



A Riddle

**What gets wet when drying?
(answer at the end of the AP News)**

- 1- Recycling trailers
- 1- Chicken Soup for the Soul
- 1- Schultz Construction Ad
- 1- SunDial Help Wanted Ad
- 1- A Riddle
- 2- Groton Care & Rehab Help Wanted Ad
- 2- Service Notice: Janice Herman
- 2- Kiwanis News
- 2- Gun Show Ad
- 3- Farmers Union PSA
- 3- Upcoming Events
- 3- 130th Anniversary of the Children's Blizzard
- 4- Doeden has double-double night against Sis-seton
- 4- Silver Skates Ad
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- 11- Daily Devotional
- 12- 2018 Community Events
- 13- News from the Associated Press

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

The cardboard/paper
recycling trailer at the school is

Closed

Job Opening
Sun Dial Manor in Bristol is accepting applications for a Full or Part time Cook/Dietary Tech. Hours Vary. Sign-on Bonus available.
Please contact Mandy at 605-492-3615 or P.O. Box 337, Bristol, SD 57219 for more information.

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Service Notice: Janice Herman

Services for Janice Herman, 72, formerly of Conde will be 10:00 a.m., Monday, January 15th at the United Methodist Church, Conde. Rev. Thomas Carlson will officiate. Burial will follow in the Conde Cemetery under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Visitation will be held on Sunday at the funeral chapel from 6–8 p.m.

Janice passed away January 10, 2018 at the Salem Care and Rehabilitation Center.

Kiwanis News

Twelve members and one guest attended Wednesday noon's Kiwanis Club meeting.

President Reed Litch led the business meeting.

Tom Mahan was program chairman, and introduced Hope Block, city finance officer. Hope fielded many questions regarding our city. Our member, Scott Hanlon, also added valuable information on the subject.

Next week's program chairman is Chuck Padfield. Followed by Tom Paepke.

Gun Show

GUN SHOW: Dakota Territory Gun Collectors Association 16th Annual ABERDEEN Gun Show. New location. Saturday, February 3, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sunday, February 4, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Dakota Event Center on LaMont East. Roger Krumm 701-851-0129. (...0203)

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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Upcoming Events

Friday, the Groton Area boys will travel to Sisseton. The C game is scheduled to start at 5 p.m. with the junior varsity starting at approximately 6 p.m. and the varsity game at approximately 7:30 p.m. The debate team will be at the Silver Bowl in Sioux Falls. The wrestling team will be at Philip High School with the tourney to start at 3 p.m. CT

On Saturday, Jan. 13, the boys will be playing with the following schedule at the Redfield Shoot-out: Parkston vs. Flandreau Indian at noon, Little Wound vs. Warner at 1:30 p.m., Aberdeen Christian vs. Platte-Geddes at 3 p.m., Timber Lake vs. Redfield-Doland at 4:30 p.m. and Dell Rapids vs. Groton Area at 6 p.m.

Also on Saturday, the wrestling team will be at Philip for the tournament starting at 10 a.m. CT. There will be a seventh and eighth grade basketball jamboree in Groton with Britton-Hecla, Leola-Frederick, Northwestern and Webster coming to town, starting at 10 a.m.

There is open gym on Sunday from 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. for JK through eighth grade and from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. for sixth grade through seniors.

On Monday, Jan. 15, Langford Area will come to Groton Area with the junior varsity game starting at 6:30 p.m. followed by the varsity match.

130th Anniversary of the Children's Blizzard

The "Children's Blizzard" of January 12, 1888 is a tale of both heroism and of the sobering realities that the first homesteaders had to endure.

It was the tragic combination of factors that culminated in such a deadly blizzard. It was the the relative warmth beforehand that lured people outside with a false sense of security, the suddenness of the onset of the storm that took most people completely off-guard, and the mid-day timing that ensured that many were outside or at school, away from home.

Hundreds of school children and teachers were caught off guard and had to make tough decisions. Do they stay with the school house and risk running out of fuel to burn and food to eat? Or do they risk walking home, hoping they could find their way safely? Unfortunately, many would never make it home that day.

[Click here](#) for a StoryMap that will guide you through events, personal stories and the significance of the blizzard that ravaged the northern plains January 12, 1888.



All auto owners!

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Super Premium E30's

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same mileage, fewer
carbon deposits, lower

maintenance costs,
slashed benzene & related
genotoxic, carcinogenic
tailpipe emissions;

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

***Farmers Union's**

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

Doeden has double-double night against Sisseton



Despite the Sisseton defense collapsing in on Jennie Doeden, Doeden finished the night with 14 points and 11 rebounds to help lead the Tigers to a NEC win over Sisseton. (Photo by Julianna Kosel)

men had Alyssn Maguuson with 12, Kiara LaFromboise with 11, Kellie Karst had three and adding two points each were Halle Williams, Libby Metenwald and Hannah Williams.

Groton Area Lady Tigers pulled out a 37-32 North-east Conference win over Sisseton Thursday in action played at the Groton Area Arena. But the Tigers had little help from the free throw line, missing 21 shots.

The game was tied four times and the lead changed hands several times before Groton Area pulled away in the fourth quarter. Sisseton led after the first quarter, 9-5, and at half time, 17-14. The Tigers led at the end of the third quarter, 28-23.

Jennie Doeden had a double-double on the night with 14 points and 11 rebounds. Payton Maine added eight points followed by Miranda Hanson with seven, Harleigh Stange four, Jessica Bjerke three and Kaycie Hawkins added two points.

Scoring for the Red-



Jessica Bjerke fights her way inside. (Photo by Julianna Kosel)



The Carnival of Silver Skates theme for January 2018 is "80 Years of Memories".

We would like to honor the former skaters who have passed away.

Please contact Tina at the Groton Independent at 397-6397 or email her at tina@grotonsd.net to share the name of someone you would like remembered at this year's carnival.

Thank you for helping us to honor those who started this great community tradition.

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Whoa! Where is everyone at? Harleigh Stange stole the ball and no one could catch her as she made the layup. (Photo by Julianna Kosel)

Groton Area made nine of 27 field goals for 33 percent, three of 16 three-pointers for 19 percent and 10 of 31 free throws for 32 percent. Stange and Bjerke each had four of the team's 12 steals, Maine had two of the team's five assists and the Tigers had 14 turnovers and 11 team fouls.

Sisseton made seven of 13 free throws for 54 percent and had 19 team fouls.

Groton Area is now 5-3 on the season and will host Langford Area on Monday.

Sisseton won the junior varsity game, 26-25. The Tigers missed two free opportunities with three seconds left to win the game. Groton Area made seven of 19 free throws for 37 percent and Sisseton was two of 13 from the line for 15 percent.

Kenzie McInerney came off the bench to lead the Tigers with eight points followed by Kaycie Hawkins with five and adding four points each were Eliza Wanner, Nicole Marzahn and Caitlyn Barse. Sheridan Swanson led the Redmen with eight points.

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2018 Week 1 Legislative Report

Jason Frerichs, District 1 State Senator,

We are back in session in Pierre, and I am proud of my duty to represent northeast South Dakota as the District 1 State Senator. I am pleased to announce that on October 29th, my wife Ashley and I were blessed with our first child Elizabeth Grace.

The Governor delivered his final State of the State address to start the session this year, and he highlighted his passion for workforce education training programs. I agree with the Governor and am pleased to see his excitement for preparing our young people to be equipped for good paying jobs after technical school or college. School-to-work along with career and technical education programs in high school are extremely important to student success. The Governor mentioned an exciting soybean processing plant being built on the edge of Aberdeen and how it will utilize 20% of the soybeans produced in our state. Opioid abuse continues to be one of the biggest issues in rural South Dakota. In 2016, there were so many opioids prescribed in our state that it would equate to enough for every South Dakotan for 19 days. Fortunately, the medical community has joined with state government to curb the amount of opioids prescribed as a first option rather than one alternative.

On Wednesday, Chief Justice Gilbertson delivered his seventeenth State of the Judiciary address emphasizing the importance of drug and alcohol courts and the savings realized in social services by keeping these people who need help in their communities. At one point this past year, a historic event happened when a majority of the Supreme Court justices were women. Unfortunately, this was only on one case due to one of the sitting justices stepping away from a case. Currently, we have just one female out of the five justices. Hopefully as we go forward, we can have more women serve on the South Dakota Supreme Court and more accurately reflect our population.

On Thursday, Chairman Boyd Gourneau from the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe delivered the annual State of the Tribes address and stressed that we are all South Dakotans. Access to quality health care and tackling the meth and opioid crisis are the main issues facing our tribal brothers and sisters. Lower Brule Sioux Tribe has a rich history of being successful in agriculture production, especially with raising popcorn.

I serve as a member of the Senate Transportation Committee, and we received the annual report from the Department of Transportation (DOT) on the status of our roads, bridges, airports, and railroads. I want to assure all of you that our DOT has adequate resources to take care of our state roads and bridges. When we as a legislature passed Senate Bill (SB) 1 a few years ago, it authorized the increase in motor fuel taxes along with an increase to the vehicle excise tax that provided increased funding to the state highway fund. There is an extra \$11.5 million of new funds available over and above the projections when we passed SB 1. I will be offering legislation to capture half of that additional money to be used in the local government bridge fund. This fund allows counties to request funding for their bridge projects, and the current fund is not meeting the needs of local governments.

Throughout this session, we will have robust discussion on the various issues impacting our state. I am supportive of the plan to extend the sunset on the open waters compromise law dealing with the public access to non-meandered bodies of water located on private land. I welcome your input on other ways that we can strike a balance to meet the interests of outdoors enthusiasts and landowners.

Please keep in touch on the issues that are important to you. If your schedule allows, come visit the session in Pierre. You can also follow along on South Dakota Public Broadcasting. My email is Jason.Frerichs@sdlegislature.gov or you can call me at 949-2204.

Jason Frerichs,
District 1 State Senator, Wilmot, SD



Build Dakota Presentation

Groton Area School hosted a Build Dakota Seminar for students in grades 11-12 on January 9, 2018 in the GHS Arena. The focus of the presentation was to explain the Build Dakota Scholarship and industry partnership programs and the benefits of the program for businesses and the community. The presentation also connected students with local businesses and gave information about the high-need workforce areas.

The Build Dakota Scholarship program provides full tuition and fees scholarships for certain programs at the SD technical schools. Students must be interested in high tech and high need occupations and be willing to stay in SD to work for three years in the technical field following graduation. Students must apply early, be accepted into eligible program, and fill out the scholarship application by the deadline (March 31, 2018). More information is available at <http://www.builddakotascholarships.com/>.

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Today in Weather History

January 12, 1912: The all-time coldest temperature ever recorded at Aberdeen and Timber Lake was 46 degrees below zero on this date in 1912. On February 8th, 1895, 46 degrees below zero was also recorded in Aberdeen. The record low for this date was also set at Watertown with 38 degrees below zero.

January 12, 1997: On January 12th, 1997, some of the greatest snow depths were recorded across central and northeast South Dakota. Ipswich had 29 inches on the ground, Aberdeen had 30 inches, Timber Lake had 31 inches, Mobridge had 34 inches, and Waubay had 38 inches. Some of the highest snow depths were recorded at Summit, Sand Lake, and at Eureka. Summit had 42 inches of snow on the ground on January 12th, Sand Lake had 47 inches, and Eureka had a snow depth of 50 inches. The snow depth at Aberdeen was the all-time record snow depth and Mobridge was just an inch shy of their 35-inch record snow depth.

1886: With a reading of 26 degrees below zero, Bowling Green Kentucky recorded its coldest temperature on record.

1888 - A sharp cold front swept southward from the Dakotas to Texas in just 24 hours spawning a severe blizzard over the Great Plains. More than 200 pioneers perished in the storm. Subzero temperatures and mountainous snow drifts killed tens of thousands of cattle. (David Ludlum)

1890: A tornado touched down at St. Louis, MO and crossed the Mississippi River, ending just south of Venice. The worst damage from this tornado occurred in St. Louis. Further east and northeast, one tornado in McLean County passed through downtown Cooksville, destroying at least a dozen buildings, while a tornado in Richland County destroyed four homes northeast of Olney. In all, over 100 homes and other buildings were unroofed or damaged. The storm caused four deaths and 15 injuries.

1912 - The morning low of 47 degrees below zero at Washta IA established a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1985: A record snowstorm struck portions of western and south central Texas. All snowfall records dating back to 1885 were easily broken. Austin measured 3.6 inches, and Del Rio received 8.6 inches. San Antonio saw a record setting 13.5 inches from this event.

1987 - Twenty-seven cities in the Upper Midwest reported new record high temperatures for the date. Afternoon highs of 72 degrees at Valentine NE and 76 degrees at Rapid City SD set records for the month of January. (National Weather Summary)








1988 - Parts of North Dakota finally got their first snow of the winter season, and it came with a fury as a blizzard raged across the north central U.S. Snowfall totals ranged up to 14 inches at Fargo ND, winds gusted to 65 mph at Windom MN, and wind chill readings in North Dakota reached 60 degrees below zero. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A dozen cities in the southeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date as readings warmed into the 70s and 80s. Fort Myers FL reported a record high of 86 degrees. (National Weather Summary)

1990 - Gale force winds produce squalls with heavy snow in the Great Lakes Region. Totals in northwest Pennsylvania ranged up to eleven inches at Conneautville and Meadville. Barnes Corners, in western New York State, was buried under 27 inches of snow in two days. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night	M.L.King Day
						
Cold	Mostly Clear	Cold	Slight Chance Snow 20%	Mostly Cloudy then Slight Chance Snow 20%	Partly Cloudy	Cold
High: -1 °F	Low: -21 °F	High: 5 °F	Low: -1 °F	High: 23 °F	Low: -9 °F	High: -3 °F



Continued Cold

Today



-4 to +3°

morning wind chills of -15 to -30°

Light snow possible over W and central SD

Saturday



slightly warmer

1 to 17°

morning wind chills of -20 to -35°

warmest over W and central SD

National Weather Service

weather.gov/Aberdeen
 National Weather Service Aberdeen
 @NWSAberdeen

Graphic Created 1/12/2018 5:39 AM

Published on: 01/12/2018 at 5:43AM

Arctic high pressure will continue to pump cold air into the area through the first half of the weekend. The cold air will be accompanied by very cold wind chills this morning, and again tonight. While there is a chance of light snow today near and west of the Missouri River, little to no snow accumulation is expected.

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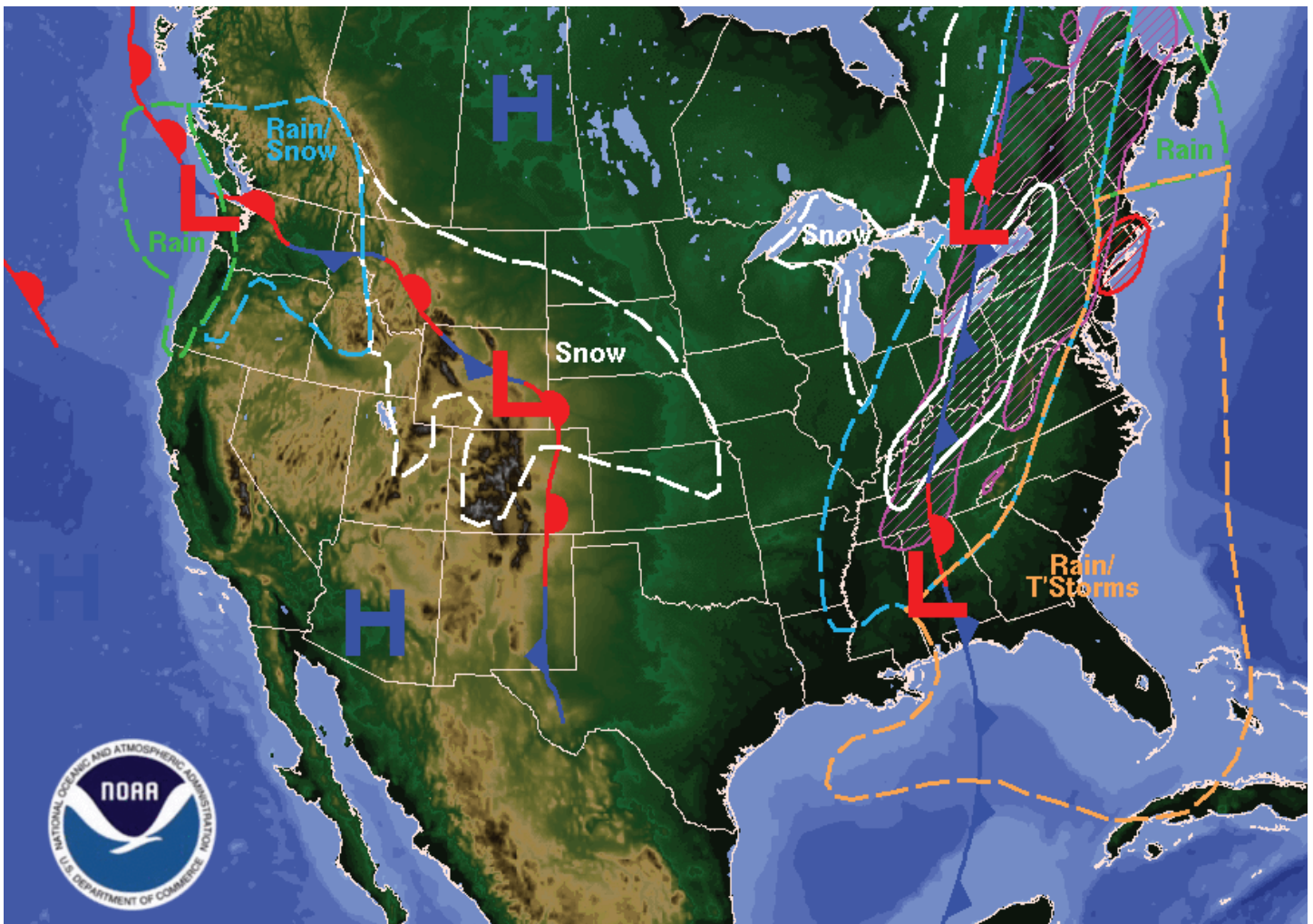
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 6.1
Low Outside Temp: -8.2
High Gust: 27
Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 58° in 1987
Record Low: -46° in 1912
Average High: 22°F
Average Low: 1°F
Average Precip in Jan: 0.21
Precip to date in Jan: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.21
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:13 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:10 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Fri, Jan 12, 2018, issued 4:33 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain
Rain and T'Storms
Rain and Snow
Snow
Flash Flooding Possible (hatched)
Severe T'Storms Possible (hatched)
Freezing Rain Possible (hatched)
Heavy Snow Possible (hatched)

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IT'S ALL ABOUT CHOICE

A reader recently wrote and asked a question that many of us ask at one time or another: "If there is a God, and if He is a good and loving God, why does He allow sin and suffering?"

A simple answer is that God gave each of us, from Adam and Eve, to the newest born baby, the opportunity and responsibility to make and live with choices and consequences. But there is a liability that came with this freedom. Even though we can make a poor choice, God will not interfere with our freedom to make it. Unfortunately we all live with the choice that Adam and Eve made: it introduced sin into the world and we have to live with their choice.

But it seems that we all make decisions that are not in keeping with what is in our best interests. Consider the history of Israel. The psalmist wrote, "My people would not listen to me; Israel would not submit to me. So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts."

Without choice there could be no love or liberty, grace or goodness, caring or compassion. We are free to choose what is right and righteous or what is destructive and devastating. This is true of individuals and nations alike. We have sin and suffering because of wrong choices.

And why do we make wrong choices? Again our psalmist has the answer: "If my people would but listen to me...I would subdue their enemies."

We make wrong choices because we do not listen to the Word of God and follow its directions.

Prayer: We pray, Father, that we will allow Your Word to speak to our hearts, guide our decisions and bring hope. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 81:11, 12 "But My people would not heed My voice, And Israel would have none of Me. So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart, To walk in their own counsels.

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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

Thursday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Christian 52, Potter County 51
Akron-Westfield, Iowa 78, Alcester-Hudson 46
Andes Central/Dakota Christian 57, Mitchell Christian 41
Bison 59, McIntosh 21
Brandon Valley 68, Pierre 51
Britton-Hecla 63, Webster 55
Castlewood 60, Great Plains Lutheran 45
Chamberlain 58, Todd County 52
Chester 47, Baltic 36
Dupree 49, Lemmon 43
Faulkton 66, Edmunds Central 41
Freeman 79, Ethan 67
Herreid/Selby Area 62, Highmore-Harrold 44
Hill City 68, Lead-Deadwood 31
Ipswich 77, Northwestern 75
Irene-Wakonda 81, Centerville 25
Madison 72, Flandreau 55
Oelrichs 69, Crazy Horse 51
Parker 54, Hanson 40
Parkston 39, Wagner 37
Rapid City Central 69, Sturgis Brown 52
Rapid City Christian 62, Harding County 43
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 62, James Valley Christian 55
Scotland 59, Avon 50
Sioux City, East, Iowa 62, Sioux Falls Lincoln 57
St. Thomas More 57, Custer 30
Sully Buttes 60, Miller 50
Tiospa Zina Tribal 90, Wilmot 59
Tri-Valley 59, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 53
Vermillion 72, Lennox 66
Viborg-Hurley 54, Gayville-Volin 41
Warner 45, Langford 44
West Central 79, Garretson 73
West Sioux, Hawarden, Iowa 74, Canton 71
Winner 82, Bon Homme 39
Wright, Wyo. 62, Belle Fourche 60
Jones County Tournament
First Round
Lyman 77, Kadoka Area 64
Stanley County 51, Colome 46
White River 82, Bennett County 39
West River Tournament
First Round

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Faith 63, Moorcroft, Wyo. 22
Hot Springs 73, Edgemont 23
Upton, Wyo. 71, Newell 41
Wall 57, New Underwood 26

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Akron-Westfield, Iowa 51, Alcester-Hudson 20
Andes Central/Dakota Christian 47, Mitchell Christian 27
Avon 60, Scotland 23
Bennett County 53, Stanley County 37
Burke/South Central 66, Colome 28
Canistota 55, Dell Rapids St. Mary 48
Chester 55, Baltic 38
Colman-Egan 32, Estelline 30
Crazy Horse 80, Takini 30
Dakota Valley 70, MVAO-CO-U, Iowa 24
DeSmet 62, Elkton-Lake Benton 23
Deubrook 71, Arlington 26
Faulkton 87, Edmunds Central 46
Groton Area 37, Sisseton 32
Hanson 54, Parker 41
Hill City 37, Lead-Deadwood 36
Irene-Wakonda 79, Centerville 24
Kimball/White Lake 54, Gregory 28
Menno 80, Bridgewater-Emery 66
Mitchell 51, Yankton 40
Parkston 57, Wagner 47
Pine Ridge 52, Little Wound 44
Rapid City Central 45, Sturgis Brown 40
Red Cloud 59, Douglas 39
Sioux Falls Christian 60, Tea Area 41
Sully Buttes 60, Miller 46
Sundance, Wyo. 58, Harding County 34
Vermillion 60, Lennox 51
Viborg-Hurley 52, Gayville-Volin 28
Waubay/Summit 58, Florence/Henry 42
West Central 42, Crofton, Neb. 35
West Sioux, Hawarden, Iowa 54, Canton 46
Winner 82, Bon Homme 39

Watertown man charged in early morning fatal shooting

WATERTOWN, S.D. (AP) — A Watertown man has been arrested and charged in a fatal shooting. Police say 30-year-old Donald Herron is charged with first-degree manslaughter and reckless discharge of a firearm in the early Friday death of 30-year-old Seth Murray.

Police allege Herron was playing around with a handgun in a residence about 3:30 a.m. when it fired, fatally shooting Murray in the head.

Herron was being held in lieu of \$100,000 bond. It wasn't immediately clear if he had an attorney.

Health technology firm in Sioux Falls lays off employees

STIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A health technology firm in Sioux Falls has laid off employees. DocuTap confirmed the Wednesday layoffs to the Argus Leader but wouldn't say how many workers lost their jobs.

Company Vice President of Marketing Dusty Schroeder said the cuts were "strategic restructuring." DocuTap sold a majority stake of the business in 2016 to private equity firm Warburg Pincus. DocuTap acquired Atlanta-based Clockwise.MD in November. In December, it filled two open executive-level positions and said it had added about 70 employees.

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

Aberdeen woman sentenced for exploiting 3 elderly people

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — An Aberdeen woman has been sentenced to five years in prison for financially exploiting three elderly people while working for a home health agency.

Attorney General Marty Jackley says 37-year-old Amy Schmidt was sentenced Thursday for grand theft. Along with her prison time, she was ordered to pay about \$7,000 in restitution.

The case was prosecuted by the attorney general's Elder Abuse and Financial Exploitation Subdivision.

Woman pleads guilty in alleged bogus medical device scheme

STIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Canadian woman has pleaded guilty in federal court in South Dakota in what authorities say was a scheme to sell bogus laser medical devices known as QLasers.

The Justice Department says 63-year-old Irina Kossovskaja of Ontario, Canada, reached a deal with prosecutors and pleaded guilty to a conspiracy charge Wednesday. She faces up to five years in prison. A sentencing date wasn't immediately set.

Three other people were charged in the case, which authorities say involved the sale of devices falsely advertised as treating more than 200 conditions, including cancer, HIV and AIDS, heart attacks, paralysis and diabetes.

Two Rapid City residents, Robert "Larry" Lytle and Fredretta Eason, have pleaded not guilty. A fourth suspect, Ronald Weir Jr., pleaded guilty a year ago.

Second suspect arrested in Sioux Falls double homicide

STIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Another suspect wanted in connection with a double homicide in Sioux Falls has been arrested.

Police say a citizen tip led them to Maria LeClaire in Red Wing, Minnesota, on Thursday. She was arrested without incident on a charge of first-degree robbery. It wasn't known if she has an attorney.

Police are still searching for Manuel Frias, who is wanted on a first-degree murder charge in the Jan. 5 shooting deaths of 28-year-old Samuel Crockett and 30-year-old Corey Zephier. Police say the drug-related incident happened outside an apartment building.

A third suspect, 19-year-old Crystal Habben, was arrested Tuesday for allegedly concealing a felony.

Spink County weighing \$1.5 million law enforcement center

REDFIELD, S.D. (AP) — Spink County officials are seeking the public's input on the idea of building a \$1.5 million law enforcement center next to the courthouse in Redfield.

The American News reports the County Commission will host an informal meeting Tuesday evening to provide information on potential building plans, funding options and law enforcement issues.

Sheriff Kevin Schurch says a new law enforcement center would provide a safer environment for inmates, county workers and the public.

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But he also says the county doesn't want to raise taxes or bond for the facility, given that a \$20 million school is being built in Redfield. He says the money would have to be found in the existing budget. There's no timetable for a decision.

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

Chicago men sentence for dealing drugs in Sioux Falls

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Two Chicago man have been sentenced in federal court for conspiring to distribute heroin in South Dakota.

Forty-eight-year-old Robert Lockhart was sentenced to just under nine years in prison and Clifton Odie was ordered to serve 20 years.

Lockhart and Odie were among four men indicted a year ago. All four eventually pleaded guilty. Co-conspirators Raleigh Thomas and Stephen Harris both were sentenced last October to five years behind bars.

U.S. Attorney Ronald Parsons Jr. says the group distributed heroin in Sioux Falls, sometimes trading the drug for firearms.

South Dakota State takes over first in Summit with 78-75 win

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Mike Daum scored 27 points and grabbed 12 rebounds and South Dakota State defeated Oral Roberts 78-75 on Thursday night to take sole possession of first place in the Summit League.

Reed Tellinghuisen added 24 points and David Jenkins Jr. 15 for the Jackrabbits (15-5, 3-0), who have won six straight. The Jackrabbits made 10 of 27 from behind the arc, including four by Daum, who notched his 20th career double-double.

Chris Miller scored 14 points, Javan White 13 and Albert Owens 12 for the Golden Eagles (7-12, 3-1).

Sam Kearns scored with 2:34 left to get Oral Roberts within a point, 75-74, after trailing by 10 with fewer than six minutes left. But the only points after that were three free throws by Jenkins and one by Kearns.

Oral Roberts tried a long inbound pass to Miller with three seconds left but the ball went off his fingertips.

South Dakota wins Summit road opener, tops Fort Wayne 68-58

FORT WAYNE, Ind. (AP) — Trey Burch-Manning, Tyler Hagedorn and Tyler Peterson each scored 12 points as South Dakota won its first Summit League road game of the season, downing Fort Wayne, 68-58 on Thursday night.

South Dakota swept the home-and-home season series last year and has won three straight against the Mastodons for the first time in the series.

Brandon Armstrong sandwiched two jumpers around a trey to put the Coyotes in the lead with 3:24 left in the first half and it was pushed to a 33-27 advantage by intermission. South Dakota maintained a double-digit lead through much of the second half.

Hagedorn grabbed 11 rebounds to lead South Dakota (15-5, 3-1) while Burch-Manning and Peterson combined to grab another 15. Matt Mooney, who came into the contest averaging 19 points per game through three conference games, finished with 10.

Bryson Scott scored 26 points to lead Fort Wayne (12-8, 1-2) and is 12 shy of 1,000 career points.

Lower Brule chairman urges lawmakers to expand Medicaid

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The Lower Brule Sioux chairman on Thursday urged South Dakota lawmakers to expand the Medicaid health coverage program and work with tribes to fight methamphetamine use.

Chairman Boyd Gourneau said in the third State of the Tribes address that he's seen firsthand the destruction that meth has on people's lives.

"It does not discriminate, and it is not only found in reservation communities," Gourneau said. "If there

was ever an issue that the tribe and state should band together on, it is to combat meth use within our state."

Gourneau said officials can also work together to help the state and save the lives of Native Americans through Medicaid expansion. Republican Gov. Dennis Daugaard had worked under Democrat Barack Obama's presidency to expand the program, but dropped the push after the 2016 election.

Gourneau said before exploring combined efforts on meth, health care and other issues, the relationship between the state and the tribes needs to be solidified with frequent, relevant conversations and actions.

Gourneau said he was "fortunate" to have been influenced by late Lower Brule Chairman Michael Jandreau and former Gov. George S. Mickelson, who died in an airplane crash in 1993. Mickelson had declared 1990 a "Year of Reconciliation," and Gourneau said he laid the foundation for what is now known as state-tribal relations.

Since that proclamation, there have been "shining examples" of how state and tribal people can move forward together, Gourneau said. He praised a new initiative at South Dakota State University that aims to increase the number of students at the school from the nine tribal nations in the state.

But Gourneau said some people still hold onto racial biases against Native Americans in South Dakota, but turning a blind eye only allows that mentality to continue. Subjecting fellow residents to racist acts and comments is detrimental to improving relations and reconciliation, Gourneau said.

"We are all South Dakotans. Our state is rightfully named after the original inhabitants in this area," Gourneau said. "The people on our reservations are farmers, ranchers, college graduates, employees and taxpayers, and simply put, your average South Dakotans."

He also highlighted Lower Brule's successes in areas such as agriculture with Lakota Foods popcorn. The tribe's headquarters is in Lower Brule, and roughly 1,300 enrolled members live on the Lower Brule Reservation in central South Dakota.

Last legislative session, Chairman Robert Flying Hawk of the Yankton Sioux Tribe gave the address.

Democratic Sen. Kevin Killer, a member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, said it's among the best ways to build connections between tribal and non-Native communities across the state while also acknowledging that tribal governments have a voice and a seat at the table.

Sexual misconduct allegations topple many state lawmakers

By The Associated Press

State lawmakers across the country have been accused of sexual harassment or misconduct over the past year as part of a national reckoning on the topic. A look at those who have resigned or faced other consequences:

RESIGNED FROM OFFICE

1. Alaska: Rep. Dean Westlake, submitted resignation letter Dec. 15 after being accused by several women of inappropriate behavior.

2. California: Assemblyman Matt Dababneh, resigned effective Jan. 1 after a lobbyist said he pushed her into a bathroom during a Las Vegas social event and engaged in lewd behavior in front of her.

3. California: Assemblyman Raul Bocanegra, resigned in November after allegations that he had kissed or groped multiple women without their consent.

4. Florida: Sen. Jack Latvala, resigned effective Jan. 5 following allegations of sexual misconduct raised by multiple women.

5. Minnesota: Sen. Dan Schoen, resigned effective Dec. 15 following several allegations from women.

6. Minnesota: Rep. Tony Cornish, resigned effective Nov. 30 following several allegations, including from a lobbyist who said he repeatedly propositioned her for sex.

7. Mississippi: Rep. John Moore, resigned in December after multiple women made complaints against him; the House speaker's office said he had been facing an investigation led by an outside lawyer.

8. Nevada: Sen. Mark Manendo, resigned in July after a law firm concluded that he violated the Legislature's anti-harassment policy and behaved inappropriately toward female staffers and lobbyists.

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9. Ohio: Sen. Clifford Hite, resigned in October after being accused of sexually harassing a female state employee.

10. Oklahoma: Rep. Dan Kirby, resigned in February after two former assistants alleged he sexually harassed them, including one with whom he had reached a confidential wrongful-termination settlement that included a \$44,500 payment from House funds.

11. Oklahoma: Sen. Ralph Shortey, resigned in March and later pleaded guilty to a federal charge of child sex trafficking after being accused of hiring a 17-year-old boy for sex.

12. Oklahoma: Sen. Bryce Marlatt, resigned in September after being charged with sexual battery for allegedly groping an Uber driver who picked him up from a restaurant in the capital city.

13. South Dakota: Rep. Mathew Wollmann, resigned in January 2017 after admitting to sexual contact with two interns, which a legislative panel said was a violation of rules.

14. Tennessee: Rep. Mark Lovell, resigned in February as a House ethics panel concluded that he had violated the Legislature's sexual harassment policy.

OTHER ACTIONS

1. Arizona: Rep. Don Shooter, suspended in November as chairman of the appropriations committee pending an external investigation into allegations that he sexually harassed a female colleague.

2. California: Sen. Tony Mendoza, agreed Jan. 3 to take a one-month paid leave of absence during an investigation into allegations that he behaved inappropriately with three young women who worked for him.

3. Colorado: Rep. Steve Lebsack, replaced Jan. 9 as chairman of the House Local Government Committee after allegations he sexually harassed a female lawmaker.

4. Illinois: Sen. Ira Silverstein, resigned in November as majority caucus chairman after a victims rights advocate publicly accused him of sending inappropriate messages to her.

5. Kentucky: House Speaker Jeff Hoover, resigned from his leadership post Jan. 8 after secretly settling a sexual harassment complaint with a female legislative aide and acknowledging he sent inappropriate text messages to her.

6. Kentucky: Rep. Jim DeCesare, removed from a legislative committee chairmanship in November after signing a secret sexual harassment settlement.

7. Kentucky: Rep. Brian Linder, removed from a legislative committee chairmanship in November after signing a secret sexual harassment settlement.

8. Kentucky: Rep. Michael Meredith, removed from a legislative committee chairmanship in November after signing a secret sexual harassment settlement.

9. Massachusetts: Senate President Stan Rosenberg, stepped aside in December from his leadership position pending an investigation by an independent law firm. The firm is looking into whether he violated any rules following a media report alleging that his husband sexually abused several men, including some who had dealings with the Legislature.

10. New Mexico: Sen. Michael Padilla, ousted in December as Democratic majority whip by the caucus after decade-old allegations that he had sexually harassed women in a prior job. Padilla also dropped out of the lieutenant governor's race.

11. New York: Assemblyman Steven McLaughlin, formally sanctioned in November by a legislative ethics panel after allegations that he asked a female legislative staffer for nude photos and leaked her name when she filed a harassment complaint.

12. Oklahoma: Rep. Will Fourkiller, advised in February to get sensitivity training and blocked from interacting with the Legislature's page program for a year after being accused of making inappropriate comments to a high school page in 2015.

13. Oregon: Sen. Jeff Kruse, removed from committees in October and told in a letter from the Senate president not to touch women after new accusations that he had inappropriately touched female colleagues. He faces an ongoing Senate investigation.

14. Pennsylvania: Sen. Daylin Leach, announced in December that he will "step back" from his campaign

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for a congressional seat after allegations that he behaved inappropriately toward female employees and campaign aides. Also facing a call from Gov. Tom Wolf to resign.

15. Washington: Rep. Matt Manweller, resigned as assistant floor leader and was removed as ranking member of a House committee in December. Manweller also was placed on paid leave from his job as a political science professor at Central Washington University and barred from contacting past and present students while the university investigates allegations of sexual harassment against him.

16. Wisconsin: Rep. Josh Zepnick, removed from legislative committees in December after being accused of kissing two women against their will at political events several years ago.

ALSO OF NOTE

1. Idaho: Rep. James Holtzclaw, accused in a complaint of making inappropriate comments to at least two people during the 2017 session.

2. Pennsylvania: Rep. Tom Caltagirone, facing calls by Gov. Tom Wolf to resign after reports that House Democrats authorized paying about \$250,000 to settle a sexual harassment claim from a legislative assistant against Caltagirone in 2015.

3. Rhode Island: Rep. Teresa Tanzi, publicly alleged in October that a more senior legislator had suggested that sexual favors would allow her bills to go further, but Tanzi has not publicly identified the lawmaker.

4. Florida: Sen. Jeff Clemens, resigned in October after an extramarital affair with a lobbyist. The House speaker had said that because a lobbyist is dependent on legislators, "the facts here raise a very real question of sexual harassment."

5. Kentucky: Rep. Dan Johnson killed himself in December, just days after being publicly accused of sexually assaulting a teenage girl in 2013.

FBI recognizes Jewish Community Relations Council for work

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A group that advocates for the Jewish community and fights anti-Semitism is being recognized by the FBI.

The FBI announced Thursday that the Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas is receiving the 2017 FBI Director's Community Leadership Award.

The award is given annually to people or groups that show extraordinary community service in areas of civil rights or crime prevention.

The FBI says the JCRC organized forums, provided education and addressed community concerns after Jewish community centers and synagogues received threats in early 2017. The group also works to prevent hate crimes and increase cooperation between law enforcement and ethnic and minority groups.

Minneapolis Special Agent in Charge Rick Thornton will honor the JCRC at a ceremony next week. The group will be formally recognized at FBI headquarters in April.

Groups record voting rights abuses against Native Americans

By FELICIA FONSECA, Associated Press

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — Election sites far from reservations. Poll workers who don't speak tribal languages. Unequal access to early voting sites.

Native Americans say they have encountered a wide range of obstacles to voting. Advocates have been spending the last few months gathering stories from around Indian Country in the hope that tribal members can wield more influence in elections and to improve conditions among populations that encounter huge disparities in health, education and economics.

"Some of the problems they were facing actually were issues we thought we'd taken care of long ago," said OJ Semans, a Rosebud Sioux tribal member and executive director of South Dakota-based voting rights group Four Directions. "If you don't keep your eye open and the communication open, things will reverse."

Tribes successfully have challenged what they see as discriminatory voting practices around the United

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States.

In Utah, a federal judge recently ordered school board and county commission districts redrawn after the Navajo Nation argued they had been divided by race. In Nevada, the Pyramid Lake and Walker River Paiute tribes won a legal battle to improve early voting access on their reservations. Alaska Natives reached a settlement in a case that includes increased language assistance for three areas.

When working with local election officials doesn't work, tribes often turn to the 1965 Voting Rights Act to try to force changes, said James Tucker, a pro bono attorney for the Native American Rights Fund.

The group is part of a coalition holding field hearings nationwide ahead of the next round of redistricting to compile what it believes will be the most comprehensive look at voting rights abuses in Indian Country.

A hearing was held Thursday in Phoenix, and others are planned this year in Oregon, California, New Mexico and Oklahoma.

"What we're trying to show is people don't have equal opportunities to vote, to register to vote and to participate in Indian Country than you would see in maybe a more urban setting," Tucker said.

Native Americans didn't become U.S. citizens until 1924, but some states restricted who was entitled to vote up into the 1960s, with laws saying Indians who weren't taxed, who lived on reservations or were enrolled with tribes couldn't cast a ballot. Southwestern states were the last holdouts.

Barriers to voting persist, including long drives to polling places, laws that ban collecting ballots for others, mistreatment and intimidation of tribal members at polling sites, voter identification requirements and unequal opportunities for Native Americans to serve as poll workers, said Patty Ferguson-Bohnee, director of Arizona State University's Indian Legal Clinic.

An issue in Arizona is whether counties that provided needed language assistance to tribal members will continue to do so despite recent census data saying it's not needed, she said.

ASU student Rani Williams on Thursday told of cases in the 2016 general election where early voting sites on reservations were open less than eight hours and voters elsewhere had days to cast ballots.

Coconino County recorder Patty Hansen said shutting down polling sites near or on reservations forces Native Americans to drive even farther to vote.

"Our Native American voters take great pride in voting and celebrate it by making it a community event," she said in prepared remarks. "They have had to fight hard for their right to vote and those of us in election administration need to dedicate the necessary resources to protect the voting rights of all of our citizens."

Semans, the Rosebud Sioux tribal member, said he's missed out on voting in at least one election in South Dakota. He said he would have had to drive at least 100 miles roundtrip to reach an early voting site off the reservation and couldn't make it on Election Day.

His group and others have sued routinely over the issue, saying it's unfair and discriminatory.

"There are not that many of us," he said. "But what we did is open the door for minorities in order to use the case law to improve their voting opportunities."

Associated Press Writer Anita Snow in Phoenix contributed to this report.

Spearfish sues volunteer firefighter association

SPEARFISH, S.D. (AP) — A city in western South Dakota has sued the community's volunteer firefighter association amid questions over whether taxpayer money has been misused.

The city of Spearfish filed the lawsuit Monday after learning that the Spearfish Volunteer Firefighters' Association transferred \$1 million to create an endowment fund, the Black Hills Pioneer reported. City officials question whether the transfer contains taxpayer funds.

Fourth Judicial Court Judge Eric Strawn issued a temporary restraining order Tuesday. The order limits how the association can spend money until a court decision is made.

The association said no taxpayer funds were included in the transfer. It said proceeds from the endowment fund would be used for fire protection and public safety services, training, victim assistance and scholarships.

The association is no longer an active volunteer fire department. It provides public safety preparedness and education to the area. The city provides the operational side of fire protection.

The association receives financial support through entities within the Spearfish Fire District, including the city. It also seeks donations from the public.

City Attorney Eric Davis said the association refused requests to provide an audit of the funds. Davis said that taxpayer money that's used for unauthorized purposes would create "irreparable harm" to the city.

Eric Nies, who represents the association, said it understands it owes the city some financial information. Nies said the information in question would likely be provided by the end of the month.

The association has 30 days after the lawsuit was filed to answer the service of the complaint.

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

Man who slipped on ice outside Sioux Falls bar sues owners

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A man who was knocked out after slipping on some ice outside a Sioux Falls bar is suing the establishment's owners.

Matt Holzwarth says he was worried he would freeze to death when he fell outside the Liebrary Bar in December 2016. The lawsuit filed recently in Lincoln County claims M & J Ventures, the bar owner, and Thompson Properties, the property owner, failed to clear the sidewalk and parking lot of ice and snow.

The Argus Leader reports Holzwarth says he has a permanent disability caused by his injuries. Some people smoking outside the bar came to Holzwarth's aid.

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

State high court upholds ex-police chief's murder conviction

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Supreme Court has upheld the murder conviction of a former police chief found guilty in the 2009 death of his pregnant fiancée.

Russell Bertram was sentenced in 2016 to life in prison for fatally shooting 26-year-old Leonila Stickney. The high court this week declined to vacate Bertram's conviction.

At the time of the incident, Bertram told authorities he was putting his shotgun into his truck after a hunting trip when the weapon fired accidentally, striking Stickney.

Officials accused the one-time Harrisburg police chief of shooting Stickney out of jealousy and to collect more than \$900,000 in insurance benefits.

Supreme Court justices ruled the circuit court didn't abuse its discretion by excluding polygraph evidence from Bertram or admitting prosecutors' evidence of his sexual encounters with other women in the days before Stickney's death.

Executives indicted for fish farm investment fraud

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Two executives of a company with plans to build an aquaponics farm in Brookings have been indicted on wire and mail fraud.

Federal prosecutors say Tobias Ritesman and Timothy Burns misled potential investors about the viability of Global Aquaponics. An indictment says investors were told that a nearly \$11 million high-tech farm would be built in Brookings to grow fish and shrimp. The water from the fish tanks would be used to grow vegetables.

The Argus Leader reports Assistant U.S. Attorney Annie Hoffman says a memorandum to investors said the company had \$5.6 million in cash, which was not true. Another \$5.4 million would come from investors. Hoffman says the defendants used the investor funds for their own purposes, not for the project. Ritesman has been released on signature bond. Burns has a hearing Friday.

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

Ex-fighter pilot launches bid to replace Arizona Sen. Flake

By STEVE PEOPLES and BOB CHRISTIE, Associated Press

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) — Republican U.S. Rep. Martha McSally called on the national GOP to “grow a pair of ovaries” as she launched her Senate bid Friday, joining the race to replace retiring GOP Sen. Jeff Flake by embracing President Donald Trump and his outsider playbook in one of the nation’s premier contests.

The 51-year-old retired Air Force combat pilot cast herself as a tough-talking outsider as she vowed to work closely with the Republican president to combat illegal immigration.

“There should be no sanctuary for anyone breaking our laws and harming our people,” said McSally, wearing a military flight suit as she faced dozens of supporters in a Tucson airport hangar. “You better believe I will keep working with President Trump.”

Like few others, the Arizona election is expected to showcase the feud between the Republican Party’s establishment and its fiery anti-immigration wing in particular — all in a border state that features one of the nation’s largest Hispanic populations.

The race will test the appeal of the Trump political playbook — which emphasizes the dangers of illegal immigration and demands border security above all else — in a state where nearly 1 in 3 residents is Hispanic and roughly 1 million are eligible to vote, according to the Pew Research Center.

McSally, a two-term congresswoman already backed by many GOP establishment leaders in Arizona and Washington, first announced her candidacy in a fiery video early Friday that touched on border security and Sharia law and featured Trump himself.

“Like our president, I’m tired of PC politicians and their BS excuses,” McSally said. “I’m a fighter pilot and I talk like one.”

“That’s why I told Washington Republicans to grow a pair of ovaries and get the job done,” she added.

After her Tucson appearance, McSally, the first female fighter pilot to fly a combat mission, boarded a World War II-era fighter plane that she was flying to Phoenix and Prescott for subsequent announcement events.

McSally enters a dynamic Republican primary field that features a nationally celebrated immigration hard-liner, 85-year-old former Arizona Sheriff Joe Arpaio, who was pardoned by Trump last year after defying a judge’s order to stop traffic patrols that targeted immigrants. The primary also includes former state Sen. Kelli Ward, an outspoken Trump advocate who was an early favorite of former Trump adviser Steve Bannon.

Despite the aggressive rhetoric in her announcement video, some of McSally’s conservative critics dismiss her as an establishment favorite whose record doesn’t match her tough talk.

She refused to endorse Trump in the 2016 presidential campaign, and she referred to his sexually predatory comments caught on the “Access Hollywood” tape as “disgusting.”

Yet she has tacked right in recent months and aligned herself with Trump as the 2018 campaign season neared.

“Thank you, Mr. President,” she wrote Friday morning, retweeting a post from the president that attacked Democrats who are contemplating a government shutdown to protect young immigrants known as “Dreamers.” “As we discussed on Tuesday, we won’t allow our troops to be held hostage by DACA negotiations. Our military is relying on us.”

McSally also co-sponsored an immigration plan released by House conservatives this week that would reduce legal immigration levels by 25 percent, block federal grants to sanctuary cities and restrict the number of relatives that immigrants already in the U.S. can bring here. The bill, which is unlikely to survive the GOP-controlled Senate, also provides temporary legal status for young immigrants enrolled in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, program.

Democrats see Arizona as a rare opportunity to pick up a Senate seat in 2018 as their party struggles to defend vulnerable incumbents in several other Republican-leaning states. Trump won Arizona in 2016 by less than 4 points.

Democrats have another advantage: Their party’s leading candidate, three-term incumbent Rep. Kyrsten Sinema, faces a relatively weak Democratic field, while McSally and her Republican opponents are expected to wage a bruising Republican contest until the state’s late August primary elections.

But McSally avoids her Republican opponents altogether in her announcement video, focusing instead on her military service while adding a jab at Sharia law — a reference to her fight against a military policy that required female soldiers in some Muslim-majority countries to wear robes over their service uniforms.

"I absolutely refused to bow down to Sharia law," she said. "After eight years of fighting, I won my battle for the religious freedom of American servicewomen."

She added, "After taking on terrorists in combat, the liberals in the Senate won't scare me one bit."

While some Trump loyalists and conservative groups don't necessarily agree, McSally is viewed as the stronger Republican candidate in a general election in which successful candidates must extend their appeal beyond their party's most passionate voters.

Democrats, meanwhile, are practically giddy about what they view as a race to the right in the Republican field that could make it difficult for the primary winner to prevail in November.

"Whoever escapes the GOP primary in August, they will be held accountable for touting their radical stripes at every opportunity and willingness to take stances on issues that are simply out of touch with Arizonan voters," state Democratic Party spokesman Drew Anderson said.

Christie reported from Phoenix.

Haiti 'shocked and outraged' over reported Trump remarks

By EVENS SANON, Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — Haitians reacted with outrage Friday to reports that President Donald Trump used a vulgar remark to describe the country on the eve of the anniversary of the 2010 earthquake, one of the deadliest disasters in modern history.

President Jovenel Moise's government issued a strongly worded statement at what it called a "racist" depiction of Haiti.

"The Haitian government condemns in the strongest terms these abhorrent and obnoxious remarks which, if proven, reflect a totally erroneous and racist view of the Haitian community and its contribution to the United States," it said.

Trump was in a closed meeting with members of Congress to discuss immigration on Thursday when he reportedly questioned why the U.S. would accept more people from Haiti and "shithole countries" in Africa, rather than places like Norway.

At first the White House did not deny that the remark was made. On Friday the president tweeted that his language was "tough" but insisted he did not say anything derogatory about Haitians aside from noting it's a poor country.

Haitians at home and abroad were stunned, and Internet message boards and radio stations were flooded with angry and anguished comments.

"It's shocking he would say it on the anniversary," said 28-year-old Natacha Joseph, who was selling rice and beans from a basket near the general hospital in downtown Port-au-Prince. "I will ask Jesus to protect Haiti from the devil, and Trump is the devil."

Motorcycle taxi driver Jean-Paul Maxon said he was angry that the president seemed to be unaware of Haiti's proud history as the first independent country founded by freed slaves.

"Trump will not last in office," Maxon said. "He attacked the wrong nation."

The government statement also pointed to history, noting that Haitian soldiers fought on the American side against the British in the Revolutionary War and in the War of 1812.

"The relationship between the two countries has been strengthened by the fact that millions of sons and daughters of Haiti have contributed and will continue to contribute to the prosperity and greatness of America," it said.

Haitian Sen. Yuri Latortue said the reported remarks were also galling because they came just before the United States marks the birthday of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. on Monday.

"Mr. Trump spits on the assassination of this black American icon, as well as on a whole generation of

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young people, black and white, who gave their lives in the civil rights movement," he said.

The United States and Haiti have long been closely intertwined. President Woodrow Wilson dispatched U.S. Marines to invade the Caribbean country in 1915 after its president was assassinated. A repressive occupation lasted until 1934. In more recent times, the U.S. supported the brutal dictator "Papa Doc" Francois Duvalier as well as the son who succeeded him until he in turn was ousted.

In the 1990s, U.S. intervention helped bring Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the country's first democratically elected president, back to power after he was ousted in a coup, but then supported his removal in a rebellion in 2004.

After the Jan. 12, 2010 earthquake, the U.S. came to Haiti's assistance and was the largest provider of aid. But that support was also a source of frustration since much of the money was spent on U.S. troops that responded to the immediate aftermath and later aid focused on long-term projects that appeared to have little to do with the disaster, such as the development of an industrial park in the north of the country, far from the earthquake zone.

The magnitude 7.0 earthquake, which killed an estimated 300,000 people and displaced more than 1 million, was on the minds of many as Moise and others prepared for a solemn memorial on Friday to mark the anniversary.

The president was expected to lay a wreath at a mass grave where many victims were buried. But government officials were also expected to meet with the highest-ranking U.S. diplomat in the country for an explanation of Trump's reported remarks.

Former Prime Minister Laurant Lamothe said Trump showed "a lack of respect and ignorance" not previously shown by a U.S. president and "the world is witnessing a new low today."

Africa startled by Trump's sudden and vulgar attention

By CARA ANNA, Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — Africans were shocked on Friday to find President Donald Trump had finally taken an interest in their continent. But it wasn't what people had hoped for.

Using vulgar language, Trump on Thursday questioned why the U.S. would accept more immigrants from Haiti and "shithole countries" in Africa rather than places like Norway in rejecting a bipartisan immigration deal. On Friday he denied using that language.

The African Union continental body told The Associated Press it was "frankly alarmed" by Trump's comments.

"Given the historical reality of how many Africans arrived in the United States as slaves, this statement flies in the face of all accepted behavior and practice," AU spokeswoman Ebba Kalondo said.

Some African governments found themselves in an awkward position. As top recipients of U.S. aid, some hesitated to jeopardize it by criticizing Trump, especially as his administration has sought to slash foreign assistance.

"Unless it was specifically said about South Sudan, we have nothing to say," South Sudan government spokesman Ateny Wek Ateny told the AP.

But Botswana's government called Trump's comment "reprehensible and racist," saying the U.S. ambassador had been summoned to clarify whether the country was regarded so poorly after years of cordial relations. Senegal's President Macky Sall said he was shocked and that "Africa and the black race merit the respect and consideration of all."

Both nations have been praised by the U.S. government as stable democracies in the region.

South Africa's ruling African National Congress called Trump's comments "extremely offensive," while opposition leader Mmusi Maimane said "the hatred of Obama's roots now extends to an entire continent." Uganda's state minister for international relations, Henry Okello Oryem, called the remarks "unfortunate and regrettable" and hoped that heads of state will reply at an African Union summit later this month.

African media outlets and the continent's young, increasingly connected population were not shy, with some tweeting sleek photos of African landscapes and urban areas with the hashtag of the word.

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"Well, that is the perfect definition of racism. That is all I have to say," Kenyan entrepreneur Wangui Muraguri told the AP in response to Trump.

"Casual Friday at the White House is soon to include hoods and tiki torches at this rate," South African media outlet Daily Maverick wrote.

Trump's comments were "shocking and shameful" and "I'm sorry, but there's no other word one can use but racist," said a spokesman for the U.N. human rights office, Rupert Colville.

Many on the world's second most populous continent reached for their smartphones, long-practiced in defending it from easy stereotypes. While 40 percent of the world's poor live in sub-Saharan Africa, according to the International Monetary Fund, the region also has billionaires, reality shows and a growing middle class.

The World Bank on Friday tweeted that sub-Saharan Africa's economic growth this year is forecast at 3.2 percent. That was the U.S. economy's annual rate of growth from July through September, according to Commerce Department data last month.

Some in Africa decided to own Trump's vulgar language or throw it back in his face.

"Good morning from the greatest most beautiful 'shithole country' in the world!!!" South African Broadcasting Corporation anchor Leanne Manas tweeted.

"As someone from South Shithole, Trevor is deeply offended by the president's remarks," The Daily Show tweeted of its South African-born host, Trevor Noah.

Others said they thought Trump had a point, in a way.

"Trump is absolutely right," said Mamady Traore, a 30-year-old sociologist in Guinea. "When you have heads of state who mess with the constitutions to perpetuate their power. When you have rebel factions that kill children, disembowel women as saints, who mutilate innocent civilians."

In Kenya, East Africa's economic hub, political activist Boniface Mwangi pleaded: "Please don't confuse the ... leaders we Africans elect with our beautiful continent." He later told the AP that "Africa gave America the greatest president ever" in Barack Obama. "It is actually a disgrace for one of the best men to occupy that office to be succeeded by an idiot."

Trump's comments highlighted months of concerns about his lack of focus on Africa, including empty ambassadorial posts in key countries like South Africa, Egypt, Congo and Somalia. A list maintained by the Washington-based American Foreign Service Association says eight such posts are vacant.

Trump has expressed negative opinions about the continent in the past. "Every penny of the \$7 billion going to Africa as per Obama will be stolen - corruption is rampant!" he tweeted in 2013.

The U.S. president is only hurting himself both at home and abroad, some Africans said.

"He has not only insulted Africans, he has also insulted African-Americans," said Sylvester Odion Akhaine, associate professor of international relations at the Lagos State University in Nigeria. "Internationally, such language will deepen the isolation of the United States, a country that is already losing its global prestige."

One lawmaker in Ghana called for a boycott by developing countries against the United States until Trump leaves office. "The sooner he is made aware that America needs the world and the world needs America the better it is for all of us," Ras Mubarak said.

As outrage spread, the U.S. government's own Africa Media Hub tried to put out the flames.

Without directly referring to Trump's statement, it tweeted that "US remains committed to working together w/Africans to realize the promise of a more peaceful, more productive, more prosperous 21st century Africa. US deeply respects the people of #Africa & values its partnerships with them."

Associated Press writers Elias Meseret in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Sam Mednick in Juba, South Sudan; Joe Mwihi in Nairobi, Kenya; Sam Olukoya in Lagos, Nigeria; Risdell Kasasira in Kampala, Uganda; Francis Kokutse in Accra, Ghana; Boubacar Diallo in Conakry, Guinea and Jamey Keaten in Geneva contributed.

Trump (sort of) denies vulgar comments about immigrants

By ALAN FRAM and JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Friday denied using certain “language” as fury spread over his comments about immigration during a private meeting with lawmakers. But neither he nor the White House denied the most controversial of his comments: using the word “shithole” to describe countries in Africa and saying he would prefer immigrants from countries like Norway instead.

During an Oval Office meeting on Thursday, Trump questioned why the U.S. would accept more immigrants from Haiti and “shithole countries” in Africa as he rejected a bipartisan immigration deal, according to people briefed on the extraordinary Oval Office conversation.

“The language used by me at the DACA meeting was tough, but this was not the language used,” Trump insisted in a series of Friday morning tweets. “What was really tough was the outlandish proposal made - a big setback for DACA.”

But Sen. Dick Durbin, the only Democrat in the room, disputed the president’s account.

“He said these hate-filled things and he said them repeatedly,” Durbin said,

Durbin added, “When the question was asked about Haitians ... he said, ‘Haitians? Do we need more Haitians?’”

Trump took particular issue with the characterization of his comments on Haiti.

“Never said anything derogatory about Haitians other than Haiti is, obviously, a very poor and troubled country. Never said “take them out.” Made up by Dems,” Trump wrote. “I have a wonderful relationship with Haitians. Probably should record future meetings - unfortunately, no trust!”

The Trump administration announced late last year that it would end a temporary residency permit program that allowed nearly 60,000 citizens from Haiti to live and work in the United States following a devastating 2010 earthquake. The Washington Post said that during the meeting he said immigrants from Haiti should be left out of any new agreement approved by Congress.

Trump’s contemptuous blanket description of African countries startled lawmakers in the meeting and immediately revived charges that the president is racist. The White House on Thursday did not deny his remark but issued a statement saying Trump supports immigration policies that welcome “those who can contribute to our society.”

Trump’s comments came as two senators presented details of a bipartisan compromise that would extend protections against deportation for hundreds of thousands of young immigrants — and also strengthen border protections, as Trump has insisted.

The lawmakers had hoped Trump would back their accord, an agreement among six senators evenly split among Republicans and Democrats, ending a monthslong, bitter dispute over protecting the “dreamers.” But the White House later rejected it, plunging the issue back into uncertainty just eight days before a deadline that threatens a government shutdown.

Durbin of Illinois, the Senate’s No. 2 Democrat, explained that as part of that deal, a lottery for visas that has benefited people from Africa and other nations would be ended, the sources said, though there could be another way for them to apply. Durbin said people who would be allowed to stay in the U.S. included those who had fled here after disasters hit their homes in places such as El Salvador, Guatemala and Haiti.

As for immigrants from Africa, the president suggested that instead, the U.S. should allow more entrants from countries like Norway. Trump met this week with Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg.

Asked about the remarks Thursday, White House spokesman Raj Shah did not deny them.

“Certain Washington politicians choose to fight for foreign countries, but President Trump will always fight for the American people,” he said.

Trump’s remarks were remarkable even by the standards of a president who has been accused of racism by his foes and who has routinely smashed through public decorum that his modern predecessors have generally embraced.

Trump has inaccurately claimed that Barack Obama, the nation’s first black president, wasn’t born in the United States. He has said Mexican immigrants were “bringing crime” and were “rapists.” He said there were “very fine people on both sides” after violence at a white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia,

left one counter-protester dead.

House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer of Maryland said, "President Trump's comments are racist and a disgrace." But it wasn't just Democrats objecting.

Republican Rep. Mia Love of Utah, the daughter of Haitian immigrants, said Trump's comments were "unkind, divisive, elitist and fly in the face of our nation's values." She said, "This behavior is unacceptable from the leader of our nation" and called on Trump to apologize to the American people "and the nations he so wantonly maligned."

Trump has called himself the "least racist person that you've ever met."

Associated Press writers Jill Colvin, Andrew Taylor, Kevin Freking and Matthew Daly contributed to this report.

Some utility rates could go down after US corporate tax cuts

By TIM TALLEY, Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Public utility regulators from Oklahoma to Massachusetts are considering lowering the rates that homeowners and businesses pay for electricity and natural gas after a federal tax overhaul signed into law by President Donald Trump reduced the corporate income tax rate by 14 percent.

The tax overhaul that went into effect Jan. 1 lowers the highest corporate income tax rate from 35 percent to 21 percent. Now, regulators and consumer groups such as AARP are demanding that the rates consumers pay be rolled back.

Utilities are allowed to incorporate federal income tax obligations into the rates they charge customers. Exactly when and where consumers might see savings remains to be seen as regulators look into the matter.

SAVINGS FOR UTILITIES IN THE MILLIONS

Oklahoma Attorney General Mike Hunter estimates five public utilities operating in the state will save at least \$100 million a year.

In Montana, regulators estimate utilities will save tens of millions of dollars a year in taxes.

In Maryland, where three utilities asked that state's regulators reduce utility rates to reflect tax savings, Baltimore Gas & Electric estimated that it alone will pass \$82 million in tax savings on to customers.

Bob Anthony, a member of the Oklahoma Corporation Commission, which regulates public utilities in the state, said consumers help pay a utility's federal taxes every time they pay their electricity or natural gas bill.

"It's not fair to over-collect for federal corporate income taxes," Anthony said.

Montana Public Service Commission Chairman Brad Johnson said the agency "wants to ensure that this money is not simply captured by shareholders, but instead is directed in a way that provides a long-term benefit to the consumer."

POTENTIAL CUSTOMER SAVINGS ON HOLD

But many regulators are allowing utilities to collect existing rates while they calculate changes in their tax liability.

The Oklahoma Corporation Commission, for example, voted to require utilities to track savings from the tax cut and report it to the commission within four months. The commission also instructed companies to create an account for the savings and refund those savings to customers later.

But regulators in other states have suggested the money could be used to help pay for capital projects and offset large, unusual expenses.

And some utilities are still seeking rate increases even with the tax savings.

Stan Whiteford, a spokesman for the Public Service of Oklahoma, an affiliate of American Electric Power that's seeking a rate increase of \$170 million, said the utility's earnings are "far below the level that we are authorized to earn by the commission." PSO favors "a more thoughtful and comprehensive approach" to dealing with the tax savings, he said.

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"We look forward to the opportunity to provide the commission with information in context on all of our costs," Whiteford said.

FEDERAL REGULATORS ASKED TO STEP IN

Attorneys general, consumer advocates and regulators in more than a dozen states — including New York, California, Illinois, Texas and Virginia — have asked the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to get involved in the issue to ensure customers benefit from any windfalls utilities receive from the tax overhaul. A letter from the coalition calls for an investigation into the "justness and reasonableness" of utility rates following reduction of utilities' corporate tax rates.

AARP, which has supported a reduction of utility rates in Oklahoma and elsewhere, believes regulators "have an opportunity to save ratepayers a significant amount of money each month while still allowing utility companies the revenue necessary to provide reliable and affordable service to their customers," said AARP Oklahoma State Director Sean Voskuhl.

'Arrogant' UK surgeon burned initials onto patients' livers

LONDON (AP) — A British surgeon who burned his initials into patients' livers during transplant operations was fined 10,000 pounds (\$13,600) on Friday, and ordered to perform community service.

Simon Bramhall pleaded guilty last month to two counts of assault in a case a prosecutor called "without legal precedent in criminal law."

Bramhall used an argon beam coagulator, which seals bleeding blood vessels with an electric beam, to mark his initials on the organs. The 53-year-old surgeon resigned from Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham in 2014 after another doctor discovered what he'd done.

The hospital said there had been "no impact whatsoever" on the success of the operations.

Passing sentence at Birmingham Crown Court in central England, judge Paul Farrer said Bramhall displayed "professional arrogance of such magnitude that it strayed into criminal behavior."

The judge accepted that the patients were not physically harmed but said one had suffered "extreme and enduring" psychological stress after learning what had happened.

"What you did was an abuse of power and a betrayal of trust that these patients had invested in you," the judge said.

California mudslide takes lives of elderly, young; 5 missing

By CHRISTOPHER WEBER and BRIAN MELLEY, Associated Press

MONTECITO, Calif. (AP) — The oldest victim swept away in a California mudslide was Jim Mitchell, who had celebrated his 89th birthday the day before. He died with his wife of more than 50 years, Alice.

The youngest, 3-year-old Kailly Benitez, was one of four children killed.

As their names and those of 14 other victims were released Thursday, crews kept digging through the muck and rubble looking for more people.

"At this moment, we are still looking for live victims," Santa Barbara fire Capt. Gary Pitney said. But he confessed: "The likelihood is increasing that we'll be finding bodies, not survivors. You have to start accepting the reality of that."

The Mitchells were in love with their home in the seaside enclave of Montecito where they moved in 1995, according to their daughter. They also loved their dog, Gigi, who is missing.

The other children killed were 6-year-old Peerawat Sutthithepn, 10-year-old Jonathan Benitez and 12-year-old Sawyer Corey. None of the adult dead shared their last names.

All of the dead were killed by "multiple traumatic injuries due to flash flood with mudslides," authorities said.

Five people were missing as of early Friday, down from as many as 43 a day earlier, said Amber Anderson, a spokeswoman for Santa Barbara County.

Sheriff Bill Brown gave the larger number Thursday but cautioned that many or most of those people

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may simply have been unreachable to the family and friends who reported they couldn't find them.

"We were able to find people," Anderson said, but added that the number could continue to fluctuate greatly. She said some missing-person reports are quickly cleared but others take time to resolve.

Pitney said many rescues were still happening Wednesday and Thursday, but most if not all were of people who were safe but just wanted to get out of the area.

Among the searchers were more than a dozen firefighters who climbed through rubble in the backyard of a mansion that had been torn apart. Some rescuers used poles to probe the muck for bodies, while others waded chest-deep in the mire. Two black Labrador retrievers swam around a debris-filled swimming pool, trying to pick up any scent.

Crews marked places where bodies were found, often far away from a home, and used that information to guess where other victims might have ended up as the surging mud carried or buried them.

The mudslide, touched off by heavy rain, took many homeowners by surprise early Tuesday, despite warnings issued days in advance that mudslides were possible because recent wildfires had stripped hill-sides of vegetation that normally holds soil in place.

The disaster was already unfolding when Santa Barbara County officials sent out their first cellphone alert at 3:50 a.m. County emergency manager Jeff Gater said officials decided not to send one sooner out of concern it might not be taken seriously.

As the rainwater made its way downhill with gathering force, it pried boulders from the ground and picked up trees and other debris that flattened homes, cars and carried at least one body a mile away.

From an aerial view, the community that is home for celebrities such as Oprah Winfrey and Jeff Bridges looked like two vastly different places.

Trashed areas were awash in a sea of mud, with only the tallest trees standing and some homes buried up to their roofs. Next to some of the devastated areas sat large estates untouched by the torrent, their lawns still green and the landscaping lush.

After a better look at the damage, officials lowered the number of destroyed homes from 100 to 64 and raised the number of damaged ones from 300 to 446.

Searchers had checked most of the debris zone for victims and some were doubling back to leave no stone unturned Thursday when a crew ended up in the backyard of Bill Asher, who lost his palatial home and a similar one he was restoring next door.

Asher returned with a pickax and five friends and trudged through the debris to salvage any possession he could find.

He was still shaken by his harrowing experience Tuesday with his pregnant wife and two young children as the violent gusher arrived with a deafening rumble.

"I looked out my front window and saw my car fly by," he said. "I screamed at my family and water started coming into the house. Windows went flying, doors went flying."

The family rode out the storm unharmed on kitchen counters as the debris smashed through the walls and water swirled around them.

Asher's return to the scene, where murky water was knee-deep, turned up at least one gem: his wife's engagement ring, the only keepsake she wanted him to find.

Melley contributed from Los Angeles. Associated Press writers Amanda Lee Myers, John Antczak, Michael Balsamo and Andrew Dalton in Los Angeles and Aron Ranen in Montecito contributed to this report.

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

Trump's first medical checkup as president set for Friday

By **DARLENE SUPERVILLE, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump will be the patient, not the commander in chief offering comfort, when he visits the Walter Reed military hospital on Friday.

Trump is headed to the medical facility in Bethesda, Maryland, outside Washington, for his first medical

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checkup as president. But what has been a fairly routine exam for previous officeholders has taken on outsized importance in the age of Trump, given the tone of some of his tweets, comments attributed to some of his close advisers and Trump's recent slurring of words on national TV.

Some of the comments were published in a new book about Trump's first year, "Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House" by Michael Wolff, which White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders has denounced as "complete fantasy" for portraying her 71-year-old boss as undisciplined and in over his head as president.

Trump himself has pushed back hard against any suggestion that he's mentally unfit, declaring himself "a very stable genius."

Some questions and answers about Trump's physical:

WHAT QUESTIONS WILL THE EXAM ANSWER?

The exam, lasting several hours, will measure things like Trump's blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar, heart rate and weight.

Conclusions about his mental acuity aren't expected. The White House said Trump will not undergo a psychiatric exam. Officials did not address a different type of screening: assessments of cognitive status that examine neurologic functions including memory. Cognitive assessments aren't routine in standard physicals, though they recently became covered in Medicare's annual wellness visits for seniors.

IS THE EXAM MANDATORY?

No, but modern presidents typically undergo them regularly and release a doctor's report declaring they are "fit for duty."

WHAT'S KNOWN ABOUT TRUMP'S HEALTH?

Two months before the November 2016 election, Trump released a five-paragraph letter from his long-time physician, Dr. Harold Bornstein, who concluded that Trump "is in excellent physical health." A year earlier, Bornstein said in a December 2015 letter: "If elected, Mr. Trump, I can state unequivocally, will be the healthiest individual ever elected to the presidency."

The 2016 letter put Trump's blood pressure and cholesterol measurements in the healthy range, though he uses a cholesterol-lowering statin medication. His EKG, chest X-ray, echocardiogram and blood sugar were normal. The 6-foot-3 Trump weighed 236 pounds, and his body mass index, or BMI, of 29.5 put him in the category of being overweight for his height.

Trump takes Crestor for his cholesterol, a low-dose aspirin for heart attack prevention, Propecia to treat male-pattern baldness and antibiotics for rosacea. The doctor's 2016 letter stated that Trump's testosterone level, 441.6, was in the normal range, as were his PSA reading for prostate abnormalities and tests of his liver and thyroid.

Trump was 70 when he took office on Jan. 20, 2017, making him the oldest person ever elected to the nation's highest office.

WHAT ABOUT HIS LIFESTYLE?

He leads a largely sedentary lifestyle compared to his most recent predecessors, and has said he gets most of his exercise playing golf.

The American Heart Association says that the best types of exercise increase the heart rate and make a person breathe heavily, but that activities like golf don't provide as much cardiovascular benefit since they don't require much extra effort. The association suggests players walk the golf course instead of renting a golf cart. Trump drives a cart from hole to hole.

President Barack Obama played basketball, lifted weights, worked out on an elliptical machine or treadmill and played golf. George W. Bush traded running for mountain biking to preserve his knees. He also cleared brush from his central Texas ranch during the 100-degree summers. Bill Clinton was a runner who installed a jogging track at the White House. He also played golf and indulged in Big Macs.

Trump likes fast food, too, along with well-done steaks, chocolate cake and double scoops of vanilla ice cream. He reportedly downs 12 Diet Cokes a day. In their recent book, "Let Trump Be Trump," former top campaign aides Corey Lewandowski and David Bossie described the four major food groups on Trump's campaign plane as "McDonald's, Kentucky Fried Chicken, pizza and Diet Coke."

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The advisers also said one Trump meal in Chicago consisted of two Big Macs, two Filet-O-Fish sandwiches and a chocolate milkshake.

WHAT MEDICAL INFORMATION WILL THE WHITE HOUSE RELEASE?

How much of Trump's health information the public gets to see is up to the president, but Sanders said she expects the White House to release the same kind of details past presidents have made public. Trump's doctor will release a brief statement on Friday after the exam, and then join her at Tuesday's briefing to offer a more detailed readout and answer questions.

Obama's three medical reports included sections on vital statistics; physical exam by system, such as eyes, pulmonary and gastrointestinal; lab results; his past medical and surgical history; his social history; and medications, among others.

WHO WILL EXAMINE TRUMP?

Trump's official doctor is Ronny L. Jackson, a Navy rear admiral who was the emergency medicine doctor for a shock trauma platoon in Taqaddum, Iraq, during Operation Iraqi Freedom, according to his Navy bio. Jackson also provided care for Obama. Jackson became a White House physician in 2006. He has overseen health care for the Cabinet and senior staff, served as physician supervisor for the Camp David presidential retreat and led the White House Medical Unit.

Jackson will examine the president and line up specialists to conduct other parts of the exam. The White House has released no information about the other doctors who will examine Trump.

HAS TRUMP EVER BEEN TO WALTER REED HOSPITAL?

Trump has visited twice as president to cheer wounded service members. He awarded Purple Hearts during visits in April and December.

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

Actresses, shows about women win big at Critics' Choice

By **SANDY COHEN, AP Entertainment Writer**

SANTA MONICA, Calif. (AP) — It was a good night for women at the Critics' Choice Awards, which honored women-centered stories like "Big Little Lies," "The Handmaid's Tale" and "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel." "Wonder Woman" was named best action movie and star Gal Gadot accepted a special award for challenging gender stereotypes.

Yet the industry's ongoing sexual misconduct crisis remained an element of the ceremony as James Franco won an acting award early in the evening, hours after a report detailed new misconduct allegations against "The Disaster Artist" star and director. Franco did not attend Thursday's presentation at the Barker Hangar in Santa Monica, California, and his award was presented during a pre-telecast section broadcast only online.

Franco won a similar award at the Golden Globes earlier in the week, where most women dressed in black to protest sexual harassment. More women dressed in color on Thursday, but their determination to end gender discrimination remained just as fierce.

"I want to share this award with all the women and men who stand for what's right, standing for those who can't stand or speak for themselves," Gadot said as she accepted the second annual #SeeHer award. "My promise to you is: I will never be silenced. We will continue to band together to make strides, uniting for equality."

Guillermo del Toro's fantasy romance, "The Shape of Water," was the top film winner with four awards. Del Toro, who was also named best director, closed the show Thursday night by shouting that he's always believed in the equality of women.

"Let me tell you one thing, if you don't do that, you don't know what you're missing," he said.

"The Shape of Water," which led all nominees with 14 bids, also claimed the best picture prize, along with score and production design honors.

Olivia Munn hosted the dinner ceremony, which was broadcast live on the CW network. The actress,

who has spoken publicly about her own experiences with sexual misconduct in the entertainment industry, led the audience in a toast. Joined by actress Niecy Nash, they raised a glass "to all the good guys in Hollywood," who held meetings in conference rooms rather than hotel rooms.

"Congratulations for doing what you're supposed to do!" Nash said.

"Big Little Lies" received four awards: best limited series, as well as acting honors for Nicole Kidman, Alexander Skarsgard and Laura Dern.

Kidman thanked the entertainment community "who show up to make really fantastic films and TV and let us do what we love."

"I love being an actor," said the 50-year-old Oscar winner. "Thank you for letting me do it all the way through to this age and beyond."

Stories about women also won in comedy categories. "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" was named best comedy series, and star Rachel Brosnahan won best actress in a comedy.

As she accepted her award, Brosnahan noted that even though women aren't wearing black like most did at the Golden Globe Awards earlier in the week, she said the fight to eradicate sexual harassment continues.

"Let's not lose focus," she said, urging viewers to support the Time's Up initiative. "Let's keep this going."

Presenter Chris Hemsworth noted that women have had a stellar year at the box office.

"The three biggest movies of 2017 in North America were 'Star Wars: The Last Jedi,' 'Beauty and the Beast' and 'Wonder Woman,'" which all feature female protagonists, he said. "The biggest comedy was a female ensemble, 'Girls Trip,' and the biggest independent movie was written and directed by Greta Gerwig."

Hemsworth presented the best actress award to an absent Frances McDormand for "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri." The film also won for acting ensemble and supporting actor for Sam Rockwell.

Double winners Thursday included "I, Tonya," "Darkest Hour," "Get Out" and "Coco."

"I, Tonya" brought acting accolades for star Margot Robbie and supporting actress Allison Janney. "Darkest Hour" won awards for makeup and lead actor for Gary Oldman. "Get Out" was named best sci-fi or horror film, and writer-director Jordan Peele claimed original screenplay honors. "Coco" won animated feature and original song for "Remember Me."

Many Critics' Choice Awards winners also took home Golden Globes, including McDormand, Rockwell, Oldman, Brosnahan and the stars of "Big Little Lies." Hollywood's awards season continues through March 4, when the Academy Awards are presented.

Follow AP Entertainment Writer Sandy Cohen at www.twitter.com/APSandy .

This story has been corrected to reflect that the Academy Awards are on March 4.

For full coverage of awards season, visit: <https://apnews.com/tag/AwardsSeason>

Man who aided hospital patient discharged in gown shocked

BALTIMORE (AP) — The man who said he came to the aid of a woman discharged from a Baltimore hospital wearing only a gown and socks on a cold winter's night, says he was left outraged and stunned at how she was treated.

Imamu Baraka, identified in local reports as the person who sought to help the woman, told The Associated Press he was so angry he decided to record Tuesday night's events on cellphone video, fearing no one would believe him if he reported a woman being left at a bus stop like that.

"I saw the unthinkable: another human in a wheelchair being wheeled out in the dead of cold," he said in the phone interview Thursday evening.

He described frigid temperatures in the 30s and a cold wind blowing at the woman's hospital gown, exposing her to the elements.

Baraka, who said he has a psychotherapy practice in a building across the street from the Maryland

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Medical Center Midtown Campus, said he rushed back to his office, retrieved his cellphone, returned and hit "record" while growing increasingly angry.

As a medical professional, the psychotherapist said he sought to keep his emotions in check even as he repeatedly challenged those who had wheeled the woman out to the street in the dark.

"At first I was shocked. I couldn't believe what I was seeing. And I move beyond that to the next level from being shocked. I became ... irritated and fearful for the young lady. And then I became angry," he recalled.

He added he failed to get satisfactory answers as he tried to help the woman.

Of those who brought her outdoors, he said: "I asked them three times, I asked them specifically, 'Are you going to leave this lady out here like this?' They kept walking. They then went inside of the building." He said he went and asked a security guard outside the hospital for a supervisor and was told "I am the supervisor."

Rebuffed, he said, he then went and tried to help the woman shelter in the bus stop while calling 911 for an ambulance. He said he asked the arriving ambulance crew where they would take her, and they replied "back to the hospital."

Recalled Baraka, "I said, 'Are you kidding me, they just dumped her on the curb.'"

It wasn't immediately clear what happened to the woman after she was driven back toward the hospital. But the hospital confirmed in a statement that the woman was discharged that Tuesday night.

Dr. Mohan Suntha, president and CEO of University of Maryland Medical Center Midtown Campus, told a news conference on Thursday afternoon that the hospital had "failed" after the video posted on Facebook showed the unidentified woman mumbling and appearing disoriented in frigid weather outside. Suntha also said there were no excuses for what happened to the woman.

"We believe firmly that we provided appropriate medical care to a patient who came to us in need, but where we absolutely failed, and where we own that failure, is in the demonstration of basic humanity and compassion as a patient was being discharged from our organization after having received that care," he said.

He added that the woman wasn't mistreated while in the hospital's care and that the incident was isolated and that hospital officials were conducting an extensive internal review.

Said Suntha, "We do not believe that what occurred Tuesday night in any way defines who we are as an organization. There has been a lot of conversation since this incident came to light."

The case for Keenum: Vikings QB keeps on disproving doubters

By DAVE CAMPBELL, AP Pro Football Writer

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — When Minnesota's offense huddled for the first time that mid-September afternoon in Pittsburgh, Case Keenum's energy and confidence quickly filled the circle.

The Vikings were forced to turn to their backup quarterback to start the second game of the season after Sam Bradford's knee acted up, an ominous development that can doom a team to an autumn of disenchantment and playing for draft pick position.

Despite the decisive defeat against the Steelers that day, though, there was a certain assurance Keenum gave his teammates that suggested they'd be all right.

"He's a guy you want to play for," wide receiver Adam Thielen said.

Four months later, the Vikings and Keenum are still playing. They're two wins away from reaching the Super Bowl.

"It's been a blast, man. It's been incredible. I'm sure one of these days I'll be able to look back and really appreciate it, but there's so much to enjoy right now," Keenum said. "Not really putting too much into perspective. Not really looking too much at the big picture. I'm keeping my blinders on."

With a modest 6-foot-1, 215-pound frame, Keenum was mostly ignored by major college programs despite leading Abilene Wylie High School to its first state championship in football-obsessed Texas. Houston made his only FBS scholarship offer, from then-head coach Art Briles, and by the time Keenum was finished

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with the Cougars he was the NCAA's all-time leading passer with 19,217 yards and 155 touchdowns. Yet he still went undrafted in 2012, needing the Houston Texans practice squad to get his professional career off the ground.

Keenum started 10 games over the next two years before being traded to the Rams in 2015, but they made Jared Goff the first pick in the 2016 draft so there was no future for Keenum there beyond being a veteran mentor.

Even Vikings head coach Mike Zimmer was among those who typecast Keenum as a just-in-case second-stringer. Zimmer acknowledged recently he didn't gain full confidence in Keenum until the 11th or 12th game of the season and, when Teddy Bridgewater was cleared to play in mid-November, Zimmer never declared Keenum the starter for more than a week at a time.

"He just wanted a chance," his father, Steve Keenum, said this week in a phone interview. "He's got to have the knack. It's just a God-given, innate thing that he's maximized by working hard."

As the oldest of his three children, Case made clear at an early age to Steve that he had the makeup to be an NFL quarterback even if there was no way to predict how the skill set would unfold.

"He was competitive in everything. It could be a board game. It could be playing darts. It could be playing cards. It didn't matter. But if it had a ball, he wanted to do it," said Steve, who was a high school and college coach around Texas for 24 years, including 10 seasons as the head coach at his alma mater McMurry University.

Good coaching, starting with dad's tips in the family backyards, was another success factor.

When Briles left for Baylor, Kevin Sumlin arrived at Houston for Keenum's sophomore year. Dana Holgorsen, now the head coach at West Virginia, was the offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach. After he departed, Kliff Kingsbury, currently the head coach at Texas Tech, took charge of the quarterbacks.

"They had some speed, and the next thing you know they were throwing the ball all over the field," said Steve, who attended all 57 of Case's games with the Cougars and has been to each game he's played for the Vikings. "They had some really talented kids. People talked about him being a system guy, with short passes and a run after the catch, but they didn't see him play."

Steve is now an area director for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, an organization that Case has long been active in as well.

"He's come to the realization like a lot of people in big situations that there are things that are really too big to do by yourself, and in order to stay grounded you've got to find somebody or something that you believe strongly in," Steve said. "I think his faith has been that for him."

Though Keenum had prior NFL experience, including nine starts for the Los Angeles Rams in 2016, he was signed by the Vikings as a one-year stopgap to be the guy in the ball cap providing sideline support and give Bridgewater ample time to recover from his colossal knee injury. Bradford had just produced an injury-free career-best performance in 2016, after all, so the Vikings were banking on him.

Over the last four months, though, they've been cashing in on Keenum, a dividend that has paid out handsomely for both parties.

"We've got a great group of guys here," he said, "and I think we're all excited to be extending our season."

With offensive coordinator Pat Shurmur deftly adapting the team's scheme to use Keenum's mobility to better advantage and a sleeker offensive line mostly protecting him well, the Vikings have leaped up the league rankings in every significant statistical category. Among them: 28th to ninth in scoring touchdowns on possessions after passing the 20-yard line, and 19th to third in third-down conversions.

Keenum will start his first playoff game Sunday against New Orleans, with a raucous home crowd at U.S. Bank Stadium ready to cheer the next step toward the franchise's elusive first championship.

"Our fans are awesome," Keenum said. "All my friends and family who have come up from Texas and my friends from other teams that come in, they'll text me after the games and they'll be like, 'Dude, that place is ridiculous.' It really is."

Some Walmart employees get raises, others to lose their jobs

By **JOSEPH PISANI** and **ALEXANDRA OLSON**, AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — For some Walmart employees, the day brought news of a pay raise. Others learned they were out of a job.

Walmart said Thursday that it is boosting its starting salary for U.S. workers and handing out bonuses. The announcement came as the company also confirmed it is closing dozens of Sam's Club warehouse stores — a move that a union-backed group estimated could cost thousands of jobs.

The world's largest private employer said it was closing 63 of its 660 Sam's Clubs over the next weeks, with some shut already. Up to 12 are being converted into e-commerce distribution centers, the company said.

It did not disclose how many people would lose their jobs, but said some workers may be placed at other Walmart locations. Making Change at Walmart, a campaign backed by the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, estimates that 150 to 160 people work at each Sam's Club store, meaning the closures could affect about 10,000 people.

Lauren Fitz, 22, said she was at her other job as a church secretary when a colleague texted to say that the Sam's Club where they both worked in Loveland, Ohio, had closed. Fitz had been pleased earlier to read the news that Walmart was boosting starting salaries and offering bonuses.

"I thought, 'This is really cool.' And then to find out that my store is closing," said Fitz, who said she had worked as a sales associate in the jewelry department for two months. At home, she got a call from her manager and had a letter in the mail saying the store had closed and she could seek employment at another Sam's Club or Walmart store.

Local news reports said Sam's Clubs stores were closing in Texas, California, New Jersey, Ohio, Indiana and Alaska, among other states.

"Transforming our business means managing our real estate portfolio and Walmart needs a strong fleet of Sam's Clubs that are fit for the future," Sam's Club CEO John Furner said in a statement. "We know this is difficult news for our associates and we are working to place as many of them as possible at nearby locations."

Earlier in the day, Walmart cited the sweeping Republican tax overhaul that will save it money in announcing the higher hourly wages, one-time bonuses and expanded parental benefits that will affect more than a million hourly workers in the U.S.

President Donald Trump cheered the announcement with a tweet, saying, "Great news, as a result of our TAX CUTS & JOBS ACT!" White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders later said she would not comment on the Sam's Club closings but that the wage increases were a sign that the tax measures "are having the impact that we had hoped."

Walmart representatives did not respond to a question about the timing of the dual developments.

Rising wages reflect a generally tight labor market. The conversion of stores to e-commerce sites also illustrates how companies are trying to leverage their store locations to better compete against Amazon as shopping moves online.

Large employers also have been under pressure to boost benefits for workers because unemployment rates are at historic lows, allowing job seekers to be pickier.

But the low unemployment has meant that retailers have had trouble attracting and keeping talented workers, experts said. Walmart employees previously started at \$9 an hour, with a rise to \$10 after completing a training program. Target had raised its minimum hourly wage to \$11 in October, and said it would raise wages to \$15 by the end of 2020.

While many department store chains such as Macy's and Sears are struggling, retailers as a whole are still trying to hire. The retail industry is seeking to fill 711,000 open jobs, the highest on records dating back to 2001, according to government data. The longer those jobs go unfilled, the greater pressure on employers to offer higher wages.

Walmart, which reported annual revenue of nearly \$486 billion in the most recent fiscal year, said the

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wage increases will cost it an additional \$300 million in the next fiscal year. The bonuses will cost it about \$400 million in this fiscal year, which ends on Jan. 31.

It joins dozens of companies including American Airlines and Bank of America that have announced worker bonuses following the passage of the Republican tax plan that slashed the corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 21 percent.

The company said the wage increase benefits all hourly U.S. workers at its stores, including Sam's Club, as well as hourly employees at its websites, distribution centers and its Bentonville, Arkansas, headquarters. The one-time bonus between \$200 and \$1,000 will be given to Walmart employees who won't receive a pay raise.

In all, Walmart employs 2.3 million people around the world, 1.5 million of which are in the U.S.

AP Business writers Michelle Chapman in Newark, New Jersey; Chris Rugaber in Washington, D.C.; and Joyce M. Rosenberg in New York contributed to this report.

Trump: Why allow immigrants from 'shithole countries'?

By ALAN FRAM and JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In bluntly vulgar language, President Donald Trump questioned Thursday why the U.S. would accept more immigrants from Haiti and "shithole countries" in Africa rather than places like Norway, as he rejected a bipartisan immigration deal, according to people briefed on the extraordinary Oval Office conversation.

Trump's contemptuous description of an entire continent startled lawmakers in the meeting and immediately revived charges that the president is racist. The White House did not deny his remark but issued a statement saying Trump supports immigration policies that welcome "those who can contribute to our society."

Trump's comments came as two senators presented details of a bipartisan compromise that would extend protections against deportation for hundreds of thousands of young immigrants — and also strengthen border protections, as Trump has insisted.

The lawmakers had hoped Trump would back their accord, an agreement among six senators evenly split among Republicans and Democrats, ending a months-long, bitter dispute over protecting the "Dreamers." But the White House later rejected it, plunging the issue back into uncertainty just eight days before a deadline that threatens a government shutdown.

Dick Durbin of Illinois, the Senate's No. 2 Democrat, explained that as part of that deal, a lottery for visas that has benefited people from Africa and other nations would be ended, the sources said, though there could be another way for them to apply. Durbin said people would be allowed to stay in the U.S. who fled here after disasters hit their homes in places including El Salvador, Guatemala and Haiti.

Trump specifically questioned why the U.S. would want to admit more people from Haiti. As for Africa, he asked why more people from "shithole countries" should be allowed into the U.S., the sources said.

The president suggested that instead, the U.S. should allow more entrants from countries like Norway. Trump met this week with Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg.

Late Thursday, Trump was pushing for "a Great Wall" and criticizing Democrats' stance on immigration, highlighting the difficulties for any negotiations.

"The Democrats seem intent on having people and drugs pour into our country from the Southern Border, risking thousands of lives in the process. It is my duty to protect the lives and safety of all Americans," he said in a late-night tweet. "We must build a Great Wall ..."

Asked about the earlier remarks insulting other countries, White House spokesman Raj Shah did not deny them.

"Certain Washington politicians choose to fight for foreign countries, but President Trump will always fight for the American people," he said.

Trump's remarks were remarkable even by the standards of a president who has been accused by his

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foes of racist attitudes and has routinely smashed through public decorum that his modern predecessors have generally embraced.

Trump has claimed without evidence that Barack Obama, the nation's first black president, wasn't born in the United States, has said Mexican immigrants were "bringing crime" and were "rapists" and said there were "very fine people on both sides" after violence at a white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, left one counter-protester dead.

"Racist," tweeted Rep. Kathleen Rice, D-N.Y., after Thursday's story broke. But it wasn't just Democrats objecting.

Republican Rep. Mia Love of Utah, the daughter of Haitian immigrants, said Trump's comments were "unkind, divisive, elitist and fly in the face of our nation's values." She said, "This behavior is unacceptable from the leader of our nation" and Trump must apologize to the American people "and the nations he so wantonly maligned."

Trump has called himself the "least racist person that you've ever met." On Friday he plans to sign a proclamation honoring Martin Luther King Day.

Critics also have questioned his mental fitness to serve as president, citing his inability to muster some policy details and his tweets asserting his "nuclear button" is bigger than North Korea's. He responded to such criticism with a recent tweet calling himself "a very stable genius" who is "like, really smart."

The sources spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to publicly describe the conversation. One said lawmakers in the room were taken aback by Trump's remarks.

The Trump administration announced late last year that it would end a temporary residency permit program that allowed nearly 60,000 citizens from Haiti to live and work in the United States following a devastating 2010 earthquake.

Trump has spoken positively about Haitians in public. During a 2016 campaign event in Miami, he said "the Haitian people deserve better" and told the audience of Haitian-Americans he wanted to "be your greatest champion, and I will be your champion."

The agreement that Durbin and Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., described to Trump also includes his \$1.6 billion request for a first installment on his long-sought border wall, aides familiar with the agreement said. They required anonymity because the agreement is not yet public.

Trump's request covers 74 miles of border wall as part of a 10-year, \$18 billion proposal.

Democrats had long vowed they wouldn't fund the wall but are accepting the opening request as part of a broader plan that protects from deportation about 800,000 younger immigrants brought to the country as children and now here illegally.

The deal also would include restrictions on a program allowing immigrants to bring some relatives to the U.S.

In an afternoon of drama and confusing developments, four other GOP lawmakers — including hardliners on immigration — were also in Trump's office for Thursday's meeting, a development sources said Durbin and Graham did not expect. It was unclear why the four Republicans were there, and the session did not produce the results the two senators were hoping for.

"There has not been a deal reached yet," said White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders. But she added, "We feel like we're close."

Underscoring the hurdles facing the effort, other Republicans also undercut the significance of the deal the half-dozen senators hoped to sell to Trump.

"How do six people bind the other 94 in the Senate? I don't get that," said No. 2 Senate Republican John Cornyn of Texas.

Cornyn said the six lawmakers were hoping for a deal and "everyone would fall in line. The president made it clear to me on the phone less than an hour ago that he wasn't going to do that."

The six senators have been meeting for months to find a way to revive protections for young immigrants who arrived in the U.S. as children and are here illegally. Trump ended the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program last year but has given Congress until March 5 to find a way to keep it alive.

Federal agencies will run out of money and have to shut down if lawmakers don't pass legislation extending

their financing by Jan. 19. Some Democrats are threatening to withhold their votes — which Republicans will need to push that legislation through Congress — unless an immigration accord is reached.

Cornyn said the real work for a bipartisan immigration deal will be achieved by a group of four leading lawmakers — the No. 2 Republicans and Democrats in both the House and Senate. That group met for the first time this week.

The immigration effort seemed to receive a boost Tuesday when Trump met with two dozen lawmakers and agreed to seek a bipartisan way to resuscitate the program. The group agreed to also include provisions strengthening security — which for Trump means building parts of a wall along the border with Mexico — curbing immigrants' relatives from coming here and restricting the visa lottery.

Also in Thursday's Oval Office meeting were House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., House Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte, R-Va., and GOP Sens. Tom Cotton of Arkansas and David Perdue of Georgia. Aides to lawmakers who attended declined to provide comment on Trump's remarks.

Any immigration deal would face hurdles winning congressional approval.

Many Democrats would oppose providing substantial sums for Trump's campaign promise to build a wall along the border with Mexico. Many Hispanic and liberal members of the party oppose steps toward curtailing immigration such as ending the visa lottery and restricting the relatives that legal immigrants could bring to the U.S.

Among Republicans, some conservatives are insisting on going further than the steps that Trump has suggested. They want to reduce legal immigration, require employers to verify workers' citizenship and block federal grants to so-called sanctuary cities that hinder federal anti-immigrant efforts.

Associated Press writers Jill Colvin, Andrew Taylor, Kevin Freking and Matthew Daly contributed to this report.

Rescuers 'searching for a miracle' in California mudslides

By **CHRISTOPHER WEBER** and **BRIAN MELLEY**, Associated Press

MONTECITO, Calif. (AP) — More than two full days after mudslides ravaged the coastal town of Montecito, the search for the missing became an increasingly desperate exercise Thursday, with growing doubts about whether anyone would be found alive. Seventeen people from ages 3 to 89 were confirmed dead, and more than 40 others were unaccounted for.

"In disaster circumstances there have been many miraculous stories lasting many days and we certainly are searching for a miracle right now," Santa Barbara County Sheriff Bill Brown said. He noted that some people had been rescued Thursday.

Santa Barbara fire Capt. Gary Pitney said most if not all rescues conducted Wednesday and Thursday were of people who were safe but just wanted to get out of the area.

"These were people that were sheltered in place that had needs that just took a while to get to some of them," Pitney said. "They were OK but they wanted to get out."

The air smelled of sewage and ash as more than a dozen firefighters climbed through rubble in the backyard of a mansion that had been torn apart. Some rescuers used poles to probe the muck for bodies, while others waded chest-deep in the mire. Two black Labrador retrievers swam around a debris-filled swimming pool, trying to pick up any scent.

"At this moment, we are still looking for live victims," Pitney said. But he confessed: "The likelihood is increasing that we'll be finding bodies, not survivors. You have to start accepting the reality of that."

He noted that one survivor pulled from the muck earlier in the week was suffering from hypothermia after just an hour.

Crews marked places where bodies were found, often far away from a home, and used that information to guess where other victims might have ended up as the surging mud carried or buried them.

The mudslide, touched off by heavy rain, took many homeowners by surprise early Tuesday, despite warnings issued days in advance that mudslides were possible because recent wildfires had stripped hill-

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sides of vegetation that normally holds soil in place.

The disaster was already unfolding when Santa Barbara County officials sent out their first cellphone alert at 3:50 a.m. County emergency manager Jeff Gater said officials decided not to send one sooner out of concern it might not be taken seriously.

As the rainwater made its way downhill with gathering force, it pried boulders from the ground and picked up trees and other debris that flattened homes, cars and carried at least one body a mile away.

From an aerial view, the community that is home for celebrities like Oprah Winfrey and Jeff Bridges, looked like two vastly different places.

Trashed areas were awash in a sea of mud, with only the tallest trees standing and some homes buried up to their roofs. Next to some of the devastated areas sat large estates untouched by the torrent, their lawns still green and the landscaping lush.

Santa Barbara County authorities offered wildly fluctuating numbers of the missing throughout the day. A spokeswoman early in the day sent a shudder through the community when she said the number of people unaccounted for had surged from 16 to 48. Within an hour, they said they had made a clerical error and the actual number of missing was eight.

"How does that happen?" resident David Weinert asked. "That's a crazy mistake to make."

Later in the day, however, the sheriff said the number was at 43, combining missing persons reports filed with law enforcement and also inquiries by people who hadn't been able to contact family members or friends.

Brown said some of those people could have left the area before or after the mudslides or may simply be out of touch with people concerned about them.

After a better look at the damage, officials lowered the number of destroyed homes from 100 to 64 and raised the number of damaged ones from 300 to 446.

Overall, 28 people were injured. Twelve remained hospitalized, four in critical condition.

All of the dead were from Montecito, Brown said. The cause of each death was listed as "multiple traumatic injuries due to flash flood with mudslides," which was due the recent wildfire

One of the victims was David Cantin, the father of a 14-year-old girl who was heavily caked in mud when she was pulled from the ruins of her home after a dramatic six-hour rescue.

Another was James Mitchell, who had celebrated his 89th birthday the day before with his wife, Alice, of more than 50 years. She also died.

Searchers had checked most of the debris zone for victims and some were doubling back to leave no stone unturned Thursday when a crew ended up in the backyard of Bill Asher, who lost his palatial home and a similar one he was restoring next door.

Asher returned with a pickaxe and five friends and trudged through the debris to salvage any possession he could find.

He was still shaken by his harrowing experience Tuesday with his pregnant wife and two young children as the violent gusher arrived with a deafening rumble.

"I looked out my front window and saw my car fly by," he said. "I screamed at my family and water started coming into the house. Windows went flying, doors went flying."

The family rode out the storm unharmed on kitchen counters as the debris smashed through the walls and water swirled around them.

Asher's return to the scene, where murky water was knee-deep, turned up at least one gem: his wife's engagement ring, the only keepsake she wanted him to find.

Melley contributed from Los Angeles. Associated Press writers Amanda Lee Myers, John Antczak, Michael Balsamo and Andrew Dalton in Los Angeles and Aron Ranen in Montecito contributed to this report.

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Teacher: Lawsuit over her forcible removal seems likely

By **STACEY PLAISANCE** and **GERALD HERBERT**, Associated Press

ABBEVILLE, La. (AP) — A Louisiana teacher ejected from a school board meeting and roughly handcuffed in a video-recorded arrest after she questioned her superintendent's pay raise said she thinks a lawsuit is likely in the case.

Deyshia Hargrave declined, at first, to say with certainty whether she would file a lawsuit in the matter. "We'll see how it goes," she said when asked again. "But I clearly feel my First Amendment rights were violated, and I feel like, yeah, there will be a lawsuit filed for that."

About 100 people chanting "Stand by Deyshia" and waving signs heralding free speech gathered in a light rain Thursday night to support Hargrave. Near tears at times, she thanked supporters who stood by her after the arrest and emphasized the need to speak out on important issues.

"I hope and pray my experience will empower you — my students, young women everywhere — to know that you have a voice," Hargrave told the crowd. "Use it. Many, many women suffered tremendously and sacrificed greatly for us to have this voice. ... And this is for the boys, too. You matter."

Earlier, Hargrave told The Associated Press she believes Vermilion Parish School Board President Anthony Fontana should resign. She declined to suggest any discipline for Reggie Hilts, the deputy city marshal who handcuffed her on the hallway floor after she left the meeting and marched her out of the building.

"He needs training," the middle school English teacher said. "Whether he needs to lose his job, I don't know."

The American Civil Liberties Union and her teachers union are investigating the case.

The turmoil followed the board's 5-3 vote Monday night approving a new three-year contract raising Vermilion Schools Superintendent Jerome Puyau's salary by roughly \$30,000, to about \$140,000 annually, with incentive targets that could add 3 percent a year.

Video of the meeting shows that Hargrave addressed the superintendent directly after raising her hand to speak and being recognized.

She questioned Puyau's raise, given that teachers haven't received an increase in 10 years, despite growing class sizes and other demands.

Fontana then declared that her comment wasn't "germane" to the vote on the contract, and banged his gavel in an attempt to silence her. According to school board member Kibbie Pillette, Fontana then beckoned off-camera to the officer, who interrupted Hargrave while she was speaking and ordered her out.

"I'm going," she said, making her way out. The officer followed her into the hallway, where moments later, a camera recorded her on the floor with her hands behind her back, being handcuffed and complaining that the officer had pushed her down.

Asked by the AP on Thursday who's directly to blame for the incident, Hargrave said "Anthony Fontana."

Fontana has not returned calls for an interview with the AP, but has defended his actions and that of the officer.

Hilts was accused along with another officer of slamming an ailing 62-year-old man's head onto a concrete slab in 2011. He left the city of Scott's police force later that year, for unrelated reasons the police chief said. Scott denied using excessive force, and the man's federal suit was settled in 2016.

Now a local pastor and a resource officer at J.H. Williams Middle School in Vermilion Parish, Hilts hasn't spoken publicly about Hargrave's arrest.

"He's a very good guy, he's a pastor, respectable citizen here, and is well-respected in the community," Puyau told the AP. "Students and teachers love him."

A teacher who attended Thursday's rally agreed.

Alicia LaSalle is a second-year teacher at the school where Hilts works as a resource officer. LaSalle said Hilts is on hand to stop altercations or other problems among students in. She adds that Hilts has a good relationship with students and teachers. "Honestly, he is very well liked at our school," she said.

"I agree she should not have been arrested," LaSalle said. "Personally, I don't think he would have ar-

rested her if it was up to him.”

Puyau, who said he began receiving hate mail and threatening phone calls as the video spread on the internet, wouldn't comment on who ordered the teacher's removal, but said he's not happy with how things played out.

“It was not good in any way,” he said. “We are a good community. It took everybody by surprise. I'm having a hard time with this, but we care about our teachers and our support staff.”

Associated Press reporter Kevin McGill contributed to this story from New Orleans.

Trump work requirement rewrites health care rules for poor

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rewriting the rules on health care for the poor, the Trump administration said Thursday it will allow states to require “able-bodied” Medicaid recipients to work, a hotly debated first in the program's half-century history.

Seema Verma, head of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, said requiring work or community involvement can make a positive difference in people's lives and in their health. The goal is to help people move from public assistance into jobs that provide health insurance. “We see people moving off of Medicaid as a good outcome,” she said.

But advocates said work requirements will become one more hoop for low-income people to jump through, and many could be denied needed coverage because of technicalities and challenging new paperwork. Lawsuits are expected as individual states roll out work requirements.

“All of this on paper may sound reasonable, but if you think about the people who are affected, you can see people will fall through the cracks,” said Judy Solomon of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, which advocates for the poor.

Created in 1965 for families on welfare and low-income seniors, Medicaid now covers more than 70 million people, or about 1 in 5 Americans. The federal-state collaboration has become the nation's largest health insurance program.

Beneficiaries range from pregnant women and newborns to elderly nursing home residents. Medicaid was expanded under former President Barack Obama, with an option allowing states to cover millions more low-income adults. Many of them have jobs that don't provide health insurance.

People are not legally required to hold a job to be on Medicaid, but states traditionally can seek federal waivers to test new ideas for the program.

Verma stressed that the administration is providing an option for states to require work, not making it mandatory across the country. Her agency spelled out safeguards that states should put in place to get federal approval for their waivers.

States can also require alternatives to work, including volunteering, caregiving, education, job training and even treatment for a substance abuse problem.

The administration said 10 states have applied for waivers involving work requirements or community involvement. They are: Arizona, Arkansas, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Utah and Wisconsin. Advocates for low-income people say they expect Kentucky's waiver to be approved shortly.

In Kentucky, which expanded Medicaid, Republican state Sen. Damon Thayer said work requirements could lessen the program's impact on the state budget. They also hearken back to the program's original intent, he added, “as temporary assistance to try to help people get back on their feet, not a permanent subsidy for someone's lifestyle, if they're capable of working.”

But congressional Democrats said the Trump administration is moving in the wrong direction. “Health care is a right that shouldn't be contingent on the ideological agendas of politicians,” said Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon, the top Democrat on the Senate committee that oversees Medicaid.

The debate about work requirements doesn't break neatly along liberal-conservative lines.

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A poll last year from the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation found that 70 percent of the public supported allowing states to require Medicaid recipients to work, even as most Americans opposed deep Medicaid cuts sought by congressional Republicans and the Trump administration.

Another Kaiser study found that most working-age adults on Medicaid are already employed. Nearly 60 percent work either full time or part time, mainly for employers that don't offer health insurance.

Most who are not working report reasons such as illness, caring for a family member or going to school. Some Medicaid recipients say the coverage has enabled them to get healthy enough to return to work.

Thursday's administration guidance spells out safeguards that states should consider in seeking work requirements. These include:

—Exempting pregnant women, disabled people and the elderly.

—Taking into account hardships for people in areas with high unemployment, or for people caring for children or elderly relatives.

—Allowing people under treatment for substance abuse to have their care counted as "community engagement" for purposes of meeting a requirement.

The administration said states must fully comply with federal disability and civil rights laws to accommodate disabled people and prevent those who are medically frail from being denied coverage. States should try to align their Medicaid work requirements with similar conditions in other programs, such as food stamps and cash assistance.

The National Association of Medicaid Directors, a nonpartisan group representing state officials, said in a statement there's no consensus on whether work requirements are the right approach.

"This is a very complex issue that will require thoughtful and nuanced approaches," said the group.

Trump's new direction can be reversed by a future administration. Although waivers can have lasting impact they don't amount to a permanent change in the program. They're considered "demonstration programs" to test ideas. The administration says the impact will be closely evaluated.

"We know that Republicans tend to think of Medicaid more as a welfare program, while Democrats tend to think of it as more of a health insurance program," said Diane Rowland, the Kaiser foundation's leading expert on the program. "It will be interesting to see how states are going to make this work for people."

Associated Press writer Bruce Schreiner in Louisville, Ky., contributed to this report.

Missouri governor admits having affair but denies blackmail

By SUMMER BALLENTINE and JIM SALTER, Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — When Eric Greitens sought Missouri's highest office in 2016, his resume seemed hard to top: former Navy SEAL, former Rhodes scholar and founder of a veterans' charity. Most important, he said during the campaign, was his role as "a proud husband and father."

On Thursday, the square-jawed Republican governor fought allegations that he photographed his hairdresser naked while having an affair with her and threatened to publicize the image if she spoke about their relationship. The top prosecutor in St. Louis quickly launched an investigation. A bipartisan group of state lawmakers asked the attorney general to investigate as well.

Greitens acknowledged being "unfaithful" in his marriage but denied taking any naked photos and blackmailing the woman to stay quiet.

The governor and his wife released a statement late Wednesday after St. Louis television station KMOV aired a bombshell report that he had a sexual relationship with the hairdresser in 2015. The report included allegations from the woman's ex-husband, who secretly recorded a conversation with his ex-wife discussing the affair.

The affair was "a deeply personal mistake," the Greitens' statement said. "Eric took responsibility, and we dealt with this together honestly and privately."

Greitens, 43, has been seen as a rising star in GOP political circles. During the campaign, he cast himself as an outsider going up against a career politician, the state's Democratic attorney general. He barely hid

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his higher ambitions and reserved the web address ericgreitensforpresident.com years ago.

Through his attorney, the governor also denied an allegation from the ex-husband that Greitens slapped the woman, saying any accusation of violence is "completely false."

The woman involved did not comment on the record to the TV station, which did not name her. But her ex-husband, who also was not named, provided the audio recording to KMOV. On the recording, the woman gave details about a sexual encounter she says she had with Greitens in March 2015 at his St. Louis home. The woman did not know her then-husband was recording their conversation.

The Associated Press learned her identity Thursday, but chose not to identify the woman because she could not be reached for comment. She did not return a call to the salon where she works, and an AP reporter who went there was told the hairdresser was not working.

The alleged encounter came after Greitens created a committee to explore a bid for governor but before he officially announced his candidacy. She said on the tape that he invited her downstairs at his home because he wanted to show her "how to do a proper pull-up."

She said: "I knew he was being sexual, and I still let him. And he used some sort of tape, I don't know what it was, and taped my hands to these rings and then put a blindfold on me."

She said she later realized he took a photo of her.

"I saw a flash through the blindfold and he said, 'You're never going to mention my name.'"

A bipartisan group of state senators signed a letter asking the attorney general to investigate. Attorney General Josh Hawley's office said it would defer to local prosecutors, as required by state law.

The letter signed by both Democrats and Republicans called the allegations "deeply disturbing" and said a swift investigation was necessary to avoid having the matter "overpower" the 2018 legislative session.

GOP leaders in the Missouri Senate released a joint statement urging Greitens to be "honest and forthright." At least two Democratic state lawmakers called on the governor to resign.

The Legislature adjourned Thursday for the long Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend. Lawmakers were not scheduled to return until Tuesday.

Months after the affair, the hairdresser sent Greitens an email asking him to stop booking appointments at the salon.

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported that the email was sent Oct. 20, 2015, three weeks after Greitens filed papers formally starting his 2016 gubernatorial campaign. It was sent to the same account that Greitens listed on a website he used in the campaign.

The newspaper did not say how it obtained the email.

She asked Greitens, whom she called by his first name, to "please consider all who are involved and the circumstances around us." She said returning to the salon "isn't fair to me, nor anyone close to us" and that she needed to "move forward."

The lawyer for the ex-husband said the FBI has contacted him several times since October 2016 about the affair. Attorney Al Watkins said the agency has spoken to him about the affair and the blackmail allegations. He did not say if the ex-husband has also heard from the FBI.

A spokeswoman for the FBI's St. Louis office said the agency could not confirm or deny that it was investigating.

St. Louis Circuit Attorney Kim Gardner, a Democrat, initially said that no criminal complaint had been filed against Greitens and no evidence of a crime presented to her office. But after further consideration, she said, she concluded that an investigation is necessary.

Greitens' attorney, Jim Bennett, said the governor was "very confident he will be cleared in any investigation. This is a three-year-old personal matter that presents no matters of public or legal interest. The facts will prove that fully."

Bennett also alleged that reporting about the affair is being driven by former Missouri Democratic Party chairman Roy Temple and that it is clear "this is a political hit piece." Temple told The Associated Press that he met with the woman's ex-husband several times in September 2016. But when the man ultimately decided he didn't want to go public, Temple said he agreed not to publicize the affair. He said he has not

spoken to the ex-husband since then.

Sheena Greitens is an assistant professor in the political science department at the University of Missouri and co-director of the university's Institute for Korean Studies. Much of her research focuses on China and North Korea.

The Greitens married in 2011 and have two young sons. The governor was married once before and divorced in 2003.

Watkins said his client and the woman who had the affair tried to reconcile but that the relationship with Greitens continued for several months and caused their breakup.

The ex-husband told KMOV that he believed the story would eventually be made public and he wanted to protect his family.

Associated Press writers David A. Lieb in Jefferson City, Missouri, and John Hanna in Topeka, Kansas, contributed to this report.

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

California mudslides happened as cellphone alerts went out

By MICHAEL BALSAMO, Associated Press

Many Californians in the area hit hardest by this week's deadly mudslides did not heed warnings for hours and days by emergency officials encouraging them to evacuate their homes — and then received cellphone alerts of imminent slides when the massive streams of debris were already heading toward them or had already hit their neighborhoods.

Wireless emergency alerts are cellphone messages sent to everyone in a region, similar to the Amber alerts that are sent to cellphone users in specific areas when authorities are trying to find missing children.

The alert sent by Santa Barbara County officials to all those in mandatory and voluntary evacuation areas went out around 3:50 a.m. Tuesday, Rob Lewin, the county's emergency management director said Thursday. It followed a cellphone alert sent by the National Weather Service, he said.

There has been no outpouring of complaints from people that wireless warnings should have been sent out earlier, and residents of affected areas spoke with The Associated Press said they knew they lived in evacuation areas but chose not to leave.

The first slides tore through Montecito about 3:30 a.m. and continued after the county cellphone alerts went out, destroying or damaging 400 homes and killing at least 17 people. The vast majority of those homes were in areas already designated by authorities as under mandatory or voluntary evacuation orders.

The National Weather Service sent out four wireless emergency alerts in various areas of Santa Barbara County between 2:30 a.m. and noon on Tuesday, spokeswoman Susan Buchanan said.

The warnings for residents to leave had been issued for days before the mudslides through social media, news media and community information emails about the potential for mudflows from the huge wildfire scar in hills above neighborhoods. Sheriff's deputies also knocked on doors in the mandatory evacuation area to warn residents to leave.

Another emergency management official told the Los Angeles Times that county officials decided not to use the its push alert system to cellphones earlier for concern it might not be taken seriously.

"If you tell everyone to get out, everyone get out, the next time people won't listen," emergency manager Jeff Gater told the newspaper. "If you cry wolf, people stop listening."

Santa Barbara County Sheriff Bill Brown defended the timing of the wireless emergency alert, saying they are supposed "to be used to notify someone of an active incident that is occurring."

"It was activated at the appropriate time actually when the event was occurring," Brown said at a news conference Thursday.

Controversy over the use of wireless emergency alerts during disasters emerged in California in October

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when a wildfire ripped through Sonoma County, killing 40 people.

Officials decided against sending a wireless alert as the fire raged. Because of the broad reach of the alerts, they said they believed the message would have panicked people who were not in danger and triggered mass evacuations that would have snarled traffic and delayed emergency vehicles.

Jim and Alice Mitchell, who were both killed after their Montecito home was swept away when flash floods cascaded through their neighborhood had not left because their house was under a voluntary evacuation order, their daughter, Kelly Weimer said Wednesday. Nearly every home on their block was destroyed. Others were lifted and tossed from their foundation.

"They were in a voluntary evacuation area so they figured they were OK," said Weimer. "They weren't concerned. It's not like anybody came around and told them to leave."

Officials said that generally when mandatory evacuation orders are issued, there is an imminent threat to life or property. For areas with voluntary warnings, the threat still exists but it is in the near future.

Santa Barbara officials defended their decision not to issue a mandatory evacuation order for the area hit hardest by the storm.

"This isn't an exact science in terms of actually defining where something is going to happen," Brown said.

Associated Press writers Amanda Lee Myers, John Antczak and Frank Baker in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

Senator: Drilling plan carve-out for Florida may be illegal

By MATTHEW DALY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration may have violated federal law by exempting Florida from a national plan to expand offshore drilling, a Democratic senator charged Thursday.

Sen. Maria Cantwell of Washington state said Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's decision to give Florida a last-minute exemption while ignoring at least 10 other states that made similar requests may violate requirements of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, which governs drilling in U.S. coastal waters.

Zinke's action is especially outrageous because Florida — unlike California, Washington and other states — did not expressly oppose the drilling proposal in written comments submitted to the Interior Department, Cantwell said.

While Florida Gov. Rick Scott voiced opposition soon after the plan's Jan. 4 release, a letter submitted by the state Department of Environmental Protection last year did not oppose the drilling plan or ask for Florida to be exempted. Instead, the letter warned about the effects of oil and gas activities on the environment and urged that "long-term protection of Florida's sensitive coastal and marine resources should be of paramount concern" in developing a drilling plan.

By contrast, the governors of California, Oregon and Washington told Interior they "strongly oppose any new leasing" off their coasts and asked to be removed from the plan.

By exempting Florida but not other states, Zinke showed he is "more concerned with politics than proper process when it comes to making key decisions that affect our coastal communities," said Cantwell, the top Democrat on the Senate Energy Committee.

Carl Tobias, a law professor at the University of Richmond, called Zinke's action troubling. Singling out one state for exemption "may well violate federal law" that requires formal notice and comment period before taking regulatory action, he said.

An Interior spokeswoman declined to comment Thursday. But White House press secretary Sarah Sanders denied the administration gave special treatment to Scott, a Republican and ally of President Donald Trump who is considered a likely Senate candidate later this year.

"I'm not aware of any political favor that that (Florida exemption) would have been part of, so, no," Sanders said.

In announcing the exemption for Florida on Tuesday, Zinke called Scott "a straightforward leader that can be trusted."

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Zinke added that he supports Scott's position that "Florida is unique and its coasts are heavily reliant on tourism as an economic driver. As a result of discussion with Governor Scott and his leadership, I am removing Florida from consideration for any new oil and gas platforms."

Rep. Ted Lieu, D-Calif., said Zinke's action "violates the legal standard of arbitrary and capricious agency action."

Like Florida, California and other coastal states "rely on our beautiful coasts for tourism and our economy," Lieu said, adding that he believes courts will strike down the drilling plan.

The American Petroleum Institute, the top oil and gas lobbying group, also questioned Zinke's action — but from the other direction. The group called the Florida withdrawal "premature" and said restricting access to the Eastern Gulf of Mexico in particular "puts hundreds of thousands of jobs at risk across the country and along the Gulf Coast."

API spokesman Reid Porter said the Trump administration "should follow the established process" for developing an offshore drilling program, including public comment. "It is important that Interior complies with all the legal procedures and requirements for putting together" a drilling program on the Outer Continental Shelf, Porter said.

Questions about the legality of the Zinke's decision came as bipartisan opposition to the drilling plan mounted. Several governors, including leaders of Washington state, Delaware, Rhode Island and Maryland, asked for their states to be withdrawn from the plan and requested meetings with Zinke.

A spokeswoman for Zinke said he spoke with South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster on Thursday and expects to speak Friday with North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper and California Gov. Jerry Brown.

Democrats from coastal states accuse Zinke and Trump of punishing states with Democratic leaders while rewarding Republicans.

Zinke announced plans last week to greatly expand offshore oil drilling from the Atlantic to the Arctic and Pacific oceans, including more than a dozen states where drilling is now blocked. The five-year plan would open 90 percent of the nation's offshore reserves to development by private companies.

Industry groups praised the announcement, while environmental groups denounced the plan, saying it would harm America's oceans, coastal economies, public health and marine life.

AP Exclusive: Pope letter details concern over Chile bishop

By EVA VERGARA and NICOLE WINFIELD, Associated Press

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) — The Vatican was so concerned about the fallout from Chile's most notorious pedophile priest that it planned to ask three Chilean bishops accused of knowing about his decades-long crimes to resign and take a year's sabbatical — a revelation that comes just days before Pope Francis makes his first visit to Chile as pope.

A confidential 2015 letter from Francis, obtained by The Associated Press, details the behind-the-scenes maneuvering by the Vatican and Chile's bishops to deal with the prelates connected to the disgraced Rev. Fernando Karadima. And it reveals the bishops' concern about Francis naming a Karadima protege, Bishop Juan Barros, to the helm of the diocese of Osorno — an appointment that roiled the diocese, with hundreds of priests and lay Catholics staging protests against him.

Those protests are expected to greet Francis during his visit to Chile, which begins Monday.

Chile's Catholic Church was thrown into crisis in 2010 when former parishioners publicly accused Karadima of sexually abusing them when they were minors, starting in the 1980s — accusations they had made years earlier to Chilean church leaders but that were ignored. The scandal grew as Chilean prosecutors and Vatican investigators took testimony from the victims, who accused Barros and other Karadima proteges of having witnessed the abuse and doing nothing about it.

In his Jan. 31, 2015, letter, written in response to Chilean church leaders' complaints about the Barros appointment, Francis revealed for the first time that he knew that the issue was controversial and that his ambassador in Chile had tried to find a way to contain the damage well before the case made headlines.

"Thank you for having openly demonstrated the concern that you have about the appointment of Mon-

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signor Juan Barros," Francis wrote in the letter, addressed to the executive committee of the Chilean bishops' conference. "I understand what you're telling me and I'm aware that the situation of the church in Chile is difficult due to the trials you've had to undergo."

Francis told the committee that his ambassador, Monsignor Ivo Scapolo, had asked Barros to resign in 2014 as bishop to Chile's armed forces, a high-profile post, and had "encouraged him to take a sabbatical year before assuming any other pastoral responsibility as a bishop."

Barros was told a similar exit strategy had been planned for two other Karadima-trained bishops, but was asked not to share the information, the pope wrote. He said the plan went awry when Barros named the two others in his letter stepping down as military bishop — a development that posed "a serious problem," and "blocked any eventual path, in the sense of offering a year of sabbatical," to remove the three from the eye of the storm roiling the Chilean church.

In the end, Francis went through with the appointment of Barros as bishop of Osorno, 600 miles (900 kilometers) south of Santiago.

Barros had been a protege of Karadima, a charismatic preacher who ministered to Chile's elite in a posh suburb of Santiago, where his El Bosque parish community produced dozens of priestly vocations and five bishops, Barros among them. Chile's church leadership for years had ignored complaints about Karadima's sexual abuse of minors and only took action after victims went public with their claims in 2010.

Karadima was sanctioned in 2011 by the Vatican, which removed him from all pastoral duties and sentenced him to a lifetime of penance and prayer for his crimes. Chilean prosecutors investigated Karadima as well but dropped the charges because the statute of limitations had expired. The judge handling the case stressed that it didn't collapse for lack of proof.

Some of Karadima's victims say Barros and other Karadima-trained bishops witnessed and tolerated Karadima's abuse and then kept quiet about it. Francis' appointment of Barros has thus been a stain on his oft-repeated "zero tolerance" for abuse, with even members of his own sexual abuse advisory commission criticizing it.

Francis has since defended Barros, saying the Osorno opposition to him was "stupid," unfounded and coming from the left. After the uproar over the appointment, the Vatican took the unusual step of defending it publicly by saying the Vatican's bishops office had "carefully" examined Barros' record and found no "objective reason" to block the nomination.

The Vatican spokesman, Greg Burke, declined to comment on the pope's 2015 letter, and calls and emails placed to members of the Chilean bishops' conference about the letter were not returned.

Asked about the planned protests by Osorno parishioners during Francis' trip to Chile, Burke said the Vatican had "maximum respect" for their right to do so. But he said no papal meetings were planned with the Osorno group, which had formally requested to meet with the pope in July but were told by Vatican organizers that his schedule was already final, some six months before the trip.

Barros said he knew nothing of the pope's letter and repeated his position that he knew nothing of Karadima's crimes. "I never knew anything about, nor ever imagined the serious abuses which that priest committed against the victims," he told the AP.

"I have never approved of nor participated in such serious dishonest acts and I have never been convicted by any tribunal of such things," Barros added.

Juan Carlos Cruz, who says Karadima sexually abused him when he was a teenager in the 1980s, told the AP that Barros and the other bishops Karadima trained were well aware of the abuse and even witnessed it. He said two of the bishops kissed Karadima "and put their heads on his shoulder and touched him, for 37 years, but now they have forgotten."

The Karadima scandal has contributed to a severe crisis in the Chilean church, including a dramatic drop in new seminarians, a 20 percent decline in the number of people identifying themselves as Catholics and a growth in evangelical churches. Francis is expected to offer encouragement to the church and Chilean Catholics during his visit.

On Wednesday, the online database on the abuse crisis, BishopAccountability.org, released research

showing at least 78 priests or members of religious orders had been credibly abused or convicted of sexually abusing minors in Chile, but that the number was likely far higher. Chile has about 2,300 priests.

Winfield reported from Vatican City.

GOP struggles to woo candidates in states where Trump won

By THOMAS BEAUMONT and JAMES MacPHERSON, Associated Press

BISMARCK, North Dakota (AP) — Republican Rep. Kevin Cramer of North Dakota got a hard sell last week from President Donald Trump, who gave Cramer and his wife a personal tour of the West Wing and used the gilded luster of the newly renovated Oval Office to entreat Cramer to challenge popular Democratic Sen. Heidi Heitkamp.

It didn't work: Cramer turned down Trump, who had also called him about the race last fall.

It's the latest in a string of complications for Senate Republicans, who are clinging to a paper-thin majority and entering a midterm election year saddled with Trump's low approval ratings and a history of losses for the party in power.

"The president made a very patriotic case for me to run for the Senate seat, and told me he would be behind me 100 percent and campaign for me and with me," Cramer told The Associated Press.

But Cramer couldn't resist the pull of his family and of his position in Congress. "I don't want to be away every weekend, around the country and raising money when I have a 10-year-old at home and four grandchildren."

His decision came as Republicans in Ohio scrambled to find a replacement on the ballot for Josh Mandel, the favorite in the GOP Senate race who left the race Friday out of concern for his wife's health. Now the possibility looms of a primary race between four-term Rep. Jim Renacci and investor and author J. D. Vance, a contest that could leave the nominee hobbled.

Ohio and North Dakota are among the 10 states that Trump won in 2016 that have Democrats running for re-election. Republicans hold a 51-to-49 edge in the Senate, a margin narrowed last month by Alabama Democrat Doug Jones' surprise win over Republican Roy Moore a special election.

"I think everybody's eyes are wide open about the midterm," said Josh Holmes, a senior aide to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. "It is going to be extremely difficult to hold the House and the Senate, but we are doing everything we possibly can do to that."

Cramer's decision was the second time in recent weeks when Trump had been rebuffed in trying to woo a candidate to run for Senate.

The president urged Orrin Hatch of Utah to run for re-election, and the White House even scheduled a trip to Utah last year largely intended to woo the veteran senator, making sure that the 83-year-old had time alone with the president.

Yet Hatch recently announced plans to retire, paving the way for frequent Trump critic Mitt Romney, the 2012 GOP presidential nominee, to run for the seat.

In the meantime, Republicans, handed an opportunity to pick up a seat in Minnesota, were waiting for word from former Gov. Tim Pawlenty. The former governor, the most recent Republican to be elected statewide in Minnesota, is considered a top candidate for the seat Democrat Al Franken said he would give up last month amid allegations of sexual harassment.

Former Lt. Gov. Tina Smith, appointed to fill the seat until a special election in November, was sworn in last week.

In North Dakota, Cramer had been viewed as the lone Republican capable of mounting a strong challenge to Heitkamp, a former state attorney general and gas company executive seeking a second term.

Yet Cramer, 56, had put off a decision while the House pursued the tax overhaul, even as Heitkamp had more than \$4 million for her re-election campaign.

Though Cramer never committed to running, White House officials and some McConnell advisers had believed he was leaning toward a bid.

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Despite the complications, McConnell allies say Republicans' path to holding the majority is made less thorny by the fall of former Trump strategist Steve Bannon.

Bannon, whose political stock was damaged after backing Moore in Alabama, was sharply rebuked by Trump last week after being quoted in a tell-all book.

"It's still too early to cast judgment on the general election map," said Chris Pack, with the McConnell-affiliated super-PAC Senate Leadership Fund. "But the threat of Republican primaries from fringe candidates who can't win in November took a big blow with Steve Bannon imploding over the past couple of weeks."

Beaumont reported from Des Moines, Iowa. Jonathan Lemire and Kevin Freking contributed from Washington.

Ecuador grants nationality to WikiLeaks founder

By GONZALO SOLANO, Associated Press

QUITO, Ecuador (AP) — Ecuador has granted citizenship to WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange after more than five years of living in asylum at the nation's embassy in London, officials announced Thursday.

Foreign Minister Maria Fernanda Espinosa said officials accepted Assange's request for naturalization in December, and they continue to look for a long-term resolution to a situation that has vexed officials since 2012.

"What naturalization does is provide the asylum seeker another layer of protection," Espinosa said.

Ecuador gave Assange asylum after he sought refuge in the embassy to avoid extradition to Sweden for investigation of sex-related claims. Sweden dropped the case, but Assange has remained in the embassy because he is still subject to arrest in Britain for jumping bail.

He also fears a possible U.S. extradition request based on his leaking of classified State Department documents.

The Australian-born Assange posted a photograph of himself wearing a yellow Ecuadorean national soccer team jersey on Instagram Wednesday and his name now appears in the Andean country's national registry.

The new citizenship status, however, appears to change little for Assange in the immediate future. He would still need to alert British authorities of any movement outside the embassy.

"Even if he has two or three nationalities, the United Kingdom will continue in its efforts against him," said Fredy Rivera, an expert in foreign affairs at the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences in Ecuador.

Espinosa said Ecuador is trying to make Assange a member of its diplomatic team, which would grant him additional rights under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, including special legal immunity and safe passage.

Britain's Foreign Office said earlier Thursday it has rejected Ecuador's request to grant him diplomatic status in the U.K.

"Ecuador knows that the way to resolve this issue is for Julian Assange to leave the embassy to face justice," the office said.

Though protected by Ecuador, the relationship between Assange and nation's leaders has at times been dicey. Ecuador has repeatedly urged Assange not to interfere in the affairs of other countries following his frequent online comments on international issues.

The biggest crisis came in October 2016, when the embassy cut his internet service after WikiLeaks published a trove of emails from then-U.S. presidential candidate Hillary Clinton's campaign.

He was also a point of contention in Ecuador's 2017 presidential election. Conservative candidate Guillermo Lasso pledged to evict the Australian within 30 days of taking office, while current President Lenin Moreno said he would allow him to stay. Assange later taunted after Lasso's loss that he would "cordially invite Lasso to leave Ecuador within 30 days."

Moreno issued a warning reminding Assange not to meddle in politics. He has also called Assange a hacker.

A lofty proposal: 'Marry Me' etched in snow, seen from above

NEVIS, Minn. (AP) — An aviation student in northern Minnesota pulled off a sky-high marriage proposal by writing "Marry Me" in the snow, then flying his long-time girlfriend over his handiwork.

Gavin Becker enlisted his family's help to pen the life-changing question using a snow blower on the frozen Eight Crow Wing Lake near Nevis.

Ed Becker, Gavin's father, tells KARE-TV that it took about 4½ hours to create the 25-foot-tall (7.5-meter-tall) letters and a huge heart.

Gavin Becker, a University of North Dakota aviation student, then rented a plane and took his high-school sweetheart, Olivia Toft, for a trip over the lake Sunday.

Toft, realizing it was snow joke, told him "yes."

Information from: KARE-TV, <http://www.kare11.com>



In this Jan. 7, 2018 photo provided by Ed Becker, Gavin Becker proposes to his long-time girlfriend Olivia Toft on Eight Crow Wing Lake near Nevis, Minn. Becker had his family's help etching out the big question with a snow blower in 25-foot-tall letters and a huge heart in the snow on the frozen lake. Then Gavin rented a plane and took Toft, who said yes, for a ride over the lake to see where his father took photos of the event. (Ed Becker via AP)

Big gains for retailers push S&P 500 higher; rates rise

By STAN CHOE, AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Rising retailers pushed U.S. stock indexes further into record territory on Friday, and the Standard & Poor's 500 was on pace to close out its seventh week of gains in the last eight.

Interest rates also climbed, and the yield on the two-year Treasury topped 2 percent for the first time since the financial crisis was peaking in 2008.

KEEPING SCORE: The S&P 500 was up 11 points, or 0.4 percent, at 2,778 as of 11:20 a.m. Eastern time. The Dow Jones industrial average gained 180, or 0.7 percent, to 25,755, and the Nasdaq composite gained 33, or 0.5 percent, to 7,245.

RETAILERS RINGING IT UP: Kohl's jumped to the biggest gain in the S&P 500 and was up \$2.35, or 3.8 percent to \$63.47. Target, Foot Locker and Gap all climbed 2.5 percent or more.

A government report confirmed that the holiday shopping season was a strong one, with retail sales climbing 0.4 percent last month following a 0.9 percent surge in November. A separate report from the National Retail Federation said that holiday spending had its strongest gain since the Great Recession. The numbers fit with what individual retailers have said recently, and several have raised their profit forecasts as a result.

The strong job market has led to higher optimism among shoppers, and they're opening their wallets up further as a result.

YIELDS: Treasury yields jumped after a key measure of inflation rose more last month than economists expected.

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Overall inflation slowed in December, but that was mostly due to gasoline and other items whose prices have historically been prone to quick changes. "Core" inflation, which looks at the steadier components of the Consumer Price Index, accelerated more than expected last month.

That pushed the yield on the two-year Treasury to 2.01 percent from 1.98 percent late Thursday. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note rose to 2.56 percent from 2.54 percent.

RATE EFFECT: Investors have been preparing for a gradual rise in rates, which dropped to record lows following the Great Recession and helped propel the market on its record run. The worry is that a surprise turn higher in inflation could force central banks to move more quickly on rates than market is expecting, which could upset the calm ride investors have been enjoying.

Stocks that pay big dividends also get hurt when bonds are paying higher interest rates, because they can lure away investors seeking income.

Real-estate stocks, which are big dividend payers, fell 0.7 percent for the worst performance among the 11 sectors that make up the S&P 500. Utilities were also weaker.

DISLIKE: Facebook fell to one of the largest losses in the S&P 500 after the social-media giant said that it is revamping its system to show fewer posts from brands and fewer videos in favor of more posts from friends and family. The changes may result in people spending less time on Facebook.

Facebook dropped \$7.44, or 4 percent, to \$180.33.

EARNINGS SEASON UNDERWAY: The floodgates are opening for companies to report their results for the last three months of 2017, and expectations are generally high. Analysts are forecasting S&P 500 companies will report earnings per share that are 10.7 percent higher than a year earlier, according to S&P Global Market Intelligence.

Financial companies are some of the earliest to report, and BlackRock jumped \$14.28, or 2.7 percent, to \$552.20 after it reported stronger earnings than analysts expected.

CURRENCIES: The euro touched its highest level since 2014 against the dollar amid hopes for a new coalition government in Germany and signs that the European Central Bank is preparing to rein in its stimulus sooner than many had been predicting.

The euro jumped to \$1.2145 from \$1.2036 late Thursday. The British pound rose to \$1.3683 from \$1.3536, and the dollar rose to 111.21 Japanese yen from 111.09 yen.

MARKETS ABROAD: Japan's Nikkei 225 index lost 0.2 percent, South Korea's Kospi advanced 0.3 percent and Hong Kong's Hang Seng jumped 0.9 percent.

France's CAC 40 gained 0.5 percent, the FTSE 100 in London rose 0.3 percent and Germany's DAX climbed 0.4 percent.

COMMODITIES: Benchmark U.S. crude slipped 21 cents to \$63.59 per barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, lost 37 cents to \$68.89 per barrel.

Gold rose \$8.40 to \$1,330.90 per ounce, silver added 16 cents to \$17.13 per ounce and copper dipped a penny to \$3.22 per pound.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, Jan. 12, the 12th day of 2018. There are 353 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 12, 1948, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Sipuel v. Board of Regents of University of Oklahoma*, unanimously ruled that state law schools could not discriminate against applicants on the basis of race.

On this date:

In 1773, the first public museum in America was organized in Charleston, South Carolina.

In 1828, the United States and Mexico signed a Treaty of Limits defining the boundary between the two countries to be the same as the one established by an 1819 treaty between the U.S. and Spain.

In 1915, the U.S. House of Representatives rejected, 204-174, a proposed constitutional amendment to

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give women nationwide the right to vote. The silent film drama "A Fool There Was," which propelled Theda Bara to stardom with her portrayal of a predatory vamp, premiered in New York.

In 1932, Hattie W. Caraway became the first woman elected to the U.S. Senate after initially being appointed to serve out the remainder of the term of her late husband, Thaddeus.

In 1945, during World War II, Soviet forces began a major, successful offensive against the Germans in Eastern Europe. Aircraft from U.S. Task Force 38 sank about 40 Japanese ships off Indochina.

In 1959, Berry Gordy Jr. founded Motown Records (originally Tamla Records) in Detroit.

In 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson said in his State of the Union address that the U.S. military should stay in Vietnam until Communist aggression there was stopped. The TV series "Batman," starring Adam West and Burt Ward as the Dynamic Duo, premiered on ABC, airing twice a week on consecutive nights.

In 1971, the groundbreaking situation comedy "All in the Family" premiered on CBS television.

In 1976, mystery writer Dame Agatha Christie died in Wallingford, England, at age 85.

In 1986, the shuttle Columbia blasted off with a crew that included the first Hispanic-American in space, Dr. Franklin R. Chang-Diaz.

In 1987, Anglican Church envoy Terry Waite arrived in Lebanon on his latest mission to win the release of Western hostages; however, Waite ended up being taken captive himself, and wasn't released until 1991.

In 1998, Linda Tripp provided Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr's office with taped conversations between herself and former White House intern Monica Lewinsky.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush, visiting Bahrain, said he was cheered by news that Iraq's parliament had approved legislation reinstating thousands of former supporters of Saddam Hussein's dissolved Baath party to government jobs, calling it "an important step toward reconciliation."

Five years ago: The NHL's four-month lockout finally ended as the league and the players' association completed signing a required memorandum of understanding. Miss New York Mallory Hagan won the Miss America pageant in Las Vegas.

One year ago: In yet another aftershock from the chaotic presidential campaign, the Justice Department inspector general opened an investigation into department and FBI actions before the election, including whether FBI Director James Comey followed established policies in the email investigation of Hillary Clinton. President Barack Obama ended the longstanding "wet foot, dry foot" immigration policy that allowed any Cuban who made it to U.S. soil to stay and become a legal resident. Novelist and filmmaker William Peter Blatty, who gave millions the fright of their lives with the best-selling novel and Oscar-winning movie "The Exorcist," died in Bethesda, Maryland, at age 89.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Katherine MacGregor (TV: "Little House on the Prairie") is 93. The Amazing Kreskin is 83. Country singer William Lee Golden (The Oak Ridge Boys) is 79. Actor Anthony Andrews is 70. Movie director Wayne Wang is 69. Actress Kirstie Alley is 67. Political commentator Rush Limbaugh is 67. Legal affairs blogger Ann Althouse is 67. Writer Walter Mosley is 66. Country singer Ricky Van Shelton is 66. Radio-TV personality Howard Stern is 64. Writer-producer-director John Lasseter is 61. Broadcast journalist Christiane Amanpour is 60. Actor Oliver Platt is 58. Basketball Hall of Famer Dominique Wilkins is 58. Entrepreneur Jeff Bezos is 54. Rock singer Rob Zombie is 53. Actor Olivier Martinez is 52. Rapper TBird (B-Rock and the Bizz) is 51. Model Vendela is 51. Actress Farrah Focuse is 50. Actress Rachael Harris is 50. Rock singer Zack de la Rocha is 48. Rapper Raekwon (Wu Tang Clan) is 48. Singer Dan Haseltine (Jars of Clay) is 45. Rock musician Matt Wong (Reel Big Fish) is 45. Singer Melanie Chisholm (Spice Girls) is 44. Contemporary Christian singer Jeremy Camp is 40. Actress Cynthia Addai-Robinson is 38. Rhythm-and-blues singer Amerie is 38. Actress Issa Rae is 33. Actress Naya Rivera is 31. Actor Will Rothhaar is 31. Actor Andrew Lawrence is 30. Rock singer ZAYN is 25. Pop/soul singer Ella Henderson (TV: "The X Factor") is 22.

Thought for Today: "Love is the strongest force the world possesses, and yet it is the humblest imaginable." — Mohandas K. Gandhi, Indian spiritual leader (1869-1948).

Riddle Answer: A towel