

Groton Daily Independent

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Today's Riddle:
What can you catch but not throw?

Answer at end of AP News

- 1- Recycling trailers
- 1- Chicken Soup for the Soul
- 1- Frost Construction Ad
- 1- Today's Riddle
- 2- Gov. Daugaard's Weekly Column
- 3- Senator Rounds' Weekly Column
- 4- Varsity Stat Sheet vs. Roncalli
- 5- Junior Varsity Stat Sheet vs. Roncalli
- 6- C Team Stat Sheet vs. Roncalli
- 7- Fast paced game propels Roncalli past Groton
- 10- Gun Show Ad
- 10- Farmers Union PSA
- 10- Sanford Aberdeen enacts restrictions to protect patients from flu
- 11- Senator Thune's Weekly Column
- 12- Silver Skates Ad
- 13- Today in Weather History
- 14- Today's Forecast
- 15- Yesterday's Weather
- 15- Today's Weather Info
- 15- National Weather Map
- 16- Daily Devotional
- 17- 2018 Community Events
- 18- 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

Upcoming Events

- Friday, Jan. 19
Girls at Roncalli with C game starting at 5:15 p.m.
Speech Fiesta debate in Watertown today and tomorrow
Robotics in Groton on Saturday
Wrestling at Kingsbury County on Saturday

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South Dakota Governor
Dennis Daugaard



Giving the Open Waters Compromise Time to Work

The issue of nonmeandered waters has been a contentious one in recent decades. Problems arose in the 1990s, when water bodies in eastern South Dakota expanded greatly, after receiving far more moisture than normal. Several legislative efforts tried to address this challenge, but the many competing opinions and interests made compromise elusive.

The situation came to a head last March, when the South Dakota Supreme Court determined that it is "up to the Legislature to decide how these waters are to be beneficially used in the public interest." Our legislators heard that message and went to work.

An interim legislative committee held four public meetings and engaged many stakeholders. The group toured areas that have been affected. They went to Day County, Brown County, and the communities of Bristol, Webster, and Waubay. They saw firsthand the inundated areas and discussed how nonmeandered waters are impacting local residents.

They met with affected agricultural producers, sportsmen and business owners. Individual committee members held still more public meetings to collect additional input. During the hearings, the committee heard testimony from more than 70 individuals, considered ten different bill drafts and adopted a number of amendments.

Through that process, the committee drafted a bill called the Open Waters Compromise to balance the interests of landowners with the ability of sportsmen to use public waters for recreation. Then during a special session of the Legislature last June, the Legislature passed and I signed the Open Waters Compromise.

The new law has since opened tens of thousands of acres of nonmeandered waters to public recreation. In fact, more than 99 percent of all nonmeandered water with managed fisheries are open.

This is not only a win for South Dakotans who enjoy fishing and boating. The law also protects the property rights of landowners. Since the law passed, we have seen that landowners are supportive of keeping nearly all of these waters open. Plus, this compromise has created a new positive dialogue between sportsmen and landowners.

The Open Waters Compromise included a provision to sunset the law in June so that the Legislature could consider whether it was properly addressing the issue. I am introducing a bill to extend the sunset date by three years to June 2021. This will give the new system more time to work before we consider opportunities for improvement.

After many years without a solution, we have found a promising compromise. The ambiguity between public recreational use and landowner rights has been largely eliminated under the new law, and we have a system with a relatively good balance. I hope we will give it more time to work.

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One South Dakotan's Purple Heart Story, 73 Years Overdue

One of the important services that our Senate office provides to South Dakotans is assistance in dealing with federal agencies. Over the past three years that I've been in office, we have helped countless South Dakotans navigate the bureaucracy of the federal government. With such a large population of veterans living in our state, we often work with different agencies on behalf of veterans. In some cases, we're able to assist veterans in receiving overdue ribbons and commendations that have been lost in federal paperwork.

We recently had the honor of helping a veteran from Flandreau receive a long overdue Purple Heart Medal. Sylvan Vigness honorably served his country in World War II. On April 1, 1945, Mr. Vigness was serving onboard the U.S.S. Hinsdale when it was hit by a kamikaze during the Battle of Iwo Jima. Mr. Vigness lost sight in his left eye after the attack, and is permanently blind in that eye as a result. Amid the chaos of the attack, the medical records onboard the ship from that day were lost or destroyed, and because of that, Mr. Vigness was denied the Purple Heart for decades.

The Vigness family has spent the past 25 years seeking a Purple Heart for Mr. Vigness, working with my predecessors in the Senate to obtain this long overdue medal. The request was continuously denied because the Navy was unable to locate his medical records from the time of the attack. When the Vigness family contacted our office to look into obtaining the Purple Heart, we began putting together witness statements from his shipmates, along with other materials related to his service and subsequent eye injury. We then sent a letter to the Secretary of the Navy, Richard Spencer, requesting the medal for Mr. Vigness, and I had an opportunity to speak directly to the Secretary about it at the Pentagon. On January 17, 2018, Secretary Spencer notified my office that at his request, under the direction of the president, Mr. Vigness, now aged 94, will finally receive the Purple Heart.

Mr. Vigness is a hero who bravely defended his country in World War II, and is fully deserving of the Purple Heart Medal. We're thankful to him for his service, and we're thankful to his family and friends for not giving up on seeking this recognition for him. Like Mr. Vigness, the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States make incredible sacrifices to defend our freedoms and our way of life. I'm extremely grateful for the president's personal interest in directing that special attention be paid to getting veterans their overdue medals, as well as for Secretary Spencer, who personally reviewed Mr. Vigness' medical records and personal statement and awarded him the Purple Heart.

If there are other veterans and families in South Dakota who are seeking to obtain a medal or award, please reach out to our office and if we can, we'll try to help with that effort. Call or stop in to our Pierre, Rapid City or Sioux Falls offices any time. Location information and phone numbers can be found on our website, www.rounds.senate.gov.

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Boys Varsity Stat Sheet vs. Roncalli

Aberdeen Roncalli		TOT-FG		3-PT		REBOUNDS											MIN	
NO	PLAYER	P	FG	FGA	FG	FGA	FT	FTA	OFF	DEF	TOT	PF	TP	A	TO	BK	S	MIN
3	Reede, Gus	*	9	18	5	10	8	9	0	6	6	3	31	2	1	0	1	24:00
21	Chamberlain, Conner	*	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	2	3	3	0	0	0	0	1	0:00
23	Reede, Max	*	1	6	1	3	0	0	0	3	3	4	3	1	1	0	0	24:00
24	Gunderson, Grant	*	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0:00
32	Morgan, Brady	*	5	10	0	1	5	7	1	4	5	1	15	2	0	0	5	16:00
4	Jeme, Scipio		2	3	1	1	3	5	1	2	3	1	8	2	1	0	2	24:00
5	Imbery, Gray		1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	8:00
10	Beuchler, Andrew		1	4	0	1	0	0	2	5	7	2	2	0	0	0	1	24:00
13	Goetz, Lucas		0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	8:00
20	Vanorman, Isaac		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	8:00
22	O'Keefer, Jacob		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	8:00
33	Keifer, Harrison		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8:00
44	Maunu, Josh		0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	8:00
TEAM REBOUNDS									0	1	1				1			
Team Totals			19	47	7	17	16	23	8	25	33	19	61	8	5	0	10	160

Total FG% - 1st: 11/23 0.478 2nd: 8/24 0.333 Game: 0.404 Deadball
 3-PT FG% - 1st: 4/9 0.444 2nd: 3/8 0.375 Game: 0.412 Rebounds
 Total FT% - 1st: 12/16 0.750 2nd: 4/7 0.571 Game: 0.696 (4,0)

Groton		TOT-FG		3-PT		REBOUNDS											MIN	
NO	PLAYER	P	FG	FGA	FG	FGA	FT	FTA	OFF	DEF	TOT	PF	TP	A	TO	BK	S	MIN
20	KEITH, BRANDON	F	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	5	0	0	1	0	0	0:00
42	DEHOET, BRODYN	C	4	7	2	3	1	3	0	5	5	3	11	0	1	0	0	24:00
4	DOEDEN, JONNY	G	1	4	0	1	0	0	0	2	2	4	2	0	4	0	0	16:00
5	SHABAZZ, SERIC	G	4	7	0	1	1	2	1	5	6	1	9	2	2	0	1	16:00
10	LANE, MARSHALL	G	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	1	0	1	2	0	0	16:00
3	SIPPEL, ANTHONY		0	3	0	2	0	2	0	2	2	1	0	1	1	0	0	16:00
11	RINTALA, ANDREW		4	9	1	3	0	1	0	3	3	3	9	0	2	0	0	24:00
12	SHABAZZ, DARIEN		0	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	8:00
14	KURTZ, KADEN		0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	8:00
22	GUTHMILLER, CADE		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8:00
34	JONES, AUSTIN		0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	8:00
50	TRAPHAGEN, TRISTAN		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8:00
55	DIEGEL, TREYTON		1	5	0	3	1	3	0	0	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	8:00
TEAM REBOUNDS									0	3	3				0			
Team Totals			14	36	3	13	5	16	3	23	26	19	36	5	14	0	2	160

Total FG% - 1st: 11/23 0.478 2nd: 3/13 0.231 Game: 0.389 Deadball
 3-PT FG% - 1st: 3/9 0.333 2nd: 0/4 0.000 Game: 0.231 Rebounds
 Total FT% - 1st: 1/6 0.167 2nd: 4/10 0.400 Game: 0.313 (5,0)

SCORE BY PERIODS	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	TOTAL
Aberdeen Roncalli	21	17	9	14	61
Groton	9	17	3	7	36

Last FG: Aberdeen Roncalli 4th-08:00, Groton 4th-08:00
 Largest lead: Aberdeen Roncalli by 30 4th-08:00, Groton NONE
 Score tied: 0 times, Lead changed: 0 times

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Boys Junior Varsity Stat Sheet vs. Roncalli

VISITOR: Roncalli

NO	PLAYER	P	TOT-FG		3-PT		FT	FTA	REBOUNDS			PF	TP	A	TO	BK	S	MIN
			FG	FGA	FG	FGA			OFF	DEF	TOT							
4	Vanorman, Isaac	*	2	8	1	4	5	6	1	3	4	1	10	2	2	0	2	32:00
10	O'Keefe, Jacob	*	0	1	0	1	4	6	0	0	0	1	4	2	2	0	1	8:00
22	Imbery, Gray	*	6	9	0	0	2	4	0	4	4	5	14	0	2	0	1	8:00
33	Kiefer, Harrison	*	1	3	0	0	1	2	3	2	5	2	3	0	1	0	1	24:00
44	Maunu, Josh	*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	16:00
3	Reede, Harry		1	4	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	1	2	0	0	32:00
5	Holstrum, Brian		0	1	0	0	1	2	1	4	5	0	1	0	1	0	0	16:00
23	Hoellein, Dawson		0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0:00
24	Prehn, Max		1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	16:00
50	Sather, Sam		0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	0	0	0	1	0	1	8:00
TEAM REBOUNDS									2	2	4				0			
Team Totals			11	29	3	10	13	20	8	17	25	12	38	7	13	0	6	160

Total FG% - 1st: 5/15 0.333 2nd: 6/14 0.429 Game: 0.379 Deadball
 3-PT FG% - 1st: 3/5 0.600 2nd: 0/5 0.000 Game: 0.300 Rebounds
 Total FT% - 1st: 6/12 0.500 2nd: 7/8 0.875 Game: 0.650 (2,0)

HOME: Groton

NO	PLAYER	P	TOT-FG		3-PT		FT	FTA	REBOUNDS			PF	TP	A	TO	BK	S	MIN
			FG	FGA	FG	FGA			OFF	DEF	TOT							
12	SHABAZZ, DARIEN	F	0	5	0	3	0	0	0	5	5	5	0	1	4	0	0	16:00
34	JONES, AUSTIN	F	2	5	1	2	1	2	4	4	8	3	6	0	1	0	1	32:00
14	KURTZ, KADEN	G	2	6	0	2	4	4	0	0	0	2	8	2	2	0	0	32:00
22	GUTHMILLER, CADE	G	2	4	1	2	0	0	0	3	3	2	5	0	5	0	1	24:00
55	Diegel, Treyton	*	4	12	3	6	1	1	1	0	1	1	12	0	1	0	2	24:00
3	SCHINKEL, ANTHONY		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0:00
10	THURSTON, RILEY		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	16:00
50	TRAPHAGEN, TRISTAN		1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	3	2	1	0	0	0	16:00
57	Add New Player,		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0:00
TEAM REBOUNDS									0	2	2				1			
Team Totals			11	33	5	15	6	7	6	15	21	16	33	4	15	0	4	160

Total FG% - 1st: 7/17 0.412 2nd: 4/16 0.250 Game: 0.333 Deadball
 3-PT FG% - 1st: 2/6 0.333 2nd: 3/9 0.333 Game: 0.333 Rebounds
 Total FT% - 1st: 4/5 0.800 2nd: 2/2 1.000 Game: 0.857 (0,0)

SCORE BY PERIODS	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	TOTAL
Roncalli	7	12	10	9	38
Groton	10	10	5	8	33

Last FG: Add New Team 4th-08:00, Add New Team 4th-08:00
 Largest lead: Add New Team by 8 4th-08:00, Add New Team by 7 1st-08:00
 Score tied: 1 times, Lead changed: 3 times

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Boys C Team Stat Sheet vs. Roncalli

VISITOR: Roncalli

NO PLAYER	P	TOT-FG		3-PT		FT	FTA	REBOUNDS			PF	TP	A	TO	BK	S	MIN
		FG	FGA	FG	FGA			OFF	DEF	TOT							
5 HolmStrom, Brian	*	1	3	0	1	1	2	0	1	1	0	3	0	3	0	0	16:00
20 Unknown,	*	2	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	1	4	0	1	0	0	8:00
22 Imbery, Gray	*	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	2	0	0	8:00
24 Prehn, Max	*	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	24:00
50 Sather, Sam	*	0	3	0	0	1	2	0	4	4	0	1	0	2	0	1	16:00
3 reede, harrison		7	14	5	10	0	0	1	4	5	1	19	4	1	0	3	24:00
13 Unknown,		3	4	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	1	6	0	0	0	4	8:00
21 Unknown,		0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	16:00
23 Hoellein, Dawson		3	6	2	5	0	0	0	1	1	0	8	0	1	0	1	16:00
32 O'keefe, Jacob		1	5	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	24:00
TEAM REBOUNDS								2	2	4				0			
Team Totals		18	39	7	16	2	4	7	15	22	5	45	4	12	0	10	160

Total FG% - 1st: 8/19 0.421 2nd: 10/20 0.500 Game: 0.462 Deadball
 3-PT FG% - 1st: 2/7 0.286 2nd: 5/9 0.556 Game: 0.438 Rebounds
 Total FT% - 1st: 1/2 0.500 2nd: 1/2 0.500 Game: 0.500 (0,0)

HOME: Groton

NO PLAYER	P	TOT-FG		3-PT		FT	FTA	REBOUNDS			PF	TP	A	TO	BK	S	MIN
		FG	FGA	FG	FGA			OFF	DEF	TOT							
5 COGLEY, JACKSON	F	1	4	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	3	3	0	0	32:00
50 TRAPHAGEN, TRISTAN	F	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	4	5	1	0	1	1	0	0	16:00
3 SCHINKEL, ANTHONY	*	3	7	1	2	1	2	1	2	3	0	8	0	1	0	0	32:00
4 DEHOET, CYRUS	*	1	4	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	0	0	16:00
10 THURSTON, RILEY	*	2	5	1	2	0	0	0	2	2	0	5	0	2	0	0	32:00
11 Unknown,		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0:00
22 KASSUBE, HUNTER		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8:00
34 PAULSON, STEVEN		0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	24:00
40 FURNEY, CALEB		0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0:00
TEAM REBOUNDS								0	5	5				2			
Team Totals		7	24	3	10	1	2	3	16	19	2	18	4	14	0	0	160

Total FG% - 1st: 1/12 0.083 2nd: 6/12 0.500 Game: 0.292 Deadball
 3-PT FG% - 1st: 1/5 0.200 2nd: 2/5 0.400 Game: 0.300 Rebounds
 Total FT% - 1st: 0/0 0.000 2nd: 1/2 0.500 Game: 0.500 (0,0)

SCORE BY PERIODS		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	TOTAL
Roncalli	3	16	12	14		45
Groton	0	3	11	4		18

Last FG: Add New Team 4th-08:00, Add New Team 4th-08:00
 Largest lead: Add New Team by 27 4th-08:00, Add New Team NONE
 Score tied: 0 times, Lead changed: 0 times

Fast paced game propels Roncalli past Groton

Aberdeen Roncalli came to town Thursday evening and swept all three games in boys' basketball action.

Harrison Reede scored 19 points to lead Roncalli's C team to a 45-18 win over the Tigers. Anthony Schinkel led the Tigers with eight points followed by Riley Thurston with five, Cyrus DeHoot three and Jackson Cogley two. Tristan Traphagen had five rebounds. Groton Area made 26 percent of its field goals, 30 percent of its three-pointers and 50 percent of its free throws.

Roncalli made 44 percent of its field goals, 44 percent of its three-pointers and 50 percent of its free throws.

Groton's junior varsity team led for most of the first half, but quickly fell behind in the third quarter as the Cavaliers went on an 11-point run to take a 27-20 lead. Groton closed the game to three late in the game, 36-33, but was unable to score again as Roncalli won, 38-33.

Treyton Diegel led the Tigers with 12 points followed by Kaden Kurtz with eight, Austin Jones had six points and eight rebounds, Cade Guthmiller had five points and Tristan Traphagen added two points.

Groton Area made 33 percent of its field goals, 33 percent of its three-pointers and 56 percent of its free throws. Roncalli made 38 percent of its field goals, 30 percent of its three-pointers and 65 percent of its free throws.



Brodyn DeHoet goes up against Roncalli's Grant Gunderson for the opening tip. (Photo by Julianna Kosel)



Jonathan Doeden is off to the races in the fast paced game. (Photo by Julianna Kosel)

The finale of the night was a roller coaster game and a high paced game. The Cavaliers went home with a 61-36 win.

