire behavior, Olivas said.

Schoop-Rutten said the fire is taking an economic toll, even if it doesn't invade the city.

"It's tragic for businesses at this time of the year because this is when we make the money," she said. "Imagine all the restaurants, all the Christmas parties have been cancelled. People lost a ton of revenue in the past few days."

There was a spot of good news down the coast. Emergency officials announced that the same fire that was burning about 25 miles (40 kilometers) southeast of Montecito was 40 percent contained. Evacuation orders for the city of Ventura were lifted.

As the northerly "sundowner" wind was driving the fire south and west, firefighters could only hope it would calm back down.

"When the sundowners surface in that area and the fire starts running down slopes, you are not going to stop it," Mark Brown, of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, told a news conference. "And we are not going to stand in front of it and put firefighters in untenable situations."

Olivas said 400 fire engines were sent to protect homes in the area. The fire is now the third-largest in California history.

The firefighter who was killed, Cory Iverson, 32, died of burns and smoke inhalation, according to autopsy results announced Saturday.

Since the fire began on Dec. 4, about 95,000 people have been placed under mandatory evacuation. The evacuation zone near Santa Barbara on Saturday was 17 miles (27 kilometers) long and up to 5 miles (8 kilometers) wide and the new expansion encompassed about 3,300 people.

The Santa Barbara Zoo has about 150 species of animals, including a pair of Amur leopards, a critically endangered species. Workers began putting vultures, California condors and some smaller animals into crates and kennels in case the fire approached.

"Everything is fine right now. The wind has shifted in our favor," spokesman Dean Noble said. "However, we just don't want to get caught by something unexpected."

Other zoos are ready to accept the evacuated animals, he said. The Fresno zoo has an incubator available for a baby giant anteater, and the San Diego zoo is prepared to accept the Amur leopards and other cats, Noble said.

Everything about the fire has been massive, from the sheer scale of destruction that cremated entire neighborhoods to the legions attacking it: about 8,300 firefighters from nearly a dozen states, aided by 78 bulldozers and 29 helicopters.

The cause remains under investigation. So far, firefighting costs have surpassed \$100 million.

Jablon reported from Los Angeles. Associated Press writer Andrew Selsky in Salem, Oregon contributed to this report.

Sydney man charged with brokering North Korea missile sales

By TREVOR MARSHALLSEA, Associated Press

SYDNEY (AP) — A South Korean-born Sydney man was charged Sunday with acting as an economic agent for North Korea in Australia by allegedly attempting to broker sales worth tens of millions of dollars for Pyongyang that included components used in ballistic missiles.

The Australian Federal Police said 59-year-old naturalized Australian Chan Han Choi used encrypted communication to broker sales and discuss the supply of weapons of mass destruction. His actions contravened both United Nations and Australian sanctions against North Korea, police said.

Police said the man was acting to generate income for Pyongyang by arranging the sale of computer software used for guiding ballistic missiles as well as expertise from North Korea to other "international entities." Police didn't elaborate.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said he had been briefed by AFP Commissioner Andrew Colvin on the "very, very serious matter" and warned anyone thinking of assisting North Korea that "the AFP will find you."

"North Korea is a dangerous, reckless, criminal regime threatening the peace of the region," Turnbull said. "It supports itself by breaching U.N. sanctions, not simply by selling commodities like coal and other goods, but also by selling weapons, by selling drugs, by engaging in cybercrime."

He added: "It is vitally important that all nations work relentlessly to enforce those sanctions because the more economic pressure that can be brought on North Korea, the sooner that regime will be brought to its senses."

Despite international sanctions, cash-strapped North Korea last month test-fired its most powerful missile that may be able to target the U.S. mainland.

Choi is facing six charges related to brokering the sale of missile componentry and expertise from North Korea to other international entities, and attempting to transfer coal from North Korea to entities in Indonesia and Vietnam.

Choi didn't appear or apply for bail in a Sydney court Sunday, and bail was formally refused.

Federal police Assistant Commissioner Neil Gaughan said the governments of Indonesia and Vietnam — or authorities in those countries — were not involved in the coal transfer attempt.

Choi is the first person charged under Australia's Weapons of Mass Destruction Act and could face a maximum 10-year prison sentence.

Gaughan said the charges related to his alleged activity over the past year, but that allegations dated back to 2008.

Choi was arrested Saturday and charged over two transactions that were unsuccessful. "But we estimate that if these trades were successful, we're talking tens of millions of dollars," Gaughan told reporters.

He said investigations were continuing and that more charges could be filed against Choi.

"The AFP are saying this man was a loyal agent of North Korea, believing he was acting to serve some high patriotic purpose," Gaughan said.

Police started investigating Choi after a tip-off from another international agency on another matter, he said.

"I know these charges sound alarming, but we are not suggesting that there are any weapons or missile componentry that came to Australian soil," he said. "We're alleging all of the activity occurred offshore."

Choi's activities also involved commodities including oil and gemstones.

"This is black market 101. It's the same with the coal and oil and gemstones — it's all about making money for North Korea," he said, adding the case was "like nothing we have ever seen on Australian soil."

"Any individual who attempts to fly in the face of sanctions cannot and will not go unnoticed in Australia," he said.

Romanians join European royals for last king's state funeral

By ALISON MUTLER, Associated Press

BUCHAREST, Romania (AP) — European royalty joined tens of thousands of Romanians who wept and applauded as they said farewell to Romania's last monarch, King Michael, who was buried next to his wife Saturday after a state funeral.

Michael, who ruled Romania twice before being forced to abdicate by the communists in 1947, was remembered for his dignity and morality. He 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.

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.

Michael's reign is best-remembered for the Aug. 23, 1944 coup he led to oust pro-Nazi leader Marshal Ion Antonescu, a move that took Romania into the war on the side of the Allies.

For this, the king was awarded made a Chief Commander of the Legion of Merit by U.S. President Harry S. Truman and was decorated with the Soviet Order of Victory by Joseph Stalin.

After his abdication, Michael spent decades in exile working as a chicken farmer and aircraft pilot, living in Britain and settling in Switzerland. He finally got his Romanian citizenship back in 1997, eight years after the collapse of communism.

The Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen dynasty that ruled Romania from 1866 until Michael's reign ended in 1947 no longer enjoys special status, but its heirs enjoy a certain prestige and hand out honors. Successive Romanian governments have returned castles and other properties that were seized from the royal family when the communists came to power.

The funeral procession carrying the coffin of Romania's last king drove slowly through the capital to a railway station, where, accompanied by a phalanx of priests, the casket was put on a royal train.

It later arrived in the central town of Curtea de Arges, where priests performed a service before the late king was buried next to his late wife, Anne de Bourbon-Parme, who died last year.

Earlier, thousands of ordinary Romanians crowded the streets to see the procession go by, while others threw flowers as the royal train bearing the coffin passed through railway stations on its way to burial in central Romania.

In the hours before Michael's coffin was taken out of the palace, people 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.

Egypt reopens ancient library in Sinai after renovations

By **SAMY MAGDY, Associated Press**

ST. CATHERINE'S, Egypt (AP) — Egypt reopened on Saturday an ancient library which holds thousands of centuries-old religious and historical manuscripts at the famed St. Catherine Monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage site, in South Sinai.

The inauguration ceremony, attended by Egyptian and western officials, comes after three years of restoration work on the eastern side of the library that houses the world's second largest collection of early codices and manuscripts, outnumbered only by the Vatican Library, according to Monk Damyanos, the monastery's archbishop.

"The library is now open to the public and scholars," said Tony Kazamias, an adviser to the archbishop, adding that restoration work is still underway without specifying a completion date.

The ancient library holds around 3,300 manuscripts of mainly Christian texts in Greek, Arabic, Syriac, Georgian, and Slavonic among other languages. It also contains thousands of books and scrolls dating to the 4th century.

At least 160 of the manuscripts include faint scratches and ink tints beneath more recent writing, according to Kazamias, who believes the palimpsests were likely scraped out by the monastery's monks and reused sometime between the 8th- 12th centuries.

During the library's renovation, archaeologists apparently found some of Hippocrates' centuries-old medical recipes. The ancient Greek physician is widely regarded as the "father of western medicine."

"The most valuable manuscript in the library is the Codex Sinaiticus, (which) dates back to the fourth century," said the Rev. Justin, an American monk working as the monastery's librarian. "This is the most precious manuscript in the world," referring to the ancient, handwritten copy of the New Testament.

The library also held some ancient paintings which are currently on display in the monastery's museum. "There are beautiful paintings in the manuscripts. When you turn the (pages) there is a flash of gold and colors. It is a living work of art," said Justin.

The officials also inaugurated the Mosaic of the Transfiguration situated in the eastern apse of the monastery's great basilica. It mosaic covers 46 square meters and features a rich chromatic range of glass paste, glass, stone, gold and silver tesserae. Jesus Christ is depicted in its center between the prophets Elias and Moses. The 6th century mosaic was created at the behest of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian, who also requested building the monastery.

St. Catherine's, where the monastery is located, is an area revered by followers of the Abrahamic faiths, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Like the Old City of Jerusalem, it has become a popular destination and an attraction not only for pilgrims but also tourists from the world over. The 6th century monastery, one of the oldest Christian Orthodox ones, is home to a small number of monks who observe prayers and daily rituals unchanged for centuries. Its well-preserved walls and buildings are of great significance to the studies Byzantine architecture. It's situated at the foot of Mount Sinai, also known as Jebel Musa or Mount Horeb, where Moses is said to have received the Ten Commandments.

Trump defends tax plan, proclaims economy set 'to rock'

By **JONATHAN LEMIRE and STEPHEN OHLEMACHER, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Closing in on the first major legislative achievement of his term, President Donald Trump on Saturday defended the Republican tax cut as a good deal for the middle class while boldly suggesting it could lead to explosive economic growth.

The legislation, which the GOP aims to muscle through Congress next week, would lower taxes on the richest Americans. Benefits for most other taxpayers would be smaller, but Trump attempted to sell the bill as a "Christmas present" for middle-class Americans in part because it would trigger job growth.

"It'll be fantastic for the middle-income people and for jobs, most of all," Trump told reporters on the White House lawn before traveling to Camp David for the weekend. "And I will say that because of what

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we've done with regulation and other things our economy is doing fantastically well, but it has another big step to go and it can't take that step unless we do the tax bill."

No stranger to hyperbole, Trump also predicted the legislation would cause the economy to soar beyond its current 3 percent rate of growth.

"I think we could go to 4, 5 or even 6 percent, ultimately," the president said. "We are back. We are really going to start to rock."

Many economists believe that attaining consistent 4 or 5 percent annual growth would be challenging. The nation last topped 5 percent growth in 1984.

The Republican plan is 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.

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.

"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."

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. It came together as Republicans cemented 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.

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 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 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.

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.

Associated Press writer Marcy Gordon contributed to this report.

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The one that got away: Not the fish, but the \$2.8M prize

By BEN FINLEY, Associated Press

OCEAN CITY, Md. (AP) — Phil Heasley caught the fish of his life, but the \$2.8 million in tournament prize money got away.

Heasley reeled in a 6-foot (1.8 meter) white marlin last year off Maryland's coast. But in a sign of how concerned some big money tournaments are about cheating, officials made him and his crew take lie detector tests. The officials said all four men failed.

Heasley is now in a protracted court battle over the winnings and his crew's reputation, pitting their integrity against that of one of the world's most lucrative angling contests.

The white-haired CEO of a financial software company had motored with his crew into the Atlantic before sunrise on a Tuesday in August in his 68-foot fishing boat, the Kallianassa, to compete in the 2016 White Marlin Open.

About 65 miles out, they zeroed in on a fast-moving school of skipjack tuna, according to transcripts from the nine-day trial.

One of the mates quickly hooked a marlin. The captain maneuvered the boat and Heasley worked the reel.

The avid fisherman from Naples, Florida, said he fought the famously acrobatic species for about 10 minutes. The blue-finned fish — whose snout resembles a fencing rapier — was "running like mad" and leaping to dislodge the hook.

Hanging from the tournament scale in Ocean City, the white marlin turned out to be relatively scrawny, weighing in at 76.5 pounds — not far over the 70-pound qualifying weight and nearly 20 pounds lighter than the 2015 winner.

"I did not think that we had a fish that was going to win some great big amount of money," Heasley said on the witness stand.

The marlin wasn't even mounted. It went to a food bank.

But three days later, the tournament deemed it the only qualifying white marlin of the five-day open.

The total prize was \$2,818,662.

The open itself paid out only \$15,000. But like many anglers, Heasley had placed a big bet on himself and his crew in various "calcuttas," which are optional betting pools.

Boats can pay a total of nearly \$30,000 apiece before the tournament. Whoever hooks the heaviest fish in a category and participated in the calcuttas takes home the big money.

Heasley planned to give half to the crew, a life-changing gift.

But there was one more step: Heasley had to pass a lie detector test.

Tournaments have employed polygraphs for decades. Sometimes they're used to settle disputes. No accusations had been made against the Kallianassa, but polygraphs are standard at the White Marlin Open.

"I kind of call it the velvet hammer," the contest's founder, Jim Motsko, said recently. "You need something to keep people honest," he said. "Would you put up \$15,000 if you didn't trust anybody?"

Heasley, 68, had competed in dozens of tournaments, once winning \$800,000. But this was his first White Marlin Open and his first polygraph.

In a hotel conference room, the examiner measured his heartbeat, breathing and perspiration and asked,

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"Did you commit any tournament violations?" Similar questions followed.

The results were inconclusive. Another test was required. The unsuspecting and hung-over captain, David Morris, had to be tested too. The examiner said Morris indicated "deception" during his exam.

The men still posed with a promotional check at the award ceremony. But the actual money was being withheld, they were told, pending Heasley's second polygraph and tests for the two mates.

No one passed.

Tournament officials denied the prize. Heasley refused to sign a release of the winnings. The tournament asked a court to intervene.

Winners from other fishing categories joined in the litigation, claiming they were entitled to the money. They accused the Kallianassa of dropping its fishing lines before 8:30 a.m., a rule violation.

This is far from the first court fight over big prize money for a big fish.

In 2010, a boat crew sued over a \$900,000 prize after catching an 883-pound fish in the Big Rock Blue Marlin Tournament. The boat was disqualified because the mate who hooked the marlin lacked a fishing license. The tournament learned of the violation during a polygraph test.

The case went to North Carolina's Supreme Court before a settlement was reached in 2013.

Polygraph issues at the White Marlin Open didn't end with Heasley. Tests for two anglers "raised concerns" this year. But in October, tournament officials determined no rules were violated. They didn't identify the boats in question.

At trial, Heasley's lawyers questioned the accuracy of polygraph tests, and criticized the tournament's exams.

The judge ruled against Heasley in June, writing that Heasley had agreed to the open's terms.

The judge also sided with the other anglers over the Kallianassa's fishing start time, citing discrepancies among the crew's accounts and other evidence.

The case is now on appeal. In a statement to The Associated Press, Heasley said he's fighting for the decency of the sport.

"I have continued our fight in the appellate courts," Heasley wrote, "because I am not the kind of person to lay down and let anyone run over us with lies and junk science."

Associated Press researchers Jennifer Farrar and Rhonda Shafner contributed to this story.

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.

"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 Grainge 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 involving 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."

This story corrects the name of Universal Music Group CEO Sir Lucian Grainge.

AP Entertainment Writer Sandy Cohen contributed to this story.

Follow Andrew Dalton at www.twitter.com/andyjamesdalton

Vatican issues new rules for relics in saint-making process

By NICOLE WINFIELD, Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The Vatican's saint-making office has updated its rules governing the use of relics for would-be saints, issuing detailed new guidelines Saturday that govern how body parts and cremated remains are to be obtained, transferred and protected for eventual veneration.

The instructions explicitly rule out selling the hair strands, hands, teeth and other body parts of saints that often fetch high prices in online auctions. They also prohibit the use of relics in sacrilegious rituals and warn that the church may have to obtain consent from surviving family members before unearthing the remains of candidates for sainthood.

Bodily relics are an important part of Catholic tradition, since the body is considered to be the "instrument" of the person's saintliness. Beatification and canonization Masses often feature the relic being ceremoniously brought to the altar in an elaborate display case and allowing the faithful to publicly venerate the new blessed or saint for the first time.

Officials said the new guidelines were necessary given some obstacles that had arisen since the rules were last revised in 2007, particularly when surviving relatives and church officials disagreed. One current case before a U.S. appeals court concerns a battle over the remains of Fulton Sheen, an American archbishop known for his revolutionary radio and television preaching in the 1950s and 1960s.

Sheen's niece went to court to force the archdiocese of New York to transfer Sheen's body from the crypt of St. Patrick's Cathedral to Peoria, Illinois, where Sheen was born, ordained a priest and where his sainthood cause has been launched by Peoria's bishop.

The New York archdiocese refused and appealed a 2016 lower court ruling in favor of the niece. A decision from the appeals court is expected soon.

Monsignor Robert Sarno of the Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of Saints said it's impossible to know what difficulties could complicate a saint-making case or whether the new guidelines might have helped avoid the legal battle over Sheen.

But Sarno said the Vatican believed the updates were needed anyway to provide bishops around the world with a detailed, go-to guide in multiple languages to replace the Latin instructions that provided

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only general rules to follow.

New to the protocols is an article that makes clear that bishops must have the "consent of the heirs" in places where the bodies of the dead legally belong to surviving family members or heirs.

The revised instructions lay out in detail how a body is to be unearthed, saying it must be covered with a "decorous" cloth while a relic is being taken or authenticated, and then re-buried in clothes of similar style.

They also make clear that the bishops involved must agree in writing to any transfer of remains and call for absolute secrecy when a body is unearthed and a relic taken for eventual veneration.

The document repeats church teaching that relics from candidates for sainthood can only be venerated publicly once they have been beatified, the first step to possible sainthood, and not before.

The guidance explicitly allows for cremated remains to be used as relics. For most of its 2,000-year history, the Catholic Church only permitted burial, arguing that it best expressed the Christian hope for resurrection. But in 1963, the Vatican explicitly allowed cremation as long as it didn't suggest a denial of faith about resurrection.

The new instructions only cover the so-called "first class" of relics from the actual body of the saintly candidate. The church also recognizes second- and third-class relics, such as clothes and other materials that came into contact with the would-be saint's body.

After Alabama, abortion may be backseat issue in 2018 races

By BILL BARROW, Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Alabama, one of the most conservative states in the country, with one of the most evangelical electorates, is sending an abortion-rights supporter to the U.S. Senate, despite GOP efforts to paint Democrat Doug Jones as an unacceptable extremist on the issue.

Certainly, any analysis of what Jones' upset over Roy Moore means for other races involves a caveat: The Republican nominee was twice ousted from the state Supreme Court and stood accused of sexual misconduct with minors, baggage that gave Jones an opening in a state that hadn't elected a Democratic senator since 1992.

Yet Jones could not have won without crossover votes from conservative Republicans who oppose abortion, and that's just what he did.

Exit polls show Jones won a third of voters who said abortion should be illegal in most cases, and 27 percent of those who want it outlawed completely.

These numbers suggest that abortion may not necessarily be a defining issue in the 2018 midterm elections.

Abortion is "still a dividing line in American politics," said Republican pollster Greg Strimple, who surveys voters for the Congressional Leadership Fund, the political action committee backed by Speaker Paul Ryan that is helping defend the GOP's House majority.

But a candidate's stand on abortion mobilizes only slices of the two parties' bases, and for most every voter in between, "it's a secondary issue," Strimple said.

There's an argument that this contest was unusually unsavory for conservatives, making them choose between a man accused of preying on girls, and a Democrat. But it's clear that Jones' support of legalized abortion wasn't a deal-breaker for just enough Republicans to give Democrats a 20,000-vote margin, out of more than 1.35 million votes cast.

That's heartening for Democrats looking to dent Republican domination in Congress and statehouses by targeting voters dissatisfied with President Donald Trump and unhappy over Republican moves to roll back Democrats' 2010 health insurance expansion and push tax cuts tilted to corporations and wealthy individuals.

"We are competing on a massive offensive battlefield, in districts that went for both Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, and that are suburban, rural and urban," said Meredith Kelly of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. "Regardless of where they are running, (our) candidates have no reason to compromise on their support for a woman's health care, her right to choose, and her economic security."

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Nationwide, polling suggests that a majority of Americans avoid taking an absolutist stance on abortion. According to a Pew assessment in July, the largest plurality is the 33 percent of voters who say abortion should be legal in most cases. The next largest segment, at 25 percent, says it should be legal in all cases. Twenty-four percent say abortion should be illegal in most cases, while just 16 percent say it should be illegal in all cases.

Of course, those voters aren't distributed proportionally across state and congressional boundaries, and partisan leanings are much more intense: 65 percent of self-identified Republicans say abortion should be illegal in all or most cases, while 75 percent of Democrats say it should be legal in most or all cases. Independents lean in favor of access, with 60 percent saying it should be legal.

Religious influence sharpens voters' leanings further. White evangelical protestants are the most likely religious group to oppose abortion rights: 70 percent say it should be illegal in most or all cases. Majorities of Catholics, black protestants and mainline protestants all support more access, while unaffiliated voters lean overwhelmingly toward legality.

A state like Alabama, where Republican nominees usually win at least 60 percent of the vote and where half the population is white evangelical protestant (as opposed to a quarter nationally), is more fundamentally anti-abortion than many other states now under Republican control, such as Ohio or Wisconsin, which have far fewer evangelicals proportionally and are typically presidential battlegrounds.

It's also true that nearly all the 91 House districts that national Democrats are targeting are less Republican than Alabama. Democrats need to flip 24 GOP-held seats for a House majority. In the Senate, Republicans will have a narrow 51-49 advantage when Jones is sworn in, meaning they need a net gain of two seats to regain control. Democrats also must defend 10 seats in states where Trump won, but all these states are less conservative than Alabama, perhaps with the exception of North Dakota.

In Alabama, Moore and his supporters certainly tried to make abortion a dividing line. Republicans circulated an interview in which Jones affirmed his position. After losing, Moore highlighted the issue again in a video to supporters explaining his refusal to concede. "Abortion, sodomy and materialism have taken the place of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," he said, lamenting that "we have killed over 60 million of our unborn children."

Yet throughout the campaign, including the months before the sexual misconduct allegations surfaced in early November, Jones stood his ground, certainly not emphasizing abortion rights, but not denying his views when asked.

"Everyone felt like I needed to be someone I was not to try to get votes," he told The Associated Press the day after his election. "I promised myself I would not do that."

Associated Press writer Kim Chandler contributed to this report. Follow Barrow on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/BillBarrowAP>.

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.

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Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Sunday, Dec. 17, the 351st day of 2017. There are 14 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 17, 1967, Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt, 59, disappeared while swimming in the ocean off Cheviot Beach in Victoria state; despite an extensive search, his body was never found (Holt was succeeded as premier by John McEwen).

On this date:

In 1777, France recognized American independence.

In 1865, Franz Schubert's Symphony No. 8, known as the "Unfinished" because only two movements had been completed, was first performed publicly in Vienna 37 years after the composer's death.

In 1903, Wilbur and Orville Wright of Dayton, Ohio, conducted the first successful manned powered-airplane flights near Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, using their experimental craft, the Wright Flyer.

In 1925, Col. William "Billy" Mitchell was convicted at his court-martial in Washington of insubordination for accusing senior military officials of incompetence and criminal negligence; he was suspended from active duty.

In 1939, the German pocket battleship Admiral Graf Spee was scuttled by its crew, ending the World War II Battle of the River Plate off Uruguay.

In 1944, the U.S. War Department announced it was ending its policy of excluding people of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast.

In 1957, the United States successfully test-fired the Atlas intercontinental ballistic missile for the first time.

In 1979, Arthur McDuffie, a black insurance executive, was fatally injured after leading police on a chase with his motorcycle in Miami. (Four white police officers accused of beating McDuffie were later acquitted, sparking riots.)

In 1981, members of the Red Brigades kidnapped Brig. Gen. James L. Dozier, the highest-ranking U.S. Army official in southern Europe, from his home in Verona, Italy. (Dozier was rescued 42 days later.)

In 1992, President George H.W. Bush, Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney (muhl-ROO'-nee) and Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari (sah-LEE'-nuhs deh gohr-TAHR'-ee) signed the North American Free Trade Agreement in separate ceremonies. (After approval by the legislative bodies of the leaders' respective countries, the treaty came into force on Jan. 1, 1994.)

In 1996, Peruvian guerrillas took hundreds of people hostage at the Japanese embassy in Lima (all but 72 of the hostages were later released by the rebels; the siege ended April 22, 1997, with a commando raid that resulted in the deaths of all the rebels, two commandos and one hostage). Kofi Annan of Ghana was appointed United Nations secretary-general.

In 2011, North Korean leader Kim Jong Il died after more than a decade of iron rule; he was 69, according to official records, but some reports indicated he was 70.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush, addressing a Rotary Club meeting, tried to reassure an edgy public that the economy was "pretty good" despite the mix of a failing housing market, a national credit crunch and surging energy costs. Gov. Jon S. Corzine signed a measure making New Jersey the first state to abolish the death penalty in more than 40 years. NBC announced that Jay Leno and Conan O'Brien were planning to return to their late-night shows in early 2008, even as a writers' strike continued.

Five years ago: Newtown, Connecticut, began laying its dead to rest, holding funerals for two 6-year-old boys, the first of the 20 children killed in the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre. A pair of NASA spacecraft, named Ebb and Flow, were deliberately crashed into a mountain near the moon's north pole, ending a mission that peered into the lunar interior. Longtime U.S. senator and World War II hero Daniel Inouye (ih-NOH'-way), D-Hawaii, died in Bethesda, Maryland, at age 88.

One year ago: President-elect Donald Trump said he intended to nominate Mick Mulvaney, a conservative Republican congressman from South Carolina, to be the White House budget director. Three-year-old

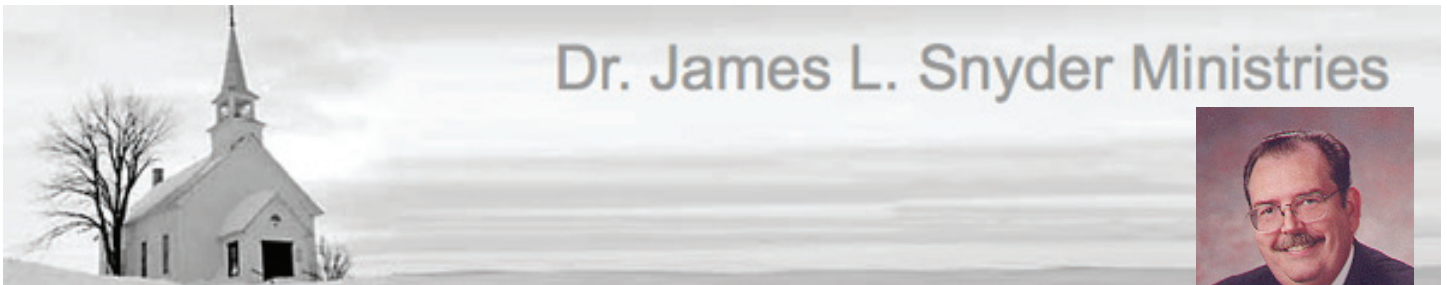
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Acen (AY'-sin) King was fatally shot in a road-rage incident in Little Rock, Arkansas, while riding in a car with his grandmother; a suspect faces a first-degree murder charge. Dr. Henry Heimlich (HYM'-lihk), the surgeon who created the life-saving Heimlich maneuver for choking victims, died in Cincinnati at age 96.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Armin Mueller-Stahl is 87. Pope Francis is 81. Singer-actor Tommy Steele is 81. Rock singer-musician Art Neville is 80. Actor Bernard Hill is 73. Actor Ernie Hudson is 72. Political commentator Chris Matthews is 72. Comedian-actor Eugene Levy is 71. Actress Marilyn Hassett is 70. Actor Wes Studi is 70. Pop musician Jim Bonfanti (The Raspberries) is 69. Actor Joel Brooks is 68. Rock singer Paul Rodgers is 68. Rhythm-and-blues singer Wanda Hutchinson (The Emotions) is 66. Actor Bill Pullman is 64. Actor Barry Livingston is 64. Country singer Sharon White is 64. Producer-director-writer Peter Farrelly is 61. Rock musician Mike Mills (R.E.M.) is 59. Pop singer Sarah Dallin (Bananarama) is 56. Country musician Tim Chewning is 55. Country singer Tracy Byrd is 51. Country musician Duane Propes is 51. Actress Laurie Holden is 48. DJ Homicide (Sugar Ray) is 47. Actor Sean Patrick Thomas is 47. Actress Claire Forlani is 46. Pop-rock musician Eddie Fisher (OneRepublic) is 44. Actress Sarah Paulson is 43. Actress Marissa Ribisi is 43. Actor Giovanni Ribisi is 43. Actress Milla Jovovich (YO'-vuh-vich) is 42. Singer Bree Sharp is 42. Singer-songwriter Ben Goldwasser (MGMT) is 35. Rock singer Mikky Ekko is 34. Actress Shannon Woodward is 33. Actress Emma Bell is 31. Actress Vanessa Zima is 31. Rock musician Taylor York (Paramore) is 28. Actor Graham Rogers is 27. Actor-singer Nat Wolff is 23.

Thought for Today: "A fool and his money are soon parted, but you never call him a fool till the money is gone." — Author unknown.



Behold, the Christmas Grinch Cometh

I never have to look at the calendar to know when the Christmas holiday season is approaching. As soon as I lay down my fork on Thanksgiving Day, the battle drums begin to roll. Somebody, who apparently does not have much of a life, takes a pot shot at the Christmas holiday. You would think, from some of their comments, the Christmas holiday was the greatest conspiracy in all of human history.

According to these protesters, the very word "Christmas," offends them to no degree. They forbid people to say cheerfully, "Merry Christmas," as if those words in and of themselves would create the ultimate damage to the person hearing them.

To placate these values-challenged patrons, some businesses have chosen not to put the word "Christmas," anywhere near their business, replacing that offensive word with the words, "Happy Holiday." Even employees are prohibited wishing customers a Merry Christmas, but rather a "Happy Holiday." This, according to the all-wise Christmas Grinch, is more acceptable than simply saying, "Merry Christmas."

Of course, anybody who is as smart as a fifth-grader knows that the word "holiday," according to Webster's dictionary, means, "A religious feast day; a holy day." So instead of saying "Merry Christmas," they want us to say, "Have a happy holy feast day," which seems more religious to me.

I am thinking of starting a grassroots movement of people who are offended by people who are offended by the word "Christmas." The only problem with this, I would have a hard time finding people as nasty, venomous and as gray-matter-challenged as those offended by the word "Christmas." People who believe in Christmas and the Christmas spirit are rather good, loving and generous people.

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Part of our agenda would go something like this. People offended by the word "Christmas" and by celebrating the Christmas season should not be allowed to take Christmas day off with pay. I do not hear any of these people complaining that they have Christmas day off with pay. If they really were offended by the Christmas season they would refuse taking any time off and getting paid for it.

Along with this, all those objecting to Christmas would not be eligible for any kind of Christmas gift or Christmas bonus. All of these "offensive goodies," would go to those who love and appreciate the Christmas season.

All government offices would be opened on Christmas day and staffed by all those people who find the Christmas season so very offensive. Why isn't the post office open on Christmas day? Moreover, why don't I get my Christmas Cards delivered to me on Christmas day?

To further our agenda, all those offended by Christmas should not be permitted to shop at Christmas time to purchase "Christmas gifts." Nor should they accept any Christmas gifts. If they are honestly offended by the Christmas season this should be anathema to them.

Any business person with a store should not have a Christmas sale. If they are really offended by Christmas, why do they insist on benefiting from those who delight in Christmas?

While I am on the subject, why are all of these people who want to take God out of government, our school system and businesses still greedily accepting American dollars that have clearly printed on it, "In God we trust." If they were really true to their beliefs, they would never touch another American dollar in their life.

This would be another part of our grassroots agenda. Those desiring to take God out of all of these things, if they are honest people, should surrender all their money to people who believe in God. After all, if you do not believe in God, why accept money that boasts in believing in God?

Throughout the rest of the year, prayer in school offends these Grinches. This has always "wondered me." They do not believe in Christmas or God and yet when either is mentioned they go into a convulsive seizure as though their very life is being threatened.

If I did not believe in something as radical as these people say they do not believe in God or Christmas, it would not threaten me. I might smile at people who believed in it, but it sure would not bother me and I would not be upset to the point where I would forbid others celebrating it. After all, I do not believe in Halloween, but I have not started a movement to ban it from our country. I think it rather silly for people to get all dressed up in scary costumes, pretending to be something they are not and begging for candy. As of today, I have not started a movement to ban them from running for political office.

I allow those who do not believe in Christmas or in God to celebrate their holidays: Halloween and April 1. Just let me celebrate my holidays.

I celebrate Christmas because of what the Bible says. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:4-6).

Christmas means that God provided redemption for all humanity. Jesus is the real reason for the season.