The Cavaliers shot 50 percent in the first quarter to jump out to a 21-9 lead. Groton Area rallied in the second quarter as both teams netted 17 points. The Tigers made 47 percent of its field goals. and Roncalli cooled down to 33 percent.

Both team went ice cold in the third quarter, making only 15 percent of their field goals, but the Cavaliers put up twice as many shots and outscored Groton, 9-3.

Both teams were equal in shooting in the fourth quarter at 33 percent. Ron-

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Anthony Sippel attempts a three-pointer. (Photo by Julianna Kosel)

calli made 12 points off of Groton's turnovers in the second half.

Gus Reede led Roncalli and all scorers with 31 points including five of 10 three-pointers. Brady Morgan had 15, Max Reede had three and Gray Imbery and Andrew Buechler each added two points.

Brodyn DeHoet led the Tigers with 11 points while Seric Shabazz and Andrew Rintala each had nine points, Treyton Diegel had three and Jonathan Doeden and Darien Shabazz each had two points.

Roncalli controlled the boards, 33-26. Buechler had seven rebounds for Roncalli and Seric Shabazz had six for Groton Area. Groton Area had 14 turnovers, 10 of which were steals with Morgan having five. Roncalli had five turn-



Treyton Diegel tries to squeeze between two Roncalli players on his way to the basket. (Photo by Julianna Kosel)

overs of which two were steals - one each by the Shabazz boys.

For the game, Groton Area 39 percent of its field goals, 23 percent of its three-pointers and 31 percent of its free throws, making five of 16. Roncalli made 40 percent of its field goals, 41 percent of its three-pointers and 70 percent of its free throws, making 16 of 22 shots.

Coach Justin Hanson was not happy about the action here as no foul was called as Seric Shabazz is tied up. Treyton Diegel has the ball. (Photo

by Julianna Kosel)



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Top Left: Seric Shabazz
Top Right: Brandon Keith
Bottom: Andy Rintala
(Photos by Julianna Kosel)



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)

Sanford Aberdeen enacts restrictions to protect patients from flu

ABERDEEN, S.D. – In order to protect patients and employees from influenza, Sanford Aberdeen is putting visitor restrictions in place at the medical center.

The restrictions are as follows:

Only visitors who are immediate family members of a hospital patient or who have business to do at the hospital are allowed to come. Immediate family members include parents, spouse or significant other, grandparents, and grandchildren, siblings and children (if older than 12).

Children age 12 and younger are not allowed to visit.

Sanford Aberdeen staff will work with patients to help maintain family connections in other ways during their hospitalization.

Influenza vaccinations are still being offered to the general public in all of Sanford Health's primary care and walk-in clinics. For more information, visit aberdeen.sanfordhealth.org/flu.



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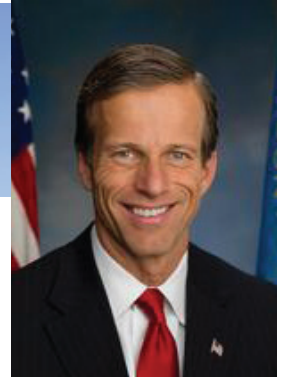
94 octane, more power,
same mileage, fewer
carbon deposits, lower
maintenance costs,
slashed benzene & related
genotoxic, carcinogenic
tailpipe emissions;

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

***Farmers Union's**

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

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



Working Toward a Farm Bill That's Done Right and On Time

For folks who haven't been following my "Thune Farm Bill" effort in the Senate, thanks to the help of stakeholder groups and individual farmers and ranchers throughout South Dakota, we made significant progress last year as we laid important groundwork for the 2018 farm bill. The current farm bill expires this fall, and one of my top priorities for 2018 is ensuring the next farm bill is done right and on time.

Last March, I announced that I'd be introducing multiple individual farm bill proposals that cover most sections of the overall bill. My goal was simple. I wanted to put pen to paper early on in the process – beginning more than one year ahead of the deadline – so we could start having a discussion about items that could be included in the new bill. By starting this conversation early, we would be able to get ahead of the game, and I'm glad we did.

The first proposal I introduced last year would create the Soil Health and Income Protection Program, or SHIPP for short. It's designed to be a new voluntary income protection program for farmers that would help meet the production and soil health needs in today's agriculture economy. The new program, which offers a short-term alternative to the popular Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and its long-term requirements, is widely supported. Scott VanderWal, the president of the South Dakota Farm Bureau, called it "commonsense" and said it had the potential to be a "helpful tool" for South Dakota farmers.

Shortly after I rolled out SHIPP, I introduced a set of proposals that would greatly improve how easement programs are managed by adding flexibility to CRP and creating new options for other easement programs. My legislation would boost the CRP acreage cap to 30 million acres, which represents a 25 percent increase, and it would create a new target acreage enrollment for each state based on historical enrollment. South Dakota is expected to lose nearly 60 percent of its existing CRP acres during the years covered by the 2018 farm bill, so it was clear to me that some changes needed to be made.

From there, I introduced numerous other proposals that would, among other things, simplify the Agriculture Risk Coverage-County payment process for multi-county farms, require a mandatory crop acreage base update, improve eligibility for disaster-related diseases under the Livestock Indemnity Program, accelerate the availability of Livestock Forage Program assistance for counties in the D2 Drought Monitor category, increase the effectiveness of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act, and improve the National Environmental Policy Act.

We closed out 2017 with a proposal to expand the sodsaver initiative, which I first authored in the 2008 and 2014 farm bills, for nationwide implementation. In 2018, we picked up right where we left off. This month, I introduced a bill that would help individual Native American ranchers by providing them with premium assistance for grazing loss crop insurance and disaster assistance eligibility for horses that are owned for personal use when natural disasters strike.

Taken as a whole, these bills represent some of the most extensive farm bill policy recommendations that have been introduced this Congress. Again, and I can't emphasize it enough, we wouldn't be here without the hard work and dedication of the men and women in South Dakota's agriculture industry who provided their advice and suggestions along the way. As we approach this fall's deadline, they're needed now more than ever.

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80th Annual Carnival of Silver Skates

Sunday, January 28th—2:00 and
6:30

Recognizing *past skaters*, showcasing several *specialty acts*, and a *walk down memory lane*. Join us for a great show, performed by our *local youth*, that helps *honor those* who have helped establish this *great community tradition* over

Admission: 13 & older—\$3.00
6-12—\$2.00

Parking: Provided around the rink and on the ice or cozy up on the bleachers (ice parking begins at 10 am, then again at 4:30 pm)

**Check us out on Facebook at "Silver Skates"

WE HOPE TO
SEE YOU THERE!



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Today in Weather History

January 19, 1970: Extremely cold air was over the area on this day in weather history in 1970. After an extremely cold night, daytime high temperatures struggled to reach the single digits below zero. Overnight low temperatures across the area were from 25 below to 34 below zero with daytime highs from 3 above at Sisseton to 12 degrees below zero at Pierre. Record low temperatures were set at Wheaton, Watertown, Pierre, and Kennebec. The temperature fell to 32 degrees below zero at Pierre, 33 degrees below zero at Watertown and Wheaton, and to 34 degrees zero at Kennebec. Aberdeen fell to 35 degrees below zero, Sisseton fell to 26 degrees below zero, Mobridge fell to 25 degrees below zero, Sisseton fell to 26 degrees below zero, and Timber Lake fell to 27 degrees below zero.

1883: The steamers of Cimbria and Sultan collided in the North Sea due to heavy fog. This collision resulted in the death of 357 people.








1961: Eight inches of snow fell and caused crippling traffic jams around the Washington D.C. area on the eve of John Kennedy's inauguration. The president-elect had to cancel dinner plans and, in a struggle to keep other commitments, is reported to have had only 4 hours of sleep. Former President Herbert Hoover was unable to fly into Washington National Airport due to the weather and he had to miss the swearing-in ceremony.

1993: An unusual series of Pacific storm systems tracked across Arizona from January 6th through the 19th, producing heavy and prolonged precipitation across the state. These heavy rains caused the most widespread and severe flooding in Arizona since the turn of the century. The highest flows of record were observed at some streamflow gaging stations in every major river basin in the state. The protracted rainfall over the 2-week period caused multiple flood peaks on most streams and rivers. A large garbage landfill and portions of the new Mill Avenue Bridge that was under construction were washed away by the raging Salt River. The Gillespie Dam west of Phoenix was damaged, as high water spread throughout low-lying areas. One man drowned while trying to cross the Agua Fria River.

1996: January 1996 is known as one of the worst snowmelt floods on record for the Mid-Atlantic. The region saw blizzard conditions on January 6 and 7th, which produced 15 to 24 inches east of I-95, and 2 to 3 feet of snow west of I-95. With tremendous amount of snow on the ground, on January 19th, temperatures soared into the 50s and 60s ahead of an approaching cold front. At 7 am in Washington D.C. was reporting a temperature of 60 degrees with a dew point of 60 degrees, both unusually high for a January morning. The warm temperatures combined with rain to melt much of the snowpack, which was released into the waterways.

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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
						
Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Snow Likely 70%	Snow Likely 60%
High: 42 °F	Low: 22 °F	High: 43 °F	Low: 22 °F	High: 38 °F	Low: 24 °F	High: 30 °F

Potential Winter Storm Late Saturday - Monday

From South Dakota/Nebraska - East into Western Lakes Regions



Can We Say For Certain:

A Storm Will Develop With Potential For Heavy Snow

Less Clear:

Exact Track & Timing

Now What?

We Continue To Monitor

Remember - Minor Shifts In Track Will Significantly Impact Snowfall Forecast

National Weather Service - Aberdeen, SD



weather.gov/Aberdeen



National Weather Service Aberdeen



@NWSAberdeen

Updated: 1/19/2018 5:15 AM Central

Published on: 01/19/2018 at 5:31AM

An area of low pressure will bring winter precipitation back into the region late Saturday through Monday. Exact timing, snow amounts, and impact are still uncertain at this time. Central Nebraska, southeast South Dakota, and southwest Minnesota could receive the brunt of this storm system.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 37.4

Low Outside Temp: 16.6

Wind Chill: -

High Gust: 19

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 60° in 1921

Record Low: -36° in 1943

Average High: 22°F

Average Low: 1°F

Average Precip in Jan: 0.31

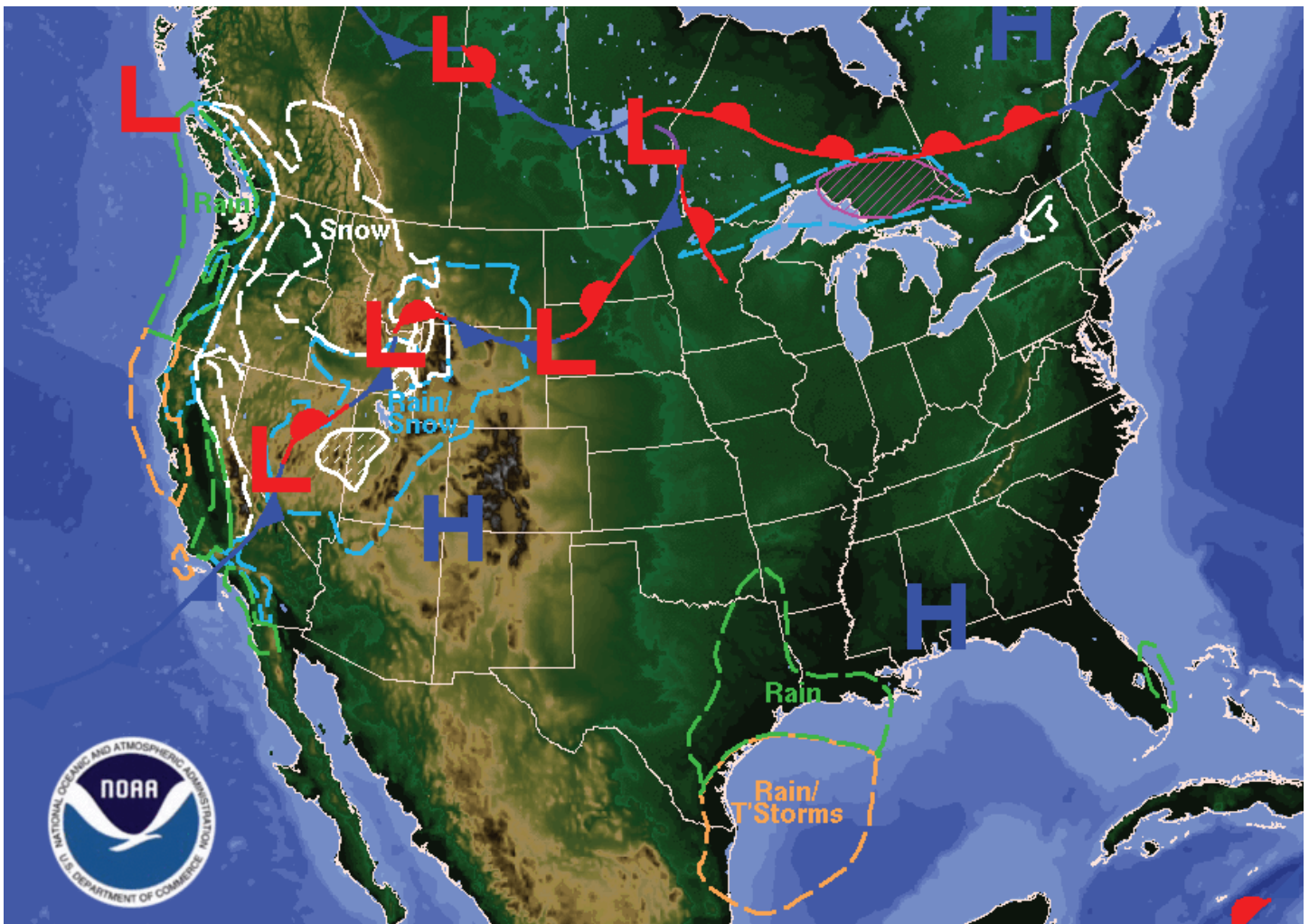
Precip to date in Jan: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.31

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 5:22 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:06 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Fri, Jan 19, 2018, issued 3:25 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Kong 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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A MEDITATION THAT MATTERS

Our minds want to wander. What they settle on in their journey from one destination to another is intriguing and telling. The Bible says that "Old men dream dreams and young men see visions." But it does not tell what the dreams or visions are. It depends on the individual.

One day a psalmist unveiled both his dream and his vision: "Better is one day in Your courts than a thousand elsewhere, I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked."

We often hear phrases about "spending quality time with loved ones" or "living a quality life." But unless we define quality in scriptural terms, "quality" may not be what "quality" is.

Our psalmist wants us to know that even standing at the edge of the temple is better than being inside the tent of a wicked person. Why is this so? It is because of God Himself! Simply being in His presence is a reward.

For the psalmist it is not the beauty of the place but the beauty of a Person. "God is a sun and a shield," he declares, referring to the absolute glory of God as a person and protector of those who serve Him. With His love upon us and His glory around us, we can be assured that He will not withhold any good things from us if we walk with Him and live lives that are blameless – or lives of integrity.

But along our way in this walk with Him, He will give us "grace and glory." Glory refers to His "grace" that He gives to those who are His own. It is His grace that saves us with the faith He gives us because of the love He has for us!

Prayer: How blest we are, Father, that we are invited into Your Kingdom through Your love, mercy and grace. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 84:10 For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

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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 Roncalli 61, Groton Area 36
Andes Central/Dakota Christian 53, Avon 52
Bon Homme 49, Parkston 31
Bridgewater-Emery 78, Howard 39
Burke/South Central 61, Lyman 54
Canistota 47, Hanson 46
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 64, Todd County 55
Corsica/Stickney 65, Ethan 58
Custer 52, Newell 51
Edmunds Central 58, Potter County 43
Freeman 73, Menno 64
Freeman Academy/Marion 60, Baltic 46
Ipswich 65, Faulkton 44
Kimball/White Lake 69, Gregory 61
Lead-Deadwood 52, Hill City 50
Madison 67, Dell Rapids 60
Miller 66, Chamberlain 56
Oelrichs 68, New Underwood 29
Pine Ridge 73, Winner 52
Rapid City Christian 52, Bennett County 42
Scotland 72, Marty Indian 70
Sioux Falls Christian 83, Vermillion 73
Sioux Falls Washington 60, Brookings 37
Sturgis Brown 64, Pierre 53
Tripp-Delmont/Armour 59, Mitchell Christian 48
281 Conference Tournament
Seventh Place
Iroquois 58, Sunshine Bible Academy 47
Fifth Place
Hitchcock-Tulare 54, Wessington Springs 37
Third Place
James Valley Christian 67, Highmore-Harrold 56
Championship
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 53, Wolsey-Wessington 45
Dakota Valley Conference Tournament
Consolation Semifinal
Deubrook 60, Estelline 46
Lake Preston 59, Elkton-Lake Benton 51
Semifinal
Arlington 56, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 38
Colman-Egan 70, Dell Rapids St. Mary 47

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Akron-Westfield, Iowa 46, Elk Point-Jefferson 45

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Avon 30, Andes Central/Dakota Christian 29
Baltic 42, Freeman Academy 24
Castlewood 43, DeSmet 37, OT
Chester 48, Viborg-Hurley 45
Clark/Willow Lake 60, Webster 51
Custer 78, Newell 41
Edmunds Central 38, Potter County 36
Freeman 57, Parker 49
Hamlin 61, Milbank 29
Hill City 40, Lead-Deadwood 35
Ipswich 69, Faulkton 66
Langford 51, Aberdeen Christian 20
McLaughlin 62, Mobridge-Pollock 36
Miller 55, Chamberlain 28
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 46, Kimball/White Lake 37
Parkston 49, Bon Homme 23
Pierre 39, Watertown 33
Scotland 48, Marty Indian 41
Sioux Falls Lincoln 51, Brandon Valley 41
Sioux Falls Washington 52, Brookings 34
Standing Rock, N.D. 54, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 44
Tripp-Delmont/Armour 67, Mitchell Christian 26
Warner 62, Wilmot 45
Winner 72, Pine Ridge 58
281 Conference Tournament
Seventh Place
James Valley Christian 63, Iroquois 13
Fifth Place
Sunshine Bible Academy 55, Wessington Springs 33
Third Place
Wolsey-Wessington 39, Highmore-Harrold 38
Championship
Hitchcock-Tulare 44, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 36
Little Moreau Conference Tournament
First Round
Faith 61, Bison 13
Lemmon 59, Harding County 29
Timber Lake 66, Tiospaye Topa 41
Southern Plains Conference Tournament
First Round
Burke/South Central 61, Colome 16
Kadoka Area 67, Stanley County 30
Lyman 57, Gregory 41
White River 59, Jones County 45

Western Union claim deadline approaching

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota attorney general says the deadline is fast approaching for consumers to file claims in a settlement with Western Union.

Attorney General Marty Jackley says those who lost money in wire transfers through Western Union be-

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tween Jan. 1, 2004 and Jan. 19, 2017 may be eligible to get their money back. But, they must file a claim before Feb. 12. And they can do that by logging onto the Federal Trade Commission's website.

The claims will be verified by the Department of Justice.

Federal officials and Western Union reached a \$586 million dollar settlement for aiding and abetting wire fraud last November. The settlement money will be used to provide refunds to people who were tricked into using Western Union to pay scammers.

California slaying suspect no longer charged in South Dakota

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Authorities in South Dakota have dropped local charges against a California man who they say was arrested with his mother's body found in the vehicle he was driving.

The procedural move by prosecutors clears the way for Tosten Walsh Lommen, 30, to be returned to California to face a murder charge in that state, the Capital Journal reported.

Authorities allege Lommen killed his mother, Michelle Walsh, 58, sometime around Dec. 30 while the two were living in her home in Palm Springs, California.

Lommen was arrested on New Year's Day on suspicion of drunk driving and eluding police following a 50-mile (80-kilometer) chase on Interstate 90 in South Dakota that reached speeds surpassing 100 mph. Authorities said they found his mother's body wrapped in a blanket in the back of his sport utility vehicle, and that an autopsy concluded Walsh had died from head and neck injuries.

He was charged with murder in California's Riverside County on Jan. 8.

Lommen had been scheduled to enter pleas Wednesday to South Dakota state charges of felony aggravated eluding and misdemeanor drunken driving, reckless driving and resisting arrest. Assistant Attorney General Scott Roetzel dropped those charges early in the week, and the hearing was canceled.

"We dismissed our file so (Lommen) could go back to (California)," attorney general spokeswoman Sara Rabern said. "The much more serious charges he is facing (are) out west."

Lommen remains jailed in Rapid City in lieu of \$2.5 million bond. It wasn't immediately clear when Lommen might be returned to California.

Information from: Pierre Capital Journal, <http://www.capjournal.com>

Youth volunteer pleads not guilty to child sexual contact

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Box Elder man accused of sexually abusing a child while volunteering at youth organizations in Pennington County has pleaded not guilty to one of three charges against him.

Twenty-seven-year-old Trevor Lone Hill faces one count of first-degree rape and two counts of sexual contact with a child under the age of 16.

The Rapid City Journal reports he pleaded not guilty Thursday to one of the sexual contact charges, and will enter pleas to the other counts next month.

Prosecutors say Lone Hill volunteered with youth church, school and sports programs. He's accused of abusing a child between the ages of 9 and 12, between January 2014 and March 2017.

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

North Dakota issuing 502 nonresident any-deer bow licenses

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — North Dakota's Game and Fish Department is making 502 any-deer bow licenses available to out-of-state hunters this year.

Applicants must apply online at the Game and Fish website. The deadline is March 1.

Up to five applicants can apply together as a party. A lottery will be held if more applications are received than licenses available. Any remaining licenses after March 1 will be issued on a first-come, first-served basis.

The number of nonresident any-deer bow licenses is 15 percent of the previous year's mule deer gun

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license allocation. Game and Fish issued 3,350 mule deer licenses in last year's deer gun license lottery.

South Dakota tourism continues growth in 2017

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Officials say South Dakota tourism continued growing in 2017, with increases in visitation, visitor spending and overall impact on the state's economy.

Tourism marked its eighth consecutive year of economic growth in South Dakota last year.

A new study by Tourism Economics finds that visitor spending in South Dakota reached \$3.9 billion in 2017, an increase of 1.2 percent from 2016. The report says this contributed \$2.6 billion in gross domestic product to South Dakota's economy, up 3.2 percent from 2016. Tourism supported more than 53,900 jobs and generated more than \$290 million in state and local tax revenue.

Visitation to South Dakota remained steady at 13.9 million visitors, a slight increase from the previous year.

James Hagen, secretary of the Department of Tourism, says while South Dakota's tourism industry felt the effects of the struggling agriculture economy and decreased discretionary income of households in the region, tourism demonstrated "great perseverance."

Online:

To view the full Tourism Economics report, visit www.SDVisit.com.

International drug conspiracy suspect arrested in Huron

HURON, S.D. (AP) — Federal authorities say a South Dakota man is under arrest in connection with an alleged drug conspiracy.

The U.S. Marshals Service says Jean Torres-Soto was arrested early Thursday in Huron as part of an FBI-coordinated nationwide takedown.

Authorities say Torres-Soto, of Huron, was indicted by a federal grand jury in Puerto Rico last month for conspiracy to distribute a controlled substance. The indictment alleges Torres-Soto and more than 100 others conspired to distribute cocaine, heroin and marijuana throughout Puerto Rico and the continental United States.

U.S. Marshals and FBI agents arrested Torres-Soto without incident. His first court appearance was re-scheduled for Monday in Sioux Falls because jail staff said he was ill with influenza. An after-hours phone message left for his federal public defender was not immediately returned Thursday.

Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press

Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, Yankton, Jan. 15

Medicaid and a work requirement

During his State of the State address last week, South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard proposed making a change to Medicaid, seeking to install a work requirement for some recipients of the program.

On the surface, it sounds like an acceptable idea, as presented. But more definition is needed to see what lurks in the details.

It's important to note that Daugaard's pilot program proposal is not unique. South Dakota is one of just several states seeking permission from the Trump administration to impose such a requirement on the program. The administration is, in fact, promoting the placement of a work requirement on the Medicaid program, according to The Hill newspaper.

Last November, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Administrator Seema Verma told state Medicaid coordinators: "Believing that community engagement requirements do not support or promote the objectives of Medicaid is a tragic example of the soft bigotry of low expectations consistently espoused by the (Obama) administration. Those days are over."

However, that broad statement overlooks some of the real-life specifics of the Medicaid program, which,

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in South Dakota, helps children, pregnant women, individuals with disabilities and low-income patients.

The statement also feeds the long-held generalization embraced by some people that many of those receiving some form of low-income assistance are basically living off the government dole instead of working.

However, a lot of low-income people who receive Medicaid are already working but aren't able to make ends meet or afford basic health care, which Medicaid helps provide. Nationally in 2016, about 43 million adults received Medicaid help, and about 67 percent of them had either full-time or part-time (or both) jobs, according to the Bloomberg News website. Only about 3 percent were neither working nor even looking for work.

Daugaard's proposal is apparently aimed at a specific "subset" of the low-income category. He said it would apply only to "(v)ery low-income, able-bodied parents who aren't already working or caring for a child under 1. That's approximately 4,500 individuals." Last year, the average monthly enrollment of people on Medicaid in South Dakota was about 120,000.

However, in national terms, there's a fear among those suspicious of the proposal that giving the states the option to impose work requirements is a means of further undercutting the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare. Echoing those fears, an editorial on the Bloomberg website noted that the work requirement plan "cannot be used as a tool to minimize insurance coverage. In a country where 8.8 percent of the population still lacks health insurance, the goal should be to expand coverage, not shrink it."

If handled properly, the work requirement for Medicaid proposed by Daugaard — and pushed by the White House — may impact only a small segment of recipients. If this move becomes something more than that — which, unfortunately, could be vaguely implied by Verma's blunt remarks — then the idea may be little more than subterfuge for something else.

This effort, both in South Dakota and across the country, must be monitored closely.

The Daily Republic, Mitchell, Jan. 18 **Slow and steady with Northwoods League**

The idea of bringing the Northwoods League to Mitchell was exciting.

And, of course, it's still possible.

But considering league officials waited until the last minute to decide its fate in Mitchell, along with the fact there are still significant concerns about local facility usage, we're not ready for an expansion here in 2018.

Why rush it?

The league and city could partner in the future, as there's a three-year option agreement that allows the Northwoods League to field a team for up to 40 games per year at Drake Field at our Cadwell Park Sports Complex.

But it needs to happen at the right time.

Too often, we've seen sports startups come and go in Mitchell, most of which fail miserably. Take, for example, the Dakota Magic.

Who?

The Dakota Magic, formed in 2016, was a flash-in-the-pan semi-professional basketball team that played its games at the Corn Palace. Despite reasonably priced tickets and some Magic players with local ties, there wasn't much support from the Mitchell community.

And that's what we fear could have happened with the Northwoods League, if it's not done right.

We're excited about the possibility of top-tier college athletes playing in our city. Wouldn't it be exciting to see an up-and-coming pitcher who has a great chance at the Major Leagues take the mound at Drake Field?

While we love what the amateur baseball tournament brings to Mitchell, when it comes typically two out of every three years, there have been some notable names who've played Northwoods League ball, such as Boston Red Sox pitcher Chris Sale and 2016 World Series MVP Ben Zobrist of the Chicago Cubs.

The biggest question that remains and needs to be addressed is facility usage. We're not convinced that

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the Northwoods League would be a great partner with Mitchell's youth baseball squads in sharing Drake Field. Most of Mitchell's teener games are played on Drake.

We realize 2018 may have been a good trial year for the Northwoods League to hit Mitchell, considering the state amateur baseball tournament is being held in Sioux Falls this year.

But, we think, this allows city officials and the Northwoods League to further problem solve how to schedule games, both during tournament time and through the course of the summer.

It's slow and steady with this one, we say. Let's make sure we have the major kinks worked out before the Northwoods League arrives, rather than trying to work through them over the summer.

We'd hate to see another situation like the demise of the Dakota Magic happen for what otherwise could be a great opportunity for Mitchell.

Rapid City Journal, Rapid City, Jan. 18

City needs to expand its sidewalk requirements

It hasn't exactly been smooth sailing since the Rapid City Council approved an ordinance in 2016 requiring new buildings to have sidewalks, which one normally wouldn't expect to be controversial. Yet, time and time again a developer or business owner has sought a variance to avoid complying with the city ordinance.

The council, meanwhile, has rejected them after hearing the same arguments over and over again — namely that the property is located in an industrial part of town and far away from any foot traffic.

The most recent appeal was heard Tuesday night. BCD Investments sought the variance for a heating and air conditioning shop being built on Galt Court in northeast Rapid City. The developer's arguments have some merit. In a written request to the city, it was pointed out that other businesses in the area don't have sidewalks and foot traffic is non-existent at this time. So, why bother with it? The council voted 8-1 to reject the variance request.

Nonetheless, it led to a discussion about what to do with businesses built before 2016 when variances were handed out like candy at Halloween.

The city's new ordinance is creating an inequity of sorts as a patchwork of sidewalks emerges in certain areas while the city marches forward with a plan to make Rapid City more pedestrian-friendly, urbane, welcoming and generally safer.

In the case of the Galt Court property, Alderwomen Lisa Modrick and Amanda Scott acknowledged the reoccurring theme of "a sidewalk to nowhere on both ends" in the variance requests.

The question that seems to be emerging is should the city remain committed to its 2016 ordinance requiring new buildings and those that expand to build sidewalks or acquiesce to the drumbeat of variance requests from businesses willing to invest in the community?

Fortunately, the City Council is standing its ground. Sidewalks are an essential part of an investment in a community. They help beautify it and make it safer and more convenient for all residents.

The next step should be for the city to require or encourage existing businesses to build sidewalks. It isn't fair that some businesses have to build and maintain sidewalks while others don't. Even homeowners are required to maintain or replace deteriorating sidewalks at their own expense.

As Rapid City grows, areas now considered rural will someday likely see more businesses, homes and maybe even schools. It is good policy for the city to address the issue now rather than later when it will become more expensive and likely complicated.

It would be a big step in the right direction for a city that seeks to be more inviting to economic development efforts.

Developer proceeding with long-delayed Keystone XL pipeline

By GRANT SCHULTE, Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — The developer of the Keystone XL pipeline announced Thursday that it hopes to begin construction next year on an alternative route approved by Nebraska authorities, despite a lawsuit challenging the project.

TransCanada Corp. said in a news release that it plans to move ahead after securing enough 20-year commitments from oil companies to ship approximately 500,000 barrels per day through the pipeline. Opponents note that the commitments are well below the pipeline's 830,000-barrel capacity.

The company previously said it needed time to evaluate the commission's decision and line up potential customers.

"Over the past 12 months, the Keystone XL project has achieved several milestones that move us significantly closer to constructing this critical energy infrastructure for North America," Russ Girling, TransCanada's president and chief executive officer, said in a statement.

TransCanada spokeswoman Robynn Tysver said the company hasn't yet made a final investment decision on the project, but has secured enough long-term commitments to make it feasible. Tysver said the interest from shippers demonstrates the project is needed.

"This is a big benchmark day for this project," she said.

The Nebraska Public Service Commission in November approved a route that would extend the pipeline by 5 miles (8 kilometers) more than TransCanada had initially proposed, and requires the company to build an extra pumping station in the state. The company, based in Calgary, Canada, said Thursday that it would accede to the commission's demands in order to move the project along.

The project has faced intense opposition from environmental groups, property owners along the route and Native American tribes, who consider it a threat to their groundwater and property rights.

Commissioners who voted for it said the alternative route would affect less rangeland and endangered species. The commission was not allowed to take into account the recent leak of the existing Keystone pipeline in South Dakota because pipeline safety is a federal responsibility.

Opponents have filed a lawsuit challenging the commission's decision, and the Nebraska Supreme Court is expected to hear oral arguments later this year.

If opponents succeed, TransCanada would have to file for a new permit with the Nebraska Public Service Commission, triggering another review that could take up to a year.

"Nebraska courts — not TransCanada — will decide when, if ever, this pipeline will cut through our state," said Brian Jorde, an attorney for affected landowners who oppose the pipeline.

Jorde said the company's announcement "changes nothing, from our perspective."

Pipeline foes said the company's commercial support of 500,000 barrels per day from shippers was "shockingly weak" given that the pipeline has the capacity for 830,000 barrels per day. They noted that 50,000 of those barrels per day will come from the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission, which is owned by the Alberta government.

"The Keystone XL pipeline will never be built," said Jane Kleeb, founder of the anti-pipeline group Bold Nebraska.

The Nebraska commission's vote to approve a route through the state removed one of the last regulatory obstacles for the project. TransCanada has said it still needs to get permits to cross land held by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management in Montana, although that likely won't be as large a hurdle as what the company faced in Nebraska.

If completed, the pipeline would carry oil from Canada through Montana, South Dakota and Nebraska, where it would connect to an existing pump station in Steele City, Nebraska. From there it would continue through Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas until it reaches Gulf Coast refineries. Business groups and some unions support the project as a way to create jobs and reduce the risk of shipping oil by trains that can derail.

President Barack Obama's administration studied the project for years before finally rejecting it in 2015

because of concerns about carbon pollution. President Donald Trump reversed that decision in March. Federal approval was required because the route crosses an international border.

Follow Grant Schulte on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/GrantSchulte>

Tax law gives unexpected break to farmers who sell to co-ops

By STEVE KARNOWSKI, Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Key senators and farm groups are trying to fix a provision in the federal tax overhaul that gave an unexpected tax break to farmers who sell their crops to cooperatives rather than regular companies.

Lawmakers say they didn't intend to give a competitive advantage to co-ops. But it's not clear they can rework the legislation given the partisan divide on Capitol Hill. That means many companies — from local grain companies to agribusiness giants such as Cargill and ADM — could wind up paying more for crops than co-ops.

The provision from GOP Sens. John Thune of South Dakota and John Hoeven of North Dakota surfaced in the final days of the debate over the tax bill, which President Donald Trump signed last month. Thune and Hoeven wanted to replace a deduction that benefited co-ops in the old law, which was being dropped, and they wanted to make sure farmers didn't wind up with a tax increase.

But the final language went further than maintaining the status quo.

"I think at the end of the day what it boiled down to is the staff didn't know what they were doing. ... They rushed this thing through," said U.S. Rep. Collin Peterson of Minnesota, the ranking Democrat on the House Agriculture Committee.

Agricultural co-ops are typically owned by farmers, and they provide their members with help with marketing crops, purchasing supplies and various other services. They range from small and local co-ops to big, nationwide ones such as Land O' Lakes and Sunkist Growers.

The new provision lets farmers deduct 20 percent of their gross sales to co-ops, but only 20 percent of their net income if they sell to other companies. The difference is big enough that farmers who sell to co-ops could entirely eliminate their tax bills.

"If it stands the way it is, you're going to see a dramatic change in who farmers sell their product to," said Paul Neiffer, a partner with CliftonLarsonAllen, a national accounting firm with clients on both sides.

Farmers who do sell to regular companies may be able to command higher prices to help make up for the lower tax break.

Kristine Tidgren, assistant director of the Center for Agricultural Law and Taxation at Iowa State University, calculated that a farmer with \$300,000 in income from grain sales to a regular company and \$180,000 in expenses would have \$86,400 in taxable income for the year. If that same producer sells to a co-op, she said, the farmer would have just \$48,000 in taxable income.

"It's a huge difference. ... We've tried to tell everyone to hold on and see what happens before you make any major changes to your business," she said.

Hoeven's chief of staff, Ryan Bernstein, said the senators didn't intend to give a competitive advantage to co-ops and their farmer-patrons. They've been working with the National Grain and Feed Association, the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives and other parties to find a quick solution, he said.

Greg Ibach, undersecretary at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, said the tax code shouldn't "pick winners and losers" and the agency expects a correction.

The new tax break has at least one defender, the North Dakota Farmers Union. The group's president, Mark Watne, said efforts to change it "may not be in the best interest of farmers or the viability of cooperatives."

Spokespeople for Thune and Sen. Pat Roberts of Kansas, chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, said they're supporting efforts to fix the provision.

Randy Gordon, president of the National Grain and Feed Association, which represents co-ops as well

as regular companies, said there's been progress in the past week. He said in a newsletter Wednesday that all sides have held several meetings and conference calls to explore alternatives.

Minnesota-based Land O'Lakes, the country's third-largest agricultural co-op, and Illinois-based ADM both said they look forward to a fix.

But it won't be simple. Bernstein said Hoeven and Thune are looking at attaching it to must-pass legislation, likely a big spending bill expected to come up late next month. That assumes that everyone agrees on a solution by then.

Even a must-pass bill likely would require 60 votes to pass the Senate, which would require some support from Democrats.

"All it's going to take is a couple Democrats in the Senate to derail the whole thing. ... I'm willing to help, but it looks like a long shot to me," Peterson said.

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Rapid City man to plead guilty in medical laser scheme

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Rapid City man who authorities say ran an illegal medical laser scheme has agreed to plead guilty to a reduced list of criminal charges and to repay at least \$16.7 million to customers.

In exchange, Larry Lytle, 82, requested that prosecutors drop the charges against his longtime live-in girlfriend, the Rapid City Journal reported.

Lytle was accused of making and selling bogus laser medical devices known as QLasers. He'd been scheduled for trial next week on charges of mail fraud, wire fraud, conspiracy, contempt and obstruction of government proceedings.

The plea agreement filed Tuesday with the U.S. District Court in Rapid City said that Lytle will plead guilty to criminal contempt and conspiracy.

The charges against Lytle's girlfriend, Fredretta Eason, will be dismissed. Eason, 76, faced charges of criminal contempt and aiding and abetting.

Court documents show Lytle admitted to selling hundreds of QLasers from 2005 through 2015, which were purchased for about \$4,000 each in some cases. He placed veterinary labels on the handheld devices to evade review by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Lytle and his co-conspirators claimed the devices could treat more than 200 medical conditions, including AIDS. The only condition the FDA approved for treatment by Lytle's devices was pain associated with osteoarthritis of the hand.

Lytle also admitted to continuing to distribute QLasers after a federal judge ordered him to stop making and selling them in 2015.

Under the terms of the plea agreement, Lytle must pay an initial restitution amount of \$1 million to the court by Feb. 15. The agreement said that some of Lytle's property will be forfeited to help pay the restitution.

Lytle's charges are punishable by imprisonment and/or fines, as well as supervised release.

Two others charged in the case pleaded guilty already and await sentencing.

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

Sanford, Good Samaritan move forward on partnership

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Two big organizations in health care and senior care based in Sioux Falls have reached a milestone in their efforts to combine operations.

Sanford Health and the Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society have reached agreement on a single mission statement and the ground rules for moving forward on their partnership.

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The Argus Leader says the agreement will be presented to the boards of both Sanford and Good Samaritan later this month. If the boards agree, "synergy" teams will be created next month to work on integrating the two organizations.

Good Samaritan is one of the largest non-profit providers of senior care in the U.S., with more than 200 locations. Sanford Health is one of the largest health care systems in the nation with 44 hospitals and nearly 300 clinics in nine states and four countries.

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

Extension of law governing lakes on private land advances

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Dennis Daugaard's bill to extend an expiring law that governs the use of lakes on private land for recreation passed its first legislative test on Thursday.

The Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee voted 7-2 to advance the bill to the chamber's floor. It would move the law's June sunset date to 2021.

The new law was the product of a special legislative session in June on so-called nonmeandered waters.

The law restored access to nearly 30 specific lakes for public recreation, after a 2017 state Supreme Court decision hampered that access. It also said that lakes on private property are open for recreational use unless a landowner installs signs or buoys saying an area is closed, though property owners could still grant permission to use the water.

Daugaard at the time called the lakes an "economic engine," saying their closure had hurt small-town businesses.

"The law you passed in June is working, but more time is needed before making a final decision on it," Hunter Roberts, a policy adviser to Daugaard, told the committee.

Nonmeandered waters are bodies of water that weren't specifically designated during government surveys in the late 1800s. Some private property has since flooded, forming new, unofficial bodies of water and creating good fishing. But that has come at the cost of farmland and pastures lost by agriculture producers.

The longstanding issue has vexed landowners and outdoor enthusiasts alike.

Eric Cleveringa, a lobbyist for the South Dakota Wildlife Federation Camo Coalition, said the law violates the public trust doctrine by allowing private control of public water.

"Don't let wrong take root," he said in opposing the proposed extension.

Second suspect found guilty in baseball bat beating death

HURON, S.D. (AP) — A Beadle County jury has convicted a man of killing another man with a baseball bat in eastern South Dakota last year.

Kevin Krueger was charged with first-degree murder in the May 2017 beating death of 49-year-old Keith Houck at a rural Cavour home.

The jury convicted him after less than two hours of deliberations Wednesday, following a two-day trial. He faces a mandatory sentence of life without parole when he's sentenced Friday.

His co-defendant, Jose Vega, of Montevideo, Minnesota, pleaded guilty last year to manslaughter for his role in the killing and is serving a 50-year sentence.

Trump, Schumer to meet as Dems, GOP trade pre-shutdown blame

By ANDREW TAYLOR and ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A bitterly divided Washington hurtled toward a government shutdown Friday in a partisan stare-down over demands by Democrats for a solution on politically fraught legislation to protect about 700,000 younger immigrants from being deported.

Republicans and Democrats in Congress and the White House traded blame for the increasingly likely shutdown with just hours remaining before the midnight deadline. President Donald Trump phoned Senate

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Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York to invite him to the White House Friday afternoon to try to reach some sort of accord.

Democrats in the Senate have served notice they will filibuster a four-week, government-wide funding bill that cleared the House Thursday evening. That could expose them to charges that they are responsible for a shutdown, but they point the finger at Republicans instead.

"They're in charge," Schumer said Friday as he entered his Capitol office. "They're not talking to us. They're totally paralyzed and inept. There's no one to negotiate with."

Republicans controlling the narrowly split chamber argue that it's the Democrats who are holding the government hostage over demands to protect "dreamer" immigrants brought to the country as children and now here illegally.

And the White House piled on, trying to paint the impending action as the "Schumer shutdown." Still, officials said the president has been working the phones trying to avert one.

As a shutdown loomed, the White House said Friday that Trump would not leave for a planned weekend trip to Florida. The president had been set to leave Friday afternoon to celebrate the one-year anniversary of his inauguration at his Palm Beach estate.

The impact of the potential shutdown on the planned trip by Trump and much of his Cabinet to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, next week was still undetermined.

Trump entered the fray early Friday morning, mentioning the House-approved bill on Twitter, adding: "Democrats are needed if it is to pass in the Senate — but they want illegal immigration and weak borders. Shutdown coming? We need more Republican victories in 2018!"

Trump has given Congress until March 5 to save the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program protecting young immigrants, so "there is absolutely no reason to tie those things together right now," Budget Director Mick Mulvaney said at the White House.

On Capitol Hill, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said he hoped to vote on the House-passed bill "soon," and he said Americans at home would be watching to see "which senators make the patriotic decision" and which "vote to shove aside veterans, military families and vulnerable children to hold the entire country hostage... until we pass an immigration bill."

In the House, Republicans muscled the measure through on a mostly party-line 230-197 vote after making modest concessions to chamber conservatives and defense hawks.

The chamber backed away from a plan to adjourn for a one-week recess Friday afternoon, meaning the GOP-controlled House could wait to see if a last-minute compromise would be reached requiring a new vote.

A test vote on a filibuster by Senate Democrats appeared likely before the shutdown deadline. Schumer was rebuffed in an attempt to vote Thursday night.

"We can't keep kicking the can down the road," said Schumer, insisting on more urgency in talks on immigration. "In another month, we'll be right back here, at this moment, with the same web of problems at our feet, in no better position to solve them."

The short-term measure would be the fourth stopgap spending bill since the current budget year started in October. A pile of unfinished Capitol Hill business has been on hold, first as Republicans ironed out last fall's tax bill and now as Democrats insist on progress on immigration. Talks on a budget deal to ease tight spending limits on both the Pentagon and domestic agencies are on hold, as is progress on a huge \$80 billion-plus disaster aid bill.

House GOP leaders sweetened the pending stopgap measure with legislation to extend for six years a popular health care program for children from low-income families and two-year delays in unpopular "Obamacare" taxes on medical devices and generous employer-provided health plans.

A shutdown would be the first since 2013, when tea party Republicans — in a strategy not unlike the one Schumer is employing now — sought to use a must-pass funding bill to try to force then-President Barack Obama into delaying implementation of his marquee health care law. At the time, Trump told Fox & Friends that the ultimate blame for a shutdown lies at the top. "I really think the pressure is on the president," he said.

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Arguing that Trump's predecessors "weaponized" that shutdown, Mulvaney said Friday the budget office would direct agencies to work to mitigate the impact of a potential lapse in funding.

"The difference between now and 2013 is that the president is standing in the way of a bipartisan agreement," Schumer said, referring to a proposal forged by Sens. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and Dick Durbin, D-Ill., among others, that would provide protections to dreamer immigrants, fund border security, and eliminate an immigration lottery aimed at promoting diversity.

Democrats want a deal to protect around 700,000 immigrants from deportation who arrived in the U.S. as children and have stayed here illegally. Trump has ended an Obama-era program providing those protections and given Congress until March to restore them, and he and Republicans want any immigration deal to include money for the president's promised wall along the Mexican border and other security measures.

Congress must act by midnight Friday or the government will begin immediately locking its doors. Though the impact would initially be spotty — since most agencies would be closed until Monday — the story would be certain to dominate weekend news coverage, and each party would be gambling the public would blame the other.

In the event of a shutdown, food inspections, federal law enforcement, airport security checks, and other vital services would continue, as would Social Security, other federal benefit programs and military operations. But most federal workers wouldn't be paid.

Associated Press writers Jill Colvin and Catherine Lucey contributed to this report.

Congestion pricing: Driving in Manhattan could cost \$11.52

By DAVID KLEPPER and FRANK ELTMAN, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Motorists would have to shell out \$11.52 to drive into the busiest parts of Manhattan under a new proposal commissioned by Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo to ease traffic congestion and raise vital funds for mass transit.

Trucks would pay even more — \$25.34 — while taxi cabs, Uber rides and for-hire vehicles would be charged between \$2 and \$5 per ride. The pricing zone would cover Manhattan south of 60th Street.

The idea, called "congestion pricing," involves using electronic tolling to charge vehicles for entering certain parts of town during especially busy times. The proposal is expected to face stiff opposition in the Legislature, which must approve portions of the plan. Similar plans have failed before after concerns were raised about the impact on commuters.

The exact amounts of the surcharges could change as state lawmakers, Cuomo and city leaders debate the details. Officials could also vary the surcharges based on the time of day, with the highest fees during rush hour.

"There are going to be some naysayers," said former Bronx Borough President Freddy Ferrer, a Metropolitan Transportation Authority board member who served on a task force created by Cuomo to study the idea. The panel released its proposal Friday. "It's clear that the status quo is no longer acceptable."

London and Singapore already have similar congestion surcharges in place. Supporters of the idea say it will address gridlock and raise money for mass transit. Skeptics, including Democratic Mayor Bill de Blasio, worry that tolls could be a burden, especially to middle class and low-income commuters. Similar concerns doomed a congestion pricing plan from former Mayor Michael Bloomberg a decade ago.

Yasmin Sohrawardy, who drives from Queens into Manhattan twice a week for her job as a financial software developer, opposes any proposal to charge drivers.

"The people in the outer boroughs, who don't have access to public transportation the way people do in Manhattan, can't possibly afford this," said Sohrawardy, 47. "It's going to be extraordinarily expensive. If you live in Manhattan, you can take subways, buses or taxis."

Cuomo stopped short of fully endorsing the proposal's details but said it's clear something must be done to address traffic and raise money for a subway system beset by breakdowns and delays. He noted that as a Queens native, he's sensitive to the concerns of commuters.

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"I have outer borough blood in my veins, and it is my priority that we keep costs down for hard working New Yorkers, and encourage use of mass transit," he said.

Only 4 percent of those who live in Queens, the Bronx, Brooklyn or Staten Island commute to Manhattan in a vehicle, according to figures released by the task force. Of those commuters, fewer than 5,000 are considered poor.

The fees on taxis and for-hire vehicles could take effect within a year, followed by trucks and then cars in 2020, according to the report. The task force said that none of the fees should be charged until mass transit repairs are made.

The task force calculated the amount of the fees based on existing bridge tolls. They suggested that tax credits could be created for low-income motorists to reduce the cost of the surcharges on those who can least afford them.

Cuomo created the task force last year after he declared a state of emergency in the subways. Details from a draft of the proposal were first reported Thursday night by The New York Times.

De Blasio said he wants a guarantee that revenue from the surcharge will go toward public transportation. He said the proposal is a "step in the right direction" compared to earlier versions, though he continues to push for a millionaires' tax to raise revenue for transit.

"We need to know a lot more," he said on WNYC radio Friday. "What we still don't see is money ... being put in a lock box that would only fund transit in New York City."

State lawmakers are likely to ask their own questions. Some say they'd like to see exemptions for drivers heading to medical appointments or driving children to and from school.

Republican Senate Leader John Flanagan of Long Island told reporters earlier this month that while he's open to discussing congestion pricing he wasn't ready to support the idea.

"No, not what I've listened to," he said. A spokesman said Friday that Flanagan hadn't yet reviewed the specifics of the new proposal.

Congestion pricing has long been a goal of many environmental groups and transit advocates, and several cheered the proposal Friday.

Nick Sifuentes, executive director of the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, noted that travelers using the subway, buses, ferries and trains already pay a fare to reach Manhattan.

"The only folks who don't pay at all are drivers — and those cars are clogging our streets, polluting our air, and harming the economy," he said. "If you choose to drive into the most transit-rich neighborhoods in the United States, it's only fair that you also pay your fair share too."

Traffic congestion will cost the New York City region an estimated \$100 billion over the next five years, according to a report from The Partnership for New York City.

Klepper reported from Albany, New York.

Gold medalist to Nassar: I won't live as a victim any longer

By DAVID EGGERT and MIKE HOUSEHOLDER, Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Olympic gold medalist Jordyn Wieber described herself in court Friday as one of 140 survivors of sexual assault by Larry Nassar, as Michigan State University called on the state's attorney general to investigate the school's handling of complaints against the disgraced former sports doctor.

Wieber is the fourth member of the "Fierce Five" — the 2012 U.S. Olympic gymnastics team — to publicly tell of abuse by Nassar under the guise of medical treatment.

"Even though I'm a victim, I do not and will not live my life as one," Wieber said during the fourth day of Nassar's sentencing hearing. "I'm an Olympian despite being abused. I worked hard and managed to achieve my goal. But I want everyone — especially the media — to know that despite my athletic achievements I am one of over 140 women and survivors whose story is important."

The 54-year-old Nassar faces a minimum sentence of 25 to 40 years in prison for molesting girls at Michigan State University and his home. He also was a team doctor at the Indianapolis-based USA Gymnastics,

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which trains Olympians. He already has been sentenced to 60 years in prison for child pornography crimes.

As victims gave impact statements for a fourth consecutive day Friday, Michigan State's board of trustees asked state Attorney General Bill Schuette to review its handling of Nassar, amid growing calls for Michigan State President Lou Anna Simon to resign or be fired. Schuette, who is running for governor, said he would provide "a full and complete review, report and recommendation," but only after Nassar's victims have had "their day in court."

The university fired Nassar in 2016, as allegations against him stretching back years came to light.

The board, which has defended Simon, said in a letter to Schuette that "questions grew louder this week with the victim impact statements. ... After watching many of these heartbreaking statements and reading accounts about them, we have concluded that only a review by your office can resolve the questions in a way that the victims, their families, and the public will deem satisfactory and that will help all those affected by Nassar's horrible crimes to heal."

The criminal cases against Nassar followed reports last year in The Indianapolis Star about how USA Gymnastics mishandled complaints about sexual misconduct involving the doctor and coaches. Women and girls said the stories inspired them to step forward with detailed allegations of abuse.

Many of the accusers have sued Michigan State, USA Gymnastics and the U.S. Olympic Committee. John Manly, an attorney for more than 100 accusers, has said the three institutions "miserably failed children," and he has likened what happened with Nassar to the child sex abuse scandal at Penn State University.

Michigan State on Friday cited a previous letter to Schuette from its lawyer, former U.S. attorney Patrick Fitzgerald, saying "the evidence will show that no MSU official believed that Nassar committed sexual abuse prior to newspaper reports in the summer of 2016."

The board added: "It has become clear to us, then, that the questions that are still being asked about the Nassar situation will not be satisfactorily resolved until they are answered as part of a separate review."

Women's gymnastics coach Kathie Klages resigned last year after she was suspended for defending Nassar for years. Others remain on the job.

Associated Press writer Jeff Karoub in Detroit contributed to this report.

Pope to indigenous: Amazon is 'heart of the church'

By NICOLE WINFIELD and CHRISTINE ARMARIO, Associated Press

PUERTO MALDONADO, Peru (AP) — Pope Francis traveled deep into the Amazon rainforest Friday demanding an end to the relentless exploitation of its timber, gas and gold and recognition of its indigenous peoples as the primary custodians to determine the future of "our common home."

Speaking to a coliseum filled with indigenous men, women and children, many of whom were bare-chested and wearing brightly-colored headdresses, Francis declared the Amazon the "heart of the church" and called for a three-fold defense of its life, land and cultures.

Warning that indigenous peoples are now more threatened than ever before, Francis said it was "essential" for governments and other institutions to consider tribes as legitimate partners when negotiating development and conservation projects and that their rights, cultures, languages and traditions must be respected and recovered.

"You are a living memory of the mission that God has entrusted to us all: the protection of our common home," the pope said.

After his speech, an indigenous man in a wheelchair who was left paralyzed from the waist down after being shot by police during a protest placed a headdress of red and yellow feathers on the pope's head and a necklace of native beads around his neck.

Francis' trip to the Amazon comes as the expansion of illegal gold mining and farming as well as new roads and dams have turned thousands of acres of once lush green forest into barren, contaminated wasteland. Francis has previously called on world leaders to protect the Amazon, likening it to one of the "lungs of our planet."

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He is also using the trip to set the stage for a big church meeting next year on the Amazon and the native peoples who reside there.

Before Francis' speech, Hector Sueyo, a member of the indigenous Harakbut people, told the pontiff that native peoples are worried about the Amazon as they watch trees disappear, fish die and rivers become contaminated.

"The sky is angry and is crying because we are destroying the planet," he said.

The pontiff's warm reception in Puerto Maldonado, where he was greeted by singing children and people who ran alongside his motorcade with Vatican-colored yellow and white balloons, was a stark contrast to the pope's visit to Chile earlier in the week, where his visit provoked protests and drew smaller crowds to greet him.

"His desire to be with us signals a historic reconciliation with the Amazon's indigenous communities," said Edwin Vasquez, an indigenous leader who traveled to Puerto Maldonado to hear the pope. "We consider it a good step forward."

The Amazon's native peoples hail from some 350 indigenous groups, some of which live in voluntary isolation. In the centuries after Spanish colonization most traces of native spiritual beliefs were lost as missionaries converted indigenous Peruvians to Catholicism.

The Catholic Church still maintains a strong presence in the region, though these days few indigenous men and women go to Mass and most identify as evangelicals, said Lizardo Cauper, president of the Amazon's largest indigenous organization.

Many Peruvian native peoples are curious about why Francis wants to meet them, Cauper said, while also hoping he can serve as an influential messenger.

"We are hoping for a reflective message that will help those in power," he said.

In a letter sent to Francis this week, the leaders of three prominent indigenous groups called on Francis to back their call for the state to grant 20 million hectares (50 million acres) in collective land rights to native peoples. They also want him to urge Peru's government to clean up rivers tainted from illegal gold mining.

Rather than a halt to all mining and exploration in the Amazon, Vasquez said that what indigenous communities want is to be a part of discussions to decide where and how those activities are conducted.

Studies confirm that contamination from mining is already having an impact on the health of many living in the Amazon.

"They have lead in their blood," Vasquez said. "Is that development?"

Cesar Yojaje, leader of the Palma Real indigenous group, was among the many trekking by boat to greet the pontiff Friday. After a three-hour journey along a brackish river he said he hoped to hear a forceful message from the pope.

He said he wants the state to return indigenous lands and publicly apologize "for robbing us of our lands and turning them into a park."

Armario reported from Lima, Peru.

Anti-smoking plan may kill cigarettes--and save Big Tobacco

By MATTHEW PERRONE, AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Imagine if cigarettes were no longer addictive and smoking itself became almost obsolete; only a tiny segment of Americans still lit up. That's the goal of an unprecedented anti-smoking plan being carefully fashioned by U.S. health officials.

But the proposal from the Food and Drug Administration could have another unexpected effect: opening the door for companies to sell a new generation of alternative tobacco products, allowing the industry to survive — even thrive — for generations to come.

The plan puts the FDA at the center of a long-standing debate over so-called "reduced-risk" products, such as e-cigarettes, and whether they should have a role in anti-smoking efforts, which have long focused exclusively on getting smokers to quit.

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"This is the single most controversial — and frankly, divisive — issue I've seen in my 40 years studying tobacco control policy," said Kenneth Warner, professor emeritus at University of Michigan's school of public health.

The FDA plan is two-fold: drastically cut nicotine levels in cigarettes so that they are essentially non-addictive. For those who can't or won't quit, allow lower-risk products that deliver nicotine without the deadly effects of traditional cigarettes.

This month the government effort is poised to take off. The FDA is expected to soon begin what will likely be a years-long process to control nicotine in cigarettes. And next week, the agency will hold a public meeting on a closely watched cigarette alternative from Philip Morris International, which, if granted FDA clearance, could launch as early as February.

The product, called iQOS (pronounced EYE-kose), is a penlike device that heats Marlboro-branded tobacco but stops short of burning it, an approach that Philip Morris says reduces exposure to tar and other toxic byproducts of burning cigarettes. This is different from e-cigarettes, which don't use tobacco at all but instead vaporize liquid usually containing nicotine.

For anti-smoking activists these new products may mean surrendering hopes of a knockout blow to the industry. They say there is no safe tobacco product and the focus should be on getting people to quit. But others are more open to the idea of alternatives to get people away from cigarettes, the deadliest form of tobacco.

Tobacco companies have made claims about "safer" cigarettes since the 1950s, all later proven false. In some cases the introduction of these products, such as filtered and "low tar" cigarettes, propped up cigarette sales and kept millions of Americans smoking. Although the adult smoking rate has fallen to an all-time low of 15 percent, smoking remains the nation's leading preventable cause of death and illness, responsible for about one in five U.S. deaths.

Anti-smoking groups also point to Big Tobacco's history of manipulating public opinion and government efforts against smoking: In 2006, a federal judge ruled that Big Tobacco had lied and deceived the American public about the effects of smoking for more than 50 years. The industry defeated a 2010 proposal by the FDA to add graphic warning labels to cigarette packs. And FDA scrutiny of menthol-flavored cigarettes — used disproportionately by young people and minorities — has been bogged down since 2011, due to legal challenges.

"We're not talking about an industry that is legitimately interested in saving lives here," said Erika Sward of the American Lung Association.

But some industry observers say this time will be different.

"The environment has changed, the technology has changed, the companies have changed — that is the reality," said Scott Ballin, a health policy consultant who previously worked for the American Heart Association.

Under a 2009 law, the FDA gained authority to regulate certain parts of the tobacco industry, including nicotine in cigarettes, though it cannot remove the ingredient completely. The same law allows the agency to scientifically review and permit sales of new tobacco products, including e-cigarettes. Little has happened so far. Last year, the agency said it would delay the deadline for manufacturers to submit their vapor-emitting products for review until 2022.

The FDA says it wants to continue to help people quit by supporting a variety of approaches, including new quit-smoking aids and opening opportunities for a variety of companies, including drugmakers, to help attack the problem. As part of this, the FDA sees an important role for alternative products — but in a world where cigarettes contain such a small amount of nicotine that they become unappealing even to lifelong smokers.

"We still have to provide an opportunity for adults who want to get access to satisfying levels of nicotine," but without the hazards of burning tobacco, said FDA Commissioner Dr. Scott Gottlieb. He estimates the FDA plan could eventually prevent 8 million smoking-related deaths.

"SMOKE-FREE FUTURE"

Philip Morris International and its U.S. partner Altria will try to navigate the first steps of the new regula-

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tory path next week.

At a two-day meeting before the FDA, company scientists will try and convince government experts that iQOS is less-harmful than cigarettes. If successful, iQOS could be advertised by Altria to U.S. consumers as a "reduced-risk" tobacco product, the first ever sanctioned by the FDA.

Because iQOS works with real tobacco the company believes it will be more effective than e-cigarettes in getting smokers to switch.

Philip Morris already sells the product in about 30 countries, including Canada, Japan and the United Kingdom.

iQOS is part of an elaborate corporate makeover for Philip Morris, which last year rebranded its website with the slogan: "Designing a smoke-free future." The cigarette giant says it has invested over \$3 billion in iQOS and eventually plans to stop selling cigarettes worldwide — though it resists setting a deadline.

Philip Morris executives say they are offering millions of smokers a better, less-harmful product.

Matthew Myers of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids still sees danger. He says FDA must strictly limit marketing of products like iQOS to adult smokers who are unable or unwilling to quit. Otherwise they may be used in combination with cigarettes or even picked up by nonsmokers or young people who might see the new devices as harmless enough to try.

"As a growing percentage of the world makes the decision that smoking is too dangerous and too risky, iQOS provides an alternative to quitting that keeps them in the market," Myers says.

It's unclear whether existing alternatives to cigarettes help smokers quit, a claim often made by e-cigarette supporters. Research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggests about 60 percent of adult e-cigarette users also smoke regular cigarettes.

THE CASE FOR LOWER NICOTINE

Experts who study nicotine addiction say the FDA plan is grounded in the latest science.

Several recent studies have shown that when smokers switch to very low-nicotine cigarettes they smoke less and are more likely to try quitting. But they also seek nicotine from other sources, underscoring the need for alternatives. Without new options, smokers would likely seek regular-strength cigarettes on the black market.

Crucial to the FDA proposal is a simple fact: nicotine is highly addictive, but not deadly. It's the burning tobacco and other substances inhaled through smoking that cause cancer, heart disease and bronchitis.

"It's hard to imagine that using nicotine and tobacco in a way that isn't burned, in a non-combustible form, isn't going to be much safer," said Eric Donny, an addiction researcher at the University of Pittsburgh.

A study of 800 smokers by Donny and other researchers showed that when nicotine was limited to less than 1 milligram per gram of tobacco, users smoked fewer cigarettes. The study, funded by the FDA, was pivotal to showing that smokers won't compensate by smoking more if nicotine intake is reduced enough. That was the case with "light" and "low-tar" cigarettes introduced in the 1960s and 1970s, when some smokers actually began smoking more cigarettes per day.

Still, many in the anti-smoking community say larger, longer studies are needed to predict how low-nicotine cigarettes would work in the real world.

LEGAL RISKS

Key to the FDA plan is the assumption that the two actions will happen at the same time: as regulators cut nicotine in conventional cigarettes, manufacturers will provide alternative products.

But that presumes that tobacco companies will willingly part with their flagship product, which remains enormously profitable.

Kenneth Warner, the public policy professor, said he would be "astonished" if industry cooperates on reducing nicotine levels.

"I don't think they will. I think they will bring out all of their political guns against it and I'm quite certain they will sue to prevent it," he said.

In that scenario, the FDA plan to make cigarettes less addictive could be stalled in court for years while companies begin launching FDA-sanctioned alternative products. Tobacco critics say that scenario would be the most profitable for industry.

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"It's like Coke, you can have regular Coke, Diet Coke, Coke Zero, we'll sell you any Coke you like," said Robin Koval, president of the Truth Initiative, which runs educational anti-tobacco campaigns.

But the FDA's Gottlieb says the two parts of the plan must go together. "I'm not going to advance this in a piecemeal fashion," he said.

When pressed about whether industry will sue FDA over mandatory nicotine reductions, tobacco executives for Altria and other companies instead emphasized the long, complicated nature of the regulatory process.

"I'm not going to speculate about what may happen at the end of a multiyear process," said Jose Murillo, an Altria vice president. "It will be science and evidence-based and we will be engaged at every step of the way."

Pence's Mideast trip still on as government shutdown looms

By KEN THOMAS and TOM LoBIANCO, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Vice President Mike Pence is making his fifth visit to Israel, returning to a region he's visited "a million times" in his heart.

An evangelical Christian with strong ties to the Holy Land, Pence this time comes packing two key policy decisions in his bags that have long been top priorities for him: designating Jerusalem as Israel's capital and curtailing aid for Palestinians.

Pence's office said he planned to depart as scheduled as U.S. lawmakers sought to avert a federal government shutdown at midnight Friday. Alyssa Farah, a Pence spokeswoman, said the trip was "integral to America's national security and diplomatic objectives" and would go on as scheduled. Pence was set to depart Friday evening, and Air Force Two was expected to land in Ireland for a refueling stop early Saturday en route to Cairo.

Since his days in Congress a decade ago, Pence has played a role in pushing both for the shift in U.S. policy related to the capital and for placing limits on funding for Palestinian causes long criticized by Israel.

Traveling to Israel just as Palestinians have condemned recent decisions by President Donald Trump's administration, Pence will arrive in the region as a longtime stalwart supporter of Israel who has questioned the notion of the U.S. serving as an "honest broker" in the stalled peace process.

"The United States certainly wants to be honest, but we don't want to be a broker," Pence once told the Christian Broadcasting Network in 2010. "A broker doesn't take sides. A broker negotiates between parties of equals."

The vice president will hold four days of meetings in Egypt, Jordan and Israel during his visit, the first to the region by a senior administration official since Trump announced plans in December to designate Jerusalem as Israel's capital and begin the process of moving the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv, angering Palestinian leaders.

His trip will also follow Tuesday's announcement that the U.S. is withholding \$65 million of a planned \$125 million funding installment to the U.N. Relief and Works Agency, which provides health care, education and social services to Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

Both decisions have come as Trump has expressed frustration over a lack of progress in restarting peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, who withdrew plans to meet with Pence during his visit to the Middle East.

Senior White House officials said security issues, countering terrorism and efforts to push back against Iran would figure prominently during Pence's trip, which concludes on Tuesday. But the vice president also is expected to face questions about Israel's future.

On the embassy, Pence played a steady role in pushing for the shift in U.S. policy. The decision upended past U.S. views that Jerusalem's status should be decided in negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, who claim east Jerusalem as the capital of their future state.

Pence had wanted the Trump administration to convey "a clear-cut policy" on Jerusalem after the president asked him last summer to visit the Middle East, White House officials have said.

Pence discussed the issue with Jewish and evangelical leaders in the months leading up to the decision

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and advocated for the plan within the administration. But he noted to religious leaders late last year that the decision was the president's alone and would fulfill a commitment from the 2016 campaign.

Pence has long aligned himself with Israel.

In Congress, he pushed for limiting U.S. aid to the Palestinian Authority during the presidency of George W. Bush, warning the funding could be redirected to groups like the militant Hamas movement, which controls Gaza.

He was a vocal advocate for Israel's security fence and co-sponsored the Jerusalem Embassy and Recognition Act in 2011 to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's undivided capital. Veteran House members recall Pence's role as a staunch ally of Israeli causes and his steadfast support for moving the embassy to Jerusalem at times when few were talking about the issue.

As Indiana's governor, Pence signed a bill requiring the state to divest from any business that engaged in the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement — a grassroots international boycott movement against Israel.

Kenneth Weinstein, CEO of the Hudson Institute, a conservative think tank, said it has been "central to his political life from the absolute outset, from when he first ran for Congress — it's something that's central to who he is, to what he believes in."

Pence traveled to Israel for the first time as an Indiana congressman in January 2004, joining a delegation from the Jewish Federation of Greater Indianapolis. He placed a wreath at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial and visited the Western Wall, both of which are on Pence's itinerary again next week, and he had a private meeting with then-Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Doug Rose, a philanthropist in Indianapolis, flew with Pence on his 2004 trip to Israel and recalled him being deeply affected by the experience. "How could you not be moved?" Rose said of their site visits.

Pence told the Indiana Jewish Post and Opinion after his 2004 trip that he was often asked if he had been to Israel before, "and my response was, 'Only in my dreams.' I was raised an evangelical Christian and tried to read the Bible every day, so in my mind and in my heart I have been there a million times."

Trump's decision on Jerusalem has drawn protests from Middle Eastern leaders and prompted Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to pull out of a planned meeting with Pence in the biblical West Bank town of Bethlehem. Administration officials said Pence is not expected to meet with Palestinian leaders during the trip.

Pence remains popular with evangelical voters in the U.S., a large and influential constituency that helped propel Trump to victory in last year's election. American evangelicals, especially the older generation, have a strong affinity for Israel, drawn both on spiritual grounds and a genuine love for the modern-day country and the Jewish people.

"From our very first meeting, I knew this was a man deeply committed to standing with Israel," said the Rev. John Hagee, founder and chairman of Christians United for Israel, whose organization helped pay for a portion of Pence's trip to Israel with family members in 2014.

Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, the U.S.-born founder and president of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, a charity that raises tens of millions of dollars for Israeli causes from American evangelicals, said Pence's upcoming visit should go over well with evangelicals and help shore up their support for the Trump administration.

"He's an extension of evangelicalism and evangelical feelings for Israel, and its history," Eckstein said. "Trump doesn't have that history. Pence has that history of being pro-Israel."

Associated Press writer Josef Federman in Jerusalem contributed to this report.

IOC: More initiatives coming to promote Korean unity

By JAMEY KEATEN, Associated Press

LAUSANNE, Switzerland (AP) — Olympics organizers on Friday welcomed an agreement between North and South Korea to unite athletes at the upcoming Winter Games in Pyeongchang, and promised that “much more exciting initiatives” promoting Korean unity will emerge this weekend.

“Watch this space,” International Olympic Committee presidential spokesman Mark Adams told The Associated Press in an interview, a day before a crucial meeting of Korean delegations at Olympics headquarters in Lausanne. He declined to elaborate, saying the decisions would come Saturday.

Referring to a detailed peace-making agreement between the rival countries announced Wednesday by South Korea’s Unification Ministry, including a joint team in the women’s hockey tournament, Adams said it was “great ... but these are discussions.”

The agreement, which still requires approval by the IOC, would mark the first time the two national Olympic committees would be competing together in a single team.

“I can tell you that there will also be some much more exciting initiatives coming through as well tomorrow,” Adams added Friday.

Apart from fielding a joint women’s ice hockey team, Seoul’s Unification Ministry said the two countries would march together under a blue and white “unification flag” depicting their peninsula in the Feb. 9 opening ceremony.

Some have questioned the fine print of the agreement announced by the two Koreas, saying it gives the combined hockey squad a far larger roster than any other national team.

Asked how the IOC planned to maintain the integrity of the sport, Adams said: “People would say that these are exceptional circumstances, and we need exceptional measures.”

“This is about the Olympic spirit,” Adams added. “And the Olympic spirit is about nations competing, athletes competing, and we will do our best make sure that it sends a signal that sport can improve the world.”

This version corrects that the agreement between the Koreas was announced Wednesday, not Thursday.

California DA says couple’s abuse of 12 kids became torture

By AMY TAXIN and BRIAN MELLEY, Associated Press

RIVERSIDE, Calif. (AP) — They were starved and shackled to their beds, sometimes for months. They were beaten and choked. They were given scant medical care, often denied use of a toilet and allowed to shower but once a year. They lived mostly at night, out of sight of neighbors, and knew virtually nothing of the outside world.

And yet, some of the children of David and Louise Turpin hatched an escape plan.

It took two years to carry out but last weekend a 17-year-old girl and her sister climbed out of the window of their Southern California home. The other girl turned back out of fear but the teen persisted and called 911. That act of courage and desperation freed her 12 siblings from a house of horrors that shocked police, a prosecutor said Thursday in announcing criminal charges that could send the parents to prison for life.

Prosecutors laid out horrifying details of the allegations but didn’t offer any theories about the motivation for what they called an escalating climate of brutality that began in Texas and ended in a small, close-knit desert town a couple of hours southeast of Los Angeles.

“The victimization appeared to intensify over time,” Riverside County District Attorney Mike Hestrin said. “What started out as neglect became severe, pervasive, prolonged child abuse.”

When sheriff’s deputies arrived Sunday at the four-bedroom, three-bathroom house on a dead-end street in Perris, they were appalled. They found a 22-year-old chained to a bed and a house that reeked and contained human waste, indicating that the children were prevented from using the toilet, authorities said.

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The oldest child, a 29-year-old woman, weighed only 82 pounds and a 12-year-old was the weight of a typical 7-year-old, Hestrin said.

David Turpin, 56, and Louise Turpin, 49, pleaded not guilty Thursday to multiple counts of torture, child abuse, dependent adult abuse and false imprisonment. David Turpin also pleaded not guilty to performing a lewd act on a child under age 14.

They were jailed on \$12 million bail each.

Sharon Ontiveros, 63, stopped by the house with her 3-year old granddaughter, who left a stuffed animal with dozens of others on the front walkway.

"Sure, we're saying we should have known, but behind closed doors you don't know what's going on," she said.

As for the parents, she added: "They deserve no mercy whatsoever."

Prosecutors say the children range in age from 2 to 29. The torture and false imprisonment charges do not include the 2-year-old, who was not malnourished. All the children's names begin with the letter J, according to court documents that didn't provide their full names.

David Turpin had worked as an engineer for both Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman. Louise Turpin identified herself as a housewife in a 2011 bankruptcy filing.

The charges include allegations dating to 2010, when the couple moved to Riverside County from outside Fort Worth, Texas.

The abuse began in Texas with the children being tied to beds with ropes and then hog-tied, Hestrin said. When one child was able to wriggle free, the couple began restraining them with chains and padlocks — for up to months at a time, Hestrin said.

While the children were deprived of food, the Turpin parents ate well and even tormented the children by putting apple and pumpkin pies on the kitchen counter, but not letting them have any, Hestrin said.

Similarly, the children were not allowed to play with toys, though many were found throughout the house — in their original packaging.

"This is depraved conduct," Hestrin said. "It breaks our hearts."

David Turpin's father, James, the children's grandfather, said from his home in Princeton, West Virginia, that he did not believe the reports about the abuse.

"I'm going to talk with the children, find out the real story on this as soon as I can get a call through to them," James Turpin told The Associated Press.

David Turpin's lawyer, Deputy Public Defender David Macher, had only begun to investigate the allegations but said the case was going to be a challenge.

"It's a very serious case," he said. "Our clients are presumed to be innocent, and that is a very important presumption."

The siblings, who were schooled at home, were rarely seen outside the house, though the parents posted photos of them smiling together at Disneyland and in Las Vegas, where the couple renewed their wedding vows.

In addition to raising them largely in isolation, the parents may have been able to hide the abuse by functioning while other families slept. The children were reared on the graveyard shift, with the family staying up all night and going to bed shortly before dawn, Hestrin said.

One of the only things the children were allowed to do was to write in their journals.

Investigators were combing through hundreds of journals found in the home, Hestrin said. They are expected to provide powerful evidence against the parents.

Melley reported from Los Angeles. Associated Press writers Michael Virtanen in Pittsburgh and Michael Balsamo, John Antczak, Andrew Dalton and Christopher Weber in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

Trump steps to forefront of anti-abortion movement

By LAURIE KELLMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — He once called himself “pro-choice.” But a year into his presidency, Donald Trump is stepping to the forefront of his administration’s efforts to roll back abortion rights.

And though his record is mixed and a midterm election looms, abortion opponents say they have not felt so optimistic in at least a decade.

“I don’t think anybody thinks that the White House is a perfectly regimented and orderly family ... but that doesn’t change their commitment to the issue,” said Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the Susan B. Anthony List, which is expanding its door-knocking operation across states with Senate incumbents who have voted for abortion rights.

With a Republican-controlled Congress at his back on this issue, Trump is cementing his turnaround on abortion with a video address Friday to the annual March to Life. That’s a symbolic change from last year, when Vice President Mike Pence — in practical terms, the leader of the anti-abortion movement in the United States — addressed the group in Trump’s absence.

“In one short year, President Donald Trump has made a difference for life,” Pence told march leaders Thursday night.

Trump has given anti-abortion activists a few key victories.

Chief among them: the confirmation of conservative Justice Neil Gorsuch to the Supreme Court. Trump also has revived and expanded a ban on sending U.S. aid to groups overseas that provide abortion counseling. And he signed legislation allowing states to withhold federal family planning dollars from clinics that provide abortion services. The administration has made its priorities clear in other ways, too — including appointments to key government posts and a new mission statement for the Department of Health and Human Services. The agency announced it is dedicated to supporting Americans at “every stage of life, beginning at conception.”

On Thursday, the administration announced the creation of a new office to protect the religious rights of medical providers, including those who oppose abortion. Supporters of abortion rights say it adds up to a president doing administratively what he’s often failed to accomplish through Congress.

“Time and again, we have seen this administration radically redefine religious freedom to impose one set of ultraconservative beliefs on all Americans,” said Sarah Hutchinson Ratcliffe, vice president of Catholics for Choice.

Trump has failed to deliver on promises to strip Planned Parenthood of federal funding or permanently ban taxpayer dollars from being used for abortions. The effort to defund Planned Parenthood, for example, failed with the Republican effort to repeal President Barack Obama’s health care law.

Behind the mixed record is Trump’s complicated personal history on abortion. White House counselor Kellyanne Conway says his transformation from supporting to opposing abortion rights dates back to at least 2011. And while she says he has shown his commitment to the anti-abortion movement “early and often,” he has at times seemed uncomfortable with the issue.

Dannenfelser recalls her struggle in 2016 after the SBA List told GOP primary voters in Iowa and elsewhere that Trump could not be trusted on the issue. But Trump’s pro-choice Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton, made the choice easy, Dannenfelser recalled. One wobble came in October, when the “Access Hollywood” recording was released with Trump’s voice boasting of assaulting women. He denied having done so; and a conversation with an aide to Pence helped Dannenfelser stay aboard.

A year into Trump’s term, abortion opponents see the stall of anti-abortion legislation as a product of the slim Republican majority in the Senate. So, they’re focusing on the midterm elections. Conway says abortion is a key part of discussions with prospective GOP candidates. And groups like the SBA List are boosting their ground games in an effort to turn out people who want to roll back abortions, including Hispanics, but don’t tend to vote in non-presidential election years.

The group’s band of door-knockers, who make about \$10 an hour, are among about 220 canvassers on the ground targeting Democratic Senate incumbents in Ohio, Indiana, Florida, Missouri and North Dakota.

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A spokeswoman said the group is aiming to quadruple the number of paid canvassers in 2018 and expand its operations into Senate races in West Virginia, Wisconsin and likely Minnesota.

In Madeira, Ohio, on a recent chilly Sunday, Alison Pavlicek led a band of six women down Miami Hills Drive, to homes suggested by an app that tracks voter information. They knocked and asked people who answered if they were aware of Sen. Sherrod Brown's voting history. Pavlicek said she sometimes looks for statues of the Virgin Mary in front of homes — signals in stone of residents "friendly" to the anti-abortion cause.

"People are really receptive now," she said.

Polling shows Americans have complicated feelings on the divisive issue of abortion nearly 45 years after the Supreme Court legalized it in the Roe v. Wade decision. A recent poll by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that just over a third of Americans think abortion should be illegal in most or all cases. That includes a majority of Republicans and about 20 percent of Democrats and 4 in 10 Hispanics.

More than 6 in 10 say abortion should usually be legal, though that includes just a quarter of Americans who think it should be legal under all circumstances.

Overall, 62 percent of Americans say they disapprove of how Trump is handling the abortion issue.

But the anti-abortion movement is facing challenges. Groups that favor abortion rights, such as Emily's List, dwarf their anti-abortion counterparts when it comes to raising campaign cash or spending on lobbying, according to OpenSecrets.org.

And traditionally, the president's party loses seats in the midterm elections, especially when his approval rating is below 50 percent, according to Gallup. Trump's overall rating has never risen that high.

Madeira, Ohio, resident Ginger Ittenbach isn't so sure the Trump administration is to be trusted, and that makes her a key "persuadable" voter in the eyes of anti-abortion activists. She says she is "very much pro-life" — but voted for Clinton.

"There were enough other red flags with Donald Trump just in how he treated women," Ittenbach, 52, said after talking with the canvassers.

Maybe next time: Cities see failed Amazon bids as trial runs

By COREY WILLIAMS, Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — For some of the 200-plus cities knocked out of the running for Amazon's second headquarters, the effort may turn out to be a trial run for other opportunities. But they're advised to not make the same kind of promises to just anyone.

Cities such as Detroit, Memphis, Tennessee; and Gary, Indiana, failed to make Amazon's first cut as the online giant narrowed its list to 20 prospective sites for the \$5 billion project that could employ up to 50,000 people. Looking on the bright side, several leaders whose proposals didn't make it say the time spent putting together juicy tax incentives, massive chunks of land and infrastructure studies was not wasted.

"We used this opportunity to showcase all the options in Delaware not just for Amazon, but for any business looking for a location to set down roots and grow," the state's governor, John Carney, said.

"This exercise showed us new ways to showcase our city that we are already using to attract other businesses," Memphis Mayor Jim Strickland said.

Seattle-based Amazon made clear that tax breaks and grants would be a big factor in its decision.

Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan floated an incentive package of more than \$5 billion to lure the second headquarters to Montgomery County. New Jersey's pitch contains \$7 billion in tax breaks and Boston's offer includes \$75 million for affordable housing for Amazon employees and others.

Generous tax breaks and other incentives can erode a city's tax base. Economists have said the Amazon headquarters is a rare case in which some enticements could repay a city over the long run.

But the pursuit of Amazon could re-ignite an incentive war between cities, regions and states to lure companies and jobs, says Tim Bartik, a senior economist at the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

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Just because they offered certain things to Amazon, doesn't mean every company should get the same, Bartik said. "Now that we've offered the store to Amazon, let's offer the store to someone else," he added. "I'd be little concerned with that."

Amazon's list includes New York, Boston, Los Angeles, Indianapolis, Washington, D.C., Denver, Miami, Atlanta and Chicago. Texas' Austin and Dallas made the cut, as did Philadelphia and Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania. The others are Columbus, Ohio; Montgomery County, Maryland; Nashville, Tennessee; Newark, New Jersey; Northern Virginia; and Raleigh, North Carolina. Toronto also is on the list.

Detroit's absence from the list muted what many see as an exciting time in the city as it makes progress since its 2014 exit from bankruptcy. Businessman Dan Gilbert led the team that put together the Motor City's proposal, which included a video showcasing the city and a more than 240-page, color, spiral-bound book. The cost of the proposal has not been revealed.

"We are not deterred in any way, shape or form," said Gilbert, founder of online mortgage lender Quicken Loans and Bedrock commercial real estate. "Detroit is the most exciting city in the country right now and the momentum continues to build every single day. There are numerous large and small deals you will continue to see develop into reality in the months and years ahead."

Some spent big on their pitches to Amazon. Worcester, Massachusetts, released invoices showing that it spent more than \$10,500 on its proposal, most of it on a video. Connecticut shelled out \$35,000 for renderings and drone footage. Virginia Beach, Virginia, reported spending at least \$85,000. That included \$3,000 to build a sand sculpture at the beach to promote its application.

For areas considered longshots, going after Amazon was a bit of an experiment.

"As much as this process helped identify our major assets, it also helped us to assess our gaps and where we can continue to improve," said Birgit Klohs, chief executive of Grand Rapids, Michigan-based The Right Place, Inc. The economic development organization was part of the team making the pitch for Grand Rapids.

Gov. Chris Sununu said New Hampshire's proposal "was the most comprehensive business marketing plan" the state had produced.

"We are excited that it is already serving as a template for other businesses that now have New Hampshire on their radar," Sununu said. He did not name specific companies, and Democrats argued that if Sununu truly wanted to attract businesses, he would invest more in education, workforce development and increasing the minimum wage.

Associated Press writer Josh Cornfield in Philadelphia contributed to this report.

Pope shocks Chile by accusing sex abuse victims of slander

By NICOLE WINFIELD, Associated Press

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) — Pope Francis accused victims of Chile's most notorious pedophile of slander Thursday, an astonishing end to a visit meant to help heal the wounds of a sex abuse scandal that has cost the Catholic Church its credibility in the country.

Francis said that until he sees proof that Bishop Juan Barros was complicit in covering up the sex crimes of the Rev. Fernando Karadima, such accusations against Barros are "all calumny."

The pope's remarks drew shock from Chileans and immediate rebuke from victims and their advocates. They noted the accusers were deemed credible enough by the Vatican that it sentenced Karadima to a lifetime of "penance and prayer" for his crimes in 2011. A Chilean judge also found the victims to be credible, saying that while she had to drop criminal charges against Karadima because too much time had passed, proof of his crimes wasn't lacking.

"As if I could have taken a selfie or a photo while Karadima abused me and others and Juan Barros stood by watching it all," tweeted Barros' most vocal accuser, Juan Carlos Cruz. "These people are truly crazy, and the pontiff talks about atonement to the victims. Nothing has changed, and his plea for forgiveness is empty."

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The Karadima scandal dominated Francis' visit to Chile and the overall issue of sex abuse and church cover-up was likely to factor into his three-day trip to Peru that began late Thursday.

Karadima's victims reported to church authorities as early as 2002 that he would kiss and fondle them in the swank Santiago parish he ran, but officials refused to believe them. Only when the victims went public with their accusations in 2010 did the Vatican launch an investigation that led to Karadima being removed from ministry.

The emeritus archbishop of Santiago subsequently apologized for having refused to believe the victims from the start.

Francis reopened the wounds of the scandal in 2015 when he named Barros, a protege of Karadima, as bishop of the southern diocese of Osorno. Karadima's victims say Barros knew of the abuse, having seen it, but did nothing. Barros has denied the allegations.

His appointment outraged Chileans, badly divided the Osorno diocese and further undermined the church's already shaky credibility in the country.

Francis had sought to heal the wounds by meeting this week with abuse victims and begging forgiveness for the crimes of church pastors. But on Thursday, he struck a defiant tone when asked by a Chilean journalist about Barros.

"The day they bring me proof against Bishop Barros, I'll speak," Francis said. "There is not one shred of proof against him. It's all calumny. Is that clear?"

Francis had defended the appointment before, calling the Osorno controversy "stupid" and the result of a campaign mounted by leftists. But The Associated Press reported last week that the Vatican was so worried about the fallout from the Karadima affair that it was prepared in 2014 to ask Barros and two other Karadima-trained bishops to resign and go on a yearlong sabbatical.

According to a Jan. 31, 2015, letter obtained by AP from Francis to the executive committee of the Chilean bishops' conference, the plan fell apart and Barros was sent to Osorno.

Juan Carlos Claret, spokesman for a group of Osorno lay Catholics who have mounted a three-year campaign against Barros, questioned why Francis was now accusing the victims of slandering Barros when the Vatican was so convinced of their claims that it planned to remove him in 2014.

"Isn't the pastoral problem that we're living (in Osorno) enough to get rid of him?" Claret asked.

The reference was to the fact that — guilty or not — Barros has been unable to do his job because so many Osorno Catholics and priests don't recognize him as their bishop. They staged an unprecedented protest during his 2015 installation ceremony and have protested his presence ever since.

Anne Barrett Doyle, of the online database BishopAccountability.org, said it was "sad and wrong" for the pope to discredit the victims since "the burden of proof here rests with the church, not the victims — and especially not with victims whose veracity has already been affirmed."

"He has just turned back the clock to the darkest days of this crisis," she said in a statement. "Who knows how many victims now will decide to stay hidden, for fear they will not be believed?"

Indeed, Catholic officials for years accused victims of slandering and attacking the church with their claims. But up until Francis' words Thursday, many in the church and Vatican had come to reluctantly acknowledge that victims usually told the truth and that the church for decades had wrongly sought to protect its own.

German Silva, a political scientist at Santiago's Universidad Mayor, said the pope's comments were a "tremendous error" that will reverberate in Chile and beyond.

Patricio Navia, political science professor at Diego Portales University in Santiago, said Francis had gone much further than Chilean bishops in acknowledging the sexual abuse scandal, which many Chileans appreciated.

"Then right before leaving, Francis turns around and says: 'By the way, I don't think Barros is guilty. Show me some proof,'" Navia said, adding that the comment will probably erase any good will the pope had won over the issue.

Navia said the Karadima scandal had radically changed how Chileans view the church.

"In the typical Chilean family, parents (now) think twice before sending their kids to Catholic school

because you never know what is going to happen," Navia said.

Associated Press writers Peter Prengaman and Eva Vergara contributed to this report.

Clues sought in copter crash that killed Zimbabwean leader

By P. SOLOMON BANDA and NOMAAN MERCHANT, Associated Press

RATON, N.M. (AP) — A husband and wife who pushed for political change in Zimbabwe, an adventurous Texas investor and a pair of decorated pilots died in a fiery helicopter crash in a remote area of New Mexico.

Investigators will comb through the charred wreckage in search for clues as to why the helicopter carrying the group of prominent friends went down after dark Wednesday.

Friends and family members confirmed Thursday that Zimbabwe opposition leader Roy Bennett and his wife, Heather, had traveled to New Mexico to spend their holiday with friend and wealthy businessman Charles Burnett III at his ranch. Burnett's friends, pilot Jamie Coleman Dodd of Colorado and co-pilot Paul Cobb of Texas, were ferrying the group aboard a Huey UH-1 when it went down.

Despite frigid temperatures that evening, the weather appeared to be clear and the wind was mild as they headed east over a rugged area toward Burnett's ranch.

The only survivor was Andra Cobb, the co-pilot's daughter and Burnett's long-term partner. She was able to escape before the helicopter burst into flames.

Her voice breaking, Martha Cobb told The Associated Press that her 39-year-old daughter was hospitalized with broken bones.

"She's just very distraught," the mother said in a telephone interview. "I'm just glad my daughter is OK, but I hate that my husband of 41 years is gone."

The Cobbs and Bennetts had become friends while traveling on cruises.

Roy Bennett, 60, treasurer-general of Morgan Tsvangirai's Movement for Democratic Change opposition party, won a devoted following of black Zimbabweans for passionately advocating political change. A white man who spoke fluent Shona, he drew the wrath of former President Robert Mugabe.

Bennett survived a traumatic year in jail and death threats over his work. He was known as "Pachedu," meaning "one of us" in Shona and was often called the sharpest thorn in Mugabe's side.

Obert Gutu, spokesman for the MDC-T party, described Bennett's death as a "huge and tragic loss."

Born in England, Burnett was an investor and philanthropist with links to a wide range of businesses and a love of entertaining friends extravagantly. In 2009, he drove a steam-powered car at an average speed of 139.8 miles per hour (225 kilometers per hour) to set a world record, The Guardian newspaper reported.

Burnett, 61, was friends with both pilots, according to his personal attorney, Martyn Hill. Both Dodd and Cobb were experienced aviators who would not have taken unnecessary risks in the helicopter, Hill said.

After being shot down while flying a helicopter in the Vietnam War, Cobb returned to the U.S. and served as a police officer for three decades in the Houston suburb of Pasadena, Texas, before becoming police chief, his wife said.

Dodd was a decorated search-and-rescue pilot who helped stranded residents in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. During his time in the military, he flew medical evacuation missions in Central and South America and was inducted in 2010 into the Hall of Fame at the New Mexico Military Institute, where he had gone to school.

Above reproach is how his estranged wife, Jacqueline Dodd, described him.

Authorities were alerted to the crash around 6 p.m. Wednesday by a 911 call from Andra Cobb.

Officials launched a search but said the response was slow because of the rugged terrain and lack of access. Engulfed in flames, the wreckage of the helicopter registered to an aviation company linked to Burnett was spotted on a ranch.

The intended destination was the Emery Gap Ranch, a mountainous property near the Colorado-New Mexico border. Burnett bought it in February 2017, said Sam Middleton, a real estate broker in Lubbock, Texas, who helped with the purchase.

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In Zimbabwe, Tendai Biti, a prominent opposition leader and a former finance minister, tweeted that the Bennetts' "tragic passing" was "a blow to our struggle." David Coltart, an opposition figure, said the couple were "two of Zimbabwe's greatest patriots."

In 2004, Roy Bennett was jailed for a year for assaulting a Cabinet minister who had said Bennett's "forefathers were thieves and murderers" during a parliamentary debate. An enraged Bennett charged the minister, who fell to the floor.

He emerged from prison rail-thin and scarred from repeated sunburns. He told of the mistreatment of fellow prisoners, some of whom he said had starved to death in their cells.

After receiving death threats, Bennett fled Zimbabwe but returned in 2009 after his party nominated him for the deputy agriculture minister in a coalition government with Mugabe's ZANU-PF. Mugabe, who had repeatedly alleged Bennett was the opposition party's contact with foreign funders, refused to swear him in.

Bennett later returned to South Africa but remained a vocal critic of Mugabe's rule. He also criticized his former party for allegedly enjoying the comforts of government while ordinary Zimbabweans suffered.

Merchant reported from Houston. Associated Press writers Farai Mutsaka in Harare, Zimbabwe, Mary Hudetz in Albuquerque, and Paul Davenport in Phoenix contributed to this report.

Not-household-name players get All-Star votes from NBA peers

By **TIM REYNOLDS**, AP Basketball Writer

Semi Ojeleye, Cedi Osman and Royce O'Neale have never started in an NBA game. Cameron Payne last played in April. Matt Costello has scored two points in his NBA career.

They're not stars.

Yet somehow, someone in an NBA locker room apparently thought they should start in this year's All-Star Game.

Only 10 players will start in Los Angeles on Feb. 18, but 249 players — roughly half the league — were listed on at least one ballot in the player portion of the All-Star selection process. And while some of the results might suggest not everyone took it seriously, making the list seemed to leave Philadelphia's Amir Johnson genuinely moved.

"That's pretty cool, man," Johnson said Thursday night when told that he got a vote. "That shows you how together we are. ... It's just everybody against the world. It's us against everybody."

So guys like Ojeleye, Osman, O'Neale, Payne and Costello all got a vote from at least one player. Andre Iguodala, a recent NBA Finals MVP, did not.

The league is trying a new format for the All-Star Game this season, using captains to pick the rosters. LeBron James and Stephen Curry, the leading overall vote-getters from each conference, will pick their teams next week in a draft that isn't slated to be televised. It's part of the way the NBA is trying to make the game more competitive and relevant.

Players seem to have fun with the league's process.

"I'm not sure who voted, but put it out there — whoever voted for me, I really appreciate it," said 76ers guard T.J. McConnell, the proud recipient of two starter votes from players.

All-Star balloting is broken up into three parts: Fan voting counts for 50 percent, media voting 25 percent and player voting the final 25 percent. Ballots are counted, then weighted, and from there the starters are picked. And it's important to note that what the majority of the players picked was largely in line with the results of fan and media balloting.

Players could vote for themselves. Since Johnson didn't know he got a vote, it would be reasonable to think he didn't go that route.

"I think it's dope," Johnson said after Philadelphia beat Boston. "Players do recognize who's doing well, who's improving around the league. You know, and it's pretty awesome to see."

Of the 249 players who got a starter vote, more than half — 53 percent — appeared on no more than two ballots cast.

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And 249 players getting at least one vote from their peers as a starter sounds like a lot, it is, but that total is also down a bit from last season when 283 players got onto ballots.

Some other notes on the All-Star voting:

THE CASE FOR MANU

Much like Dwyane Wade last year, if these were olden times — of two years ago — San Antonio's Manu Ginobili would be starting the All-Star Game.

Ginobili was second in the fan balloting among Western Conference guards, behind only Golden State's Stephen Curry. Ginobili ranked eighth in player votes, and did not appear on any media ballots.

In this new system, with those things weighted and then factored together, Ginobili finished fourth overall in the West guard race behind only Curry, James Harden and Russell Westbrook.

Ginobili is a two-time All-Star, with appearances in 2005 and 2011.

PEOPLE'S CHOICE

Golden State's Draymond Green got the second-most votes from fans who voted for Western Conference frontcourt players. But Green isn't an All-Star starter, because he finished sixth in the media vote and seventh in the player vote.

"Disappointing, for sure," Curry told reporters after the numbers were released Thursday night.

ZHOU FANS

Dallas' Zhou Qi has played a total of 75 minutes in 14 games this season, averaging 1.2 points.

But it's a global game, with global voting, and it's likely that he got some social-media help from basketball fans in his homeland of China. He finished 21st overall in the Western Conference frontcourt fan balloting.

HAYWARD TRIBUTE

Boston's Gordon Hayward, whose season was derailed when he broke his ankle five minutes into the Celtics' season-opener at Cleveland, wasn't forgotten. He was picked as a starter on two player ballots, and finished 16th in the fan voting among Eastern Conference frontcourt players.

MEDIA VOTING

A total of 99 media members invited by the league to participate returned ballots. Cleveland's LeBron James and Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo were the only players to appear on all of their ballots, while Golden State's Kevin Durant was on 98, Boston's Kyrie Irving was on 96 and Houston's James Harden was on 94.

Associated Press Writers Doug Alden and Gethin Coolbaugh in Boston contributed to this report.

More AP basketball: <https://apnews.com/tag/NBAbasketball>

Pakistan's ace in poker match with US: Afghan air routes

By MATTHEW PENNINGTON, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As bad as President Donald Trump describes U.S.-Pakistani ties today, they can get far worse.

Over 16 years that included hundreds of deadly U.S. drone strikes, Osama bin Laden's killing on Pakistani soil and accusations Pakistan helps insurgents that kill Americans, the reluctant allies never reached one point of no return: Pakistan closing the air routes to Afghanistan.

It's an action that could all but cripple the U.S.-backed military fight against the Taliban. It could also be tantamount to Pakistan going to war with the United States.

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Even if such a step is seen as unlikely by most officials and observers, Pakistan's ability to shape the destiny of America's longest war is a reminder of how much leverage the country maintains at a time Trump is suspending hundreds of millions of dollars in military assistance.

"There's some suggestion that we have all of the cards in our hands," said Richard Olson, a former U.S. ambassador to Pakistan. "But we don't. The leverage is strong on the Pakistan side as well and arguably stronger than our side."

Trump's re-commitment of U.S. forces to the fight in Afghanistan makes the stakes high for his administration. The top U.S. diplomat for South Asia, Alice Wells, made a low-key visit to Islamabad this week, suggesting both sides want to prevent a breach in ties. Pakistan's cooperation is needed not only to reduce violence in its northern neighbor. It's also critical to any hope of a political settlement with the Afghan Taliban after decades of conflict.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis has said the U.S. doesn't expect Pakistan to cut off supply routes. Even so, the U.S. is seeking out alternatives, a senior administration official said, without elaborating on what those routes might be. The Pentagon wouldn't discuss the issue, citing operational security, other than to say military planners develop "multiple supply chain contingencies" to sustain their mission.

The administration official, who wasn't authorized to comment by name and demanded anonymity, said it would be "very difficult" but not impossible for the U.S. to get military equipment into Afghanistan if the Pakistan route is shut down. Restrictions limit what types of supplies can flow through the Northern Distribution Network in Central Asia, set up during the Obama administration amid concerns about relying solely on Pakistan.

Pakistan has cut overland access before. When a U.S. airstrike killed 24 Pakistani soldiers at the Afghan-Pakistan frontier in late 2011, months after the U.S. commando raid that killed bin Laden, Pakistan blocked border crossings into Afghanistan.

The decision sunk U.S.-Pakistani relations to a post-9/11 low point. Supply trucks that trundle across desert into Afghanistan's southern Kandahar province or into Nangarhar via the mountainous Khyber Pass ground to a halt. Hundreds of containers shipped from the U.S. or the Gulf were left stranded in the Pakistani port of Karachi until mid-2012.

For the U.S., truck and rail costs inflated by about 50 percent, said David Sedney, a former Pentagon official who organized the alternative northern routes. He said deliveries by air cost three times as much or more.

But the saga, resolved through a U.S. apology, also exposed the limits of Pakistan's leverage, Sedney said. Pakistan's own economy was hurt, notably the military-dominated trucking industry. And the Afghan war effort, which was then supporting more than 70,000 U.S. troops, compared with around 16,000 now, endured.

That was perhaps the result of Pakistan never closing the air corridor into Afghanistan, which U.S. pilots call "the boulevard." It's essential for ferrying ammunition and weapons for U.S. and Afghan forces, and waging war. U.S. intelligence flights and combat missions use it when taking off from U.S. bases in the Persian Gulf or from aircraft carriers in the Indian Ocean.

Since closing Pakistan's airspace would hinder America's ability to defend its forces in Afghanistan, Olson, the former ambassador, said the U.S. might regard such action as a "casus belli," or grounds for war. Other former U.S. officials echoed that assessment.

"From what I can tell we don't actually have any serious alternative," said Daniel Markey, a South Asia expert at the John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

Sedney said the Northern Distribution Network, which fell out of use after most U.S. forces were withdrawn from Afghanistan by late 2014, could be restored with astute U.S. diplomacy. Nations such as Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan all have been used before for transporting mostly nonlethal supplies. Poor U.S. relations with Russia could make the task trickier, however. Moscow wields significant influence over these former Soviet states.

Pakistan is weighing options carefully. The suspension of around \$1.2 billion in assistance and Trump's

accusations of Pakistani "lies and deceit" for allowing Taliban havens have stirred anger and demands from opposition party leader Imran Khan for both land and air links to be cut.

Pakistan's ambassador in Washington, Aizaz Chaudhry, indicated such steps weren't imminent, urging greater U.S. cooperation on counterterrorism. But he warned that further downward spiraling in U.S.-Pakistani ties could create a situation in which "everything will be on table."

Chaudhry cited Pakistan's longstanding complaints that its efforts have been unappreciated, claiming that most leaders of the Haqqani network — which the U.S. hopes to eradicate — have fled to Afghanistan. Critics say Pakistan's military only targets insurgents threatening Pakistan itself.

"The problem is we have a porous open border and it's like a revolving door," Chaudhry told The Associated Press. "These elements tend to come back, and travel back and forth, but there is no organized presence or safe havens inside Pakistan."

Republicans and Democrats in America aren't sold. Lawmakers have urged targeted financial sanctions against Pakistani intelligence officials linked to militants, and for Pakistan to lose its "non-NATO ally" status that offers preferential access to U.S. military technology. Zalmay Khalilzad, a former U.S. ambassador in Kabul, is among hawks advocating Pakistan be declared a state sponsor of terrorism, unless it cooperates.

But others who've worked with the Pakistanis fear coercion could backfire at a time they're hedging their bets, unsure America will win in Afghanistan.

A tacit Pakistani alliance with the Taliban will appear "more important to them than ever as we turn once again from an ally into an adversary," said Ryan Crocker, who was U.S. ambassador in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Associated Press writer Josh Lederman contributed to this report.

New Trump office would protect conscience rights of doctors

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Reinforcing its strong connection with social conservatives, the Trump administration announced Thursday a new federal office to protect medical providers refusing to participate in abortion, assisted suicide or other procedures on moral or religious grounds.

Leading Democrats and LGBT groups immediately denounced the move, saying "conscience protections" could become a license to discriminate, particularly against gay and transgender people.

The announcement by the Department of Health and Human Services came a day ahead of the annual march on Washington by abortion opponents, who will be addressed via video link by President Donald Trump. HHS put on a formal event in the department's Great Hall, with Republican lawmakers and activists for conscience protections as invited speakers.

The religious and conscience division will be part of the HHS Office for Civil Rights, which enforces federal anti-discrimination and privacy laws. Officials said it will focus on upholding protections already part of federal law. Violations can result in a service provider losing government funding.

No new efforts to expand such protections were announced, but activists on both sides expect the administration will try to broaden them in the future.

Although the HHS civil rights office has traditionally received few complaints alleging conscience violations, HHS Acting Secretary Eric Hargan, painted a picture of clinicians under government coercion to violate the dictates of conscience.

"For too long, too many health care practitioners have been bullied and discriminated against because of their religious beliefs and moral convictions, leading many of them to wonder what future they have in our medical system," Hargan told the audience.

"The federal government and state governments have hounded religious hospitals and the men and women who staff them, forcing them to provide or refer for services that violate their consciences, when they only wish to serve according to their religious beliefs," Hargan added.

After Hargan spoke, Rep. Kevin McCarthy, the No. 2 Republican in the House, provided an example of

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the kind of case the new office should tackle. McCarthy told the audience he has "high hopes" that the "arrogance" of a California law known as AB 775 "will be investigated and resolved quickly."

That law, which requires anti-abortion crisis pregnancy centers to post information about abortion and other services, is the subject of a free-speech challenge brought by the pregnancy centers that will be heard by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Although the HHS civil rights office traditionally has gotten a small number of complaints involving religious and conscience rights, the number has grown since Trump was elected.

Office director Roger Severino said that from 2008 to Nov. 2016, HHS received 10 such complaints. Since Trump won, the office has received 34 new complaints. Before his appointment to government service under Trump, Severino was an expert on religious freedom, marriage, and life issues at the conservative Heritage Foundation.

The new HHS office joins the list of administration actions seen as pleasing to social conservatives, including expanded exemptions for employers who object to providing contraceptive coverage, and the White House move to bar military service by transgender people. Those initiatives have run into legal challenges.

Democrats, LGBT organizations and some civil liberties groups were quick to condemn the administration's latest action.

"They are prioritizing providers' beliefs over patients' health and lives," Louise Melling, deputy legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union, said in a statement. "This administration isn't increasing freedom — they're paving the way for discrimination."

On Capitol Hill, Rep. Frank Pallone, D-N.J., pledged to keep a close eye on the new enforcement office. "Religious freedom should not mean that our health care providers have a license to discriminate or impose their beliefs on others," Pallone said. He is the ranking Democrat on the Energy and Commerce Committee, which has jurisdiction over many health care issues.

LGBT-rights organizations suggested some medical providers will be emboldened to shun gay, lesbian and transgender patients.

"LGBT people have already been turned away from hospitals and doctors' offices," said Rachel Tiven, CEO of Lambda Legal. "The Orwellian 'Conscience and Religious Freedom' unit simply provides guidance on how they can get away with it."

But conservatives said the new office will help maintain balance in the health care system. It's a world that has become increasingly secular, even if many of its major institutions sprang from religious charity.

"In the context of health care, Americans have very deep, sincere differences on a number of ethical and moral matters," said Heritage Foundation analyst Melanie Israel. "It's these conscience protections that allow us to work and live alongside each other despite our differences."

Monday marks the 45th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, the landmark Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion.

Associated Press writers David Crary and Mark Sherman contributed to this report.

In Chile, pope met by protests, threats, burned churches

By PETER PRENGAMAN, Associated Press

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) — As he does during every papal visit, Pope Francis produced plenty of surprises in Chile: He married a couple during a flight, stopped his motorcade to help a fallen police officer and wept with victims of sex abuse by priests.

But the pope also faced protests and a level of hostility unheard of in modern times for a papal visit. Anti-pope protests had to be broken up with tear gas, attackers burned at least 11 Roman Catholic Churches and pamphlets were found threatening Francis that the "next bomb would be in your cassock."

"This kind of violence during a papal visit is absolutely unprecedented. And Chile is historically a very solidly Catholic nation," said Andrew Chesnut, the Catholic Studies chair at Virginia Commonwealth University.

It remains to be seen whether the friction in Chile was a fluke or a harbinger of what to expect in future

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papal trips.

The neighboring country of Peru, where Francis went Thursday, isn't taking any chances. Authorities have banned demonstrations because they "impact the image of the country," police spokeswoman Veronica Marquez said.

Papal visits sometimes attract demonstrations. In 2010, thousands in London protested the visit of Pope Benedict XVI, condemning his stance on condoms, women's rights and homosexuality, among other things. But the ferocity and firebombing of churches in Chile went beyond anything in modern memory.

"These violent acts may be a first in the history of the 'traveling papacy,'" said Massimo Faggioli, a theology professor at Villanova University in Philadelphia. "It is striking also because Latin America is supposed to be friendly territory for Francis" — the first pope from the region.

Chile has changed radically, from its economy to politics, in less than a generation. Those changes, combined with a pedophile priest scandal and what many argue was a bungled response by the church, has accelerated a move away from Catholicism. Last year, 45 percent of Chileans identified as Catholic, a sharp drop in just a decade from the mid-60s, according to Latinobarometro's annual poll.

One of the pope's sharply contested decisions — to appoint a Chilean bishop with close ties to the country's most notorious pedophile priest — soured many on the visit before it even began.

A few days before Francis arrived, a group angry about the cost of the papal visit briefly occupied the Nunciature in Santiago where the pope would sleep.

The same day, several churches were burned. Over the next couple of days during the pope's visit, several more churches were torched, along with three helicopters.

It was unclear who was behind the arson attacks. Outside some of the churches, pamphlets were found supporting the cause of indigenous Mapuche. Pamphlets outside one threatened the pope.

The Mapuche, Chile's largest indigenous group, are fighting for a return of ancestral lands, recognition of their language and an end to discrimination.

Much of Francis' trip was dedicated to the conflict. During his homily Wednesday in the heart of Mapuche territory, he took both the Mapuche and Chilean officials to task, calling for a halt to violence and for government engagement that goes beyond just "elegant" agreements.

The burning of churches is a tactic frequently employed by radical Mapuche groups: Nearly two dozen have been firebombed the last two years. That 11 were then attacked in just a few days is a possible sign that these groups saw the visit as an opportunity to bring more attention to their cause.

"The burning of churches is an expression of the disgruntlement" that many Mapuche feel for the Catholic Church, said German Silva, a political analyst at the Universidad Mayor in Santiago.

During Chile's 1973-1990 dictatorship, several bishops spoke out in defense of human rights and worked closely with indigenous populations. Today's bishops are much less visible, arguably less hands-on with the poor and in general the church has nowhere near the same moral authority.

Other groups protested the pope himself. While Francis celebrated Mass on Tuesday at a large park in Santiago, riot police shot tear gas and arrested dozens of protesters as they tried to march on the service.

Protesters included members of the country's LGBT community, socialists and people angry at the church's reaction to the sex abuse scandal that many Chileans don't feel has been resolved.

"There will be no peace for an accomplice who helps and protects a rapist," read one sign.

"Burn, Daddy!" read another.

Hours before Francis left Chile, he made comments that all but overshadowed his entire visit, and certainly would have added to the protests if they had come sooner. When asked why he defended Bishop Juan Barros, the former protege of the pedophile priest, Francis said there was no proof Barros knew about the abuse and called those accusations against him slanderous.

"After saying those things, if he came back here his reception would be even worse," said Eriano Luna, a computer technician in Santiago.

Associated Press writers Patricia Luna in Santiago and Christine Armario in Lima, Peru, contributed to

this report.

Drone rescue off Australian beach heralded as world-first

By ROD McGUIRK, Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — A flying drone has dropped a flotation device to two teens caught in a riptide in heavy seas off the Australian coast in what officials describe as a world-first rescue.

Monty Greenslade and Gabe Vidler got into trouble on Thursday at Lennox Head, 750 kilometers (470 miles) north of Sydney.

They were about a kilometer (0.6 mile) from lifeguards who were about to start training with the new drones, equipped with a camera, rescue gear and six rotors.

After a friend raised the alert, lifeguard Jai Sheridan said he piloted the drone to the swimmers and dropped a rescue pod minutes faster than lifeguards could have reached the pair by conventional means.

"I was able to launch it, fly it to the location, and drop the pod all in about one to two minutes. On a normal day, that would have taken our lifeguards a few minutes longer to reach the members of the public," Sheridan said in a statement.

Greenslade, 16, said Friday the pair were lucky that the drone had been nearby.

"We realized pretty quickly that it was a rescue drone, once we heard it," Greenslade told Nine Network television. "It was pretty noisy, so it was kind of hard to miss it, to be honest."

"With the heavy waves, we were sort of going under and coming up for breath and ... the drone dropped the package and we both grabbed on pretty quickly. It's kind of obvious what you're supposed to do with it," he added.

Vidler, 17, told Nine: "It was pretty heavy out there and we were a little bit concerned."

"It just dropped the life raft and so we just held on to that and just swam into shore," Vidler said.

It was the first drone rescue since the New South Wales state government last month invested 430,000 Australian dollars (\$345,000) in drone technology for rescue and shark spotting work in the state's north.

"This is a world-first rescue," state Deputy Premier John Barilaro said. "Never before has a drone, fitted with a flotation device been used to rescue swimmers like this."

House votes to avert federal shutdown, Senate chances dim

By ALAN FRAM and ANDREW TAYLOR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — On the edge of a government shutdown, a divided House voted late Thursday to keep the government open past a Friday deadline — setting up an eleventh-hour standoff in the Senate, where Democrats have vowed to kill the measure.

The partisan roadblock in the GOP-controlled Senate left just a day and little hope for negotiators searching for a way to avoid shuttering federal offices and keeping thousands of employees home from work. A closure, coming on the one-year anniversary of President Donald Trump's inauguration, would be only the fourth such episode in roughly two decades and pose perils for both in parties in an election year.

Still, Senate Democrats appeared ready to take the risk of shouldering the blame. Emboldened by a liberal base clamoring to challenge Trump, they've demanded concessions on immigration, chiefly protection for thousands of young immigrants facing deportation, and largely unified behind the effort. Leaders said Thursday they would have the votes to block the House-passed measure that would have funded the government for another four weeks.

Republican leaders said the plan would give the White House and lawmakers more time to work through the disputes on immigration and spending that they've tangled over for months. Those talks were roiled last week by Trump's comments questioning the need for immigration for "shithole countries" in Africa. With trust at a low ebb, Democrats said they weren't willing to give Republicans that time to negotiate, arguing they could be back in the same standoff a month from now and push for a shorter extension that could keep the pressure on.

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Schumer asked how can senators negotiate when the president, who has to sign the legislation, "is like a sphinx on this issue, or says one thing one day and one thing the next?"

Most Senate Democrats and some Republicans were expected to vote against the House plan, probably Friday.

Senate rejection would leave the pathway ahead uncertain with only one guarantee: finger-pointing by both parties, which began as that chamber debated the measure late Thursday.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., accused Democrats of a "fixation on illegal immigration," which he said "has them threatening to filibuster spending for the whole government."

Trump weighed in earlier in the day from Pennsylvania, where he flew to help a GOP candidate in a special congressional election.

"I really believe the Democrats want a shutdown to get off the subject of the tax cuts because they're doing so well," he said.

The stakes are high for Republicans, who control the Congress and the White House and are still struggling to prove they can govern.

McConnell warned GOP senators in an email obtained by The Associated Press that voting against the measure "plays right into Democrats hand" — presumably because it would dilute the argument that Democrats killed the legislation.

The GOP controls the Senate 51-49 and will need substantial Democratic backing to reach 60 — the number needed to end Democratic delaying tactics. Republicans were all but daring Democrats to scuttle the bill and force a shutdown because of immigration, which they said would hurt Democratic senators seeking re-election in 10 states that Trump carried in 2016.

"Senator Schumer, do not shut down the federal government," said House Speaker Paul Ryan, adding, "It is risky. It is reckless. And it is wrong."

Republicans in the House faced their own divisions on the short-term bill, ones only overcome after a last-minute round of bargaining with conservatives.

House passage was assured after the House Freedom Caucus reached an accord with Ryan, R-Wis. The leader of the hard-right group, Rep. Mark Meadows, R-N.C., said Ryan promised future votes on extra defense spending and on a conservative, restrictive immigration bill, though a source familiar with the discussion said Ryan didn't guarantee an immigration vote. That person was not authorized to speak publicly about the private negotiations and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The House voted by a near party-line 230-197 vote to approve the legislation. Just 11 Republicans, mostly conservatives and a pair of moderate Hispanic lawmakers, opposed the measure. Six Democrats, a mix of Hispanic and moderate legislators, backed the bill.

Shadowing everything is this November's elections. Trump's historically poor popularity and a string of Democratic election victories have fueled that party's hopes of capturing control of the House and perhaps the Senate.

As he's done since taking office a year ago, Trump was dominating and confusing the jousting, at times to the detriment of his own party. He tweeted that the month-long funding measure should not contain money for a children's health insurance program — funds his administration has expressly supported — then the White House quickly said he indeed supports the legislation.

Congress must act by midnight Friday or the government will begin immediately locking its doors. Though the impact would initially be spotty — since most agencies would be closed until Monday — the story would be certain to dominate weekend news coverage, and each party would be gambling the public would blame the other.

In the event of a shutdown, food inspections and other vital services would continue, as would Social Security, other federal benefit programs and most military operations.

Hoping to garner more votes, Republicans added language providing six years of financing for the children's health program and delaying some taxes imposed by President Barack Obama's health care law. The health program insures nearly 9 million low-income children, and some states have nearly exhausted their funds.

But Pelosi compared the GOP bill to “having a bowl of doggy-doo and adding a cherry on top and calling it a chocolate sundae.”

Democrats want a deal to protect around 800,000 immigrants from deportation who arrived in the U.S. as children and now are here illegally. Trump has ended an Obama-era program providing those protections and given Congress until March to restore them, and he and Republicans want any immigration deal to include money for the president’s promised wall along the Mexican border and other security measures..

Republicans were demanding that a separate budget bill financing government for the rest of this year include big boosts for the military, and they accused Democrats of imperiling Pentagon funding. Democrats were insisting on equally large increases for domestic programs for opioid treatment and veterans — efforts that many in the GOP also back.

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

Blood test to detect 8 cancers early gives promising results

By MARILYNN MARCHIONE, AP Chief Medical Writer

Scientists are reporting progress on a blood test to detect many types of cancer at an early stage, including some of the most deadly ones that lack screening tools now.

Many groups are working on liquid biopsy tests, which look for DNA and other things that tumors shed into blood, to try to find cancer before it spreads, when chances of cure are best.

In a study Thursday in the journal *Science*, Johns Hopkins University scientists looked to see how well their experimental test detected cancer in people already known to have the disease. The blood tests found about 70 percent of eight common types of cancer in the 1,005 patients. The rates varied depending on the type — lower for breast tumors but high for ovarian, liver and pancreatic ones.

In many cases, the test narrowed the possible origin of the cancer to one or two places, such as colon or lung, important for limiting how much follow-up testing a patient might need. It gave only seven false alarms when tried on 812 others without cancer.

The test is nowhere near ready for use yet; it needs to be validated in a larger study already underway in a general population, rather than cancer patients, to see if it truly works and helps save lives — the best measure of a screening test’s value.

“We’re very, very excited and see this as a first step,” said Nickolas Papadopoulos, one of the Hopkins study leaders. “But we don’t want people calling up” and asking for the test now, because it’s not available, he said.

Some independent experts saw great promise.

“It’s such a good first set of results” that it gives hope this approach will pan out, said Dr. Peter Bach, a health policy expert at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center who consults for a gene testing company. “Anything close to 50 percent or 40 percent detection is pretty exciting stuff,” and this one did better than that, he said.

Dr. Len Lichtenfeld, deputy chief medical officer of the American Cancer Society, was encouraged that the test did well on cancers that lack screening tests now. If a blood test could find 98 percent of ovarian cancers at an early stage, as these early results suggest, “that would be a significant advance,” he said.

But he cautioned: “We have a long way to go to demonstrate its effectiveness as a screening test.”

TESTING THE TEST

The test detects mutations in 16 genes tied to cancer and measures eight proteins that often are elevated when cancer is present.

It covers breast, colon and lung and five kinds that don’t have screening tests for people at average risk: ovarian, liver, stomach, pancreatic and esophageal. Prostate cancer is not included. A blood test already is widely used — the PSA test — but its value for screening is controversial.

Researchers tried the new test on people whose cancers were still confined to where it started or had

spread a little but not widely throughout the body. It detected 33 percent of breast cancers, about 60 percent of colon or lung cancers and nearly all of the ovarian and liver ones. It did better when tumors were larger or had spread. It did less well at the very earliest stage.

CAVEATS AND NEXT STEPS

The test probably will not work as well when tested in a general population rather than those already known to have cancer, researchers say. Hopkins and Geisinger Health System in Pennsylvania have started a study of it in 10,000 Geisinger patients who will be tracked for at least five years.

The work was financed by many foundations, the Mayo Clinic, the National Institutes of Health and Howard Hughes Medical Institute, which provides The Associated Press with funding for health and science coverage. Many study leaders have financial ties to gene testing companies, and some get royalties for patents on cancer detection methods.

Researchers say the test could cost around \$500 based on current materials and methods, but the ultimate goal is to commercialize it, so what a company would charge is unknown.

OTHER LIQUID BIOPSY NEWS

Also this week, Taiwan-based CellMax Life gave results on its liquid biopsy test, which looks for whole tumor cells shed into blood, at an American Society of Clinical Oncology conference.

Researchers tested 620 people getting colonoscopies or with confirmed colon cancer at a hospital in Taiwan. The company said its test had an overall accuracy of 84 to 88 percent for detecting cancer or precancerous growths and a false alarm rate around 3 percent.

The company's chief executive, Atul Sharan, said U.S. studies should start this year. The test is sold now in Taiwan for \$500, but should cost around \$150 in the U.S., he said.

Dr. Richard Schilsky, chief medical officer of the oncology society, said results are encouraging, but the test needs more study, especially to see if it gives too many false alarms.

"The last thing you'd want is a test that tells you you might have cancer if you don't," he said.

Marilynn Marchione can be followed on Twitter: @MMarchioneAP

This Associated Press series was produced in partnership with the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Mother: Care denied daughter left in cold in hospital gown

By DAVID McFADDEN, Associated Press

BALTIMORE (AP) — The mother of a mentally ill woman who was left outside a Baltimore hospital on a frigid night wearing only a flimsy gown and socks says the 22-year-old daughter was denied care by medical professionals and left to face life-threatening conditions on the street.

Cheryl Chandler said she was only made aware of her missing daughter's predicament on the night of Jan. 9 when she happened upon a viral video shot by a passer-by enraged at the way she was treated.

Chandler's daughter, Rebecca, was escorted out of the hospital by uniformed security personnel with her street clothes stuffed in plastic bags, and she was left at an open-air bus stop with outdoor temperatures in the 30s. She had a gash on her forehead and was visibly disoriented, stumbling in her hospital gown and unable to formulate any words on the cold night.

At a Thursday press conference held at a lawyer's office, Chandler described her daughter as a beloved young woman who has been struggling intensely with mental illness since she was 16. Over the past year-and-a-half, she has cycled through a couple of residential facilities for mentally ill clients.

She said Rebecca, who has health insurance, was "denied her right by law to receive the clinical care" that the CEO of the University of Maryland Medical Center has publicly claimed she received that night.

"My daughter did not choose to be the face of mental illness. She didn't choose to be an example of the impact of a failed mental health care system. She was an individual in need of services," Chandler said through tears, adding that she was "eternally grateful" to psychotherapist Imamu Baraka for shooting the

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cellphone video showing her daughter's condition.

J. Wyndal Gordon, the attorney representing Rebecca, said she was suffering from an episode of acute psychosis when the institution turned its back on her. He asserts it's a case of "patient dumping," an illegal practice of turning away patients, mostly uninsured, from emergency rooms.

"Rebecca's condition was going to require a considerable hospital stay to stabilize her. UMMC, believing that she did not have insurance, determined it was better to return her to the street untreated and face whatever consequences arose from that decision rather than to absorb the cost," Gordon alleged.

Dr. Mohan Suntha, president and CEO of University of Maryland Medical Center, told reporters last week there were no excuses for what happened to the young woman. But he stood by her medical care, saying she received treatment and was discharged.

"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," he said.

On Thursday, the hospital released a statement saying its internal investigation has identified a breakdown after the point of medical discharge. It said resulting "actions steps" will include holding personnel accountable and getting outside experts to conduct an independent audit.

Suntha, in the statement, said he's confident that their actions "address the root causes of last week's breakdown."

But Gordon said he expects "legal action" over the incident.

He believes Rebecca should have been placed on a 72-hour hold so she could be properly evaluated. Instead, the hospital dumped her on the street "unable to speak coherently, fend for herself, or respond appropriately to the frigid temperatures."

She was involuntarily admitted to another Baltimore hospital a day after being discharged from the University of Maryland Medical Center Midtown Campus and sent to a homeless shelter, her family said.

Her mother said Rebecca is now at an undisclosed inpatient facility undergoing mental health treatment. Her younger sister, Rachelle, said she was doing better and read aloud a statement from Rebecca thanking people for their support.

Rebecca's twin sister, Rosslyn, who flew to Baltimore from her home in Texas, wept as she recalled watching the video showing her beloved sister in such distress.

"It didn't take a genius to see that she needed help," she said, her voice shaking.

David McFadden on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/dmcfadd>

Love in the air: Pope marries couple on papal plane in Chile

By NICOLE WINFIELD, Associated Press

IQUIQUE, Chile (AP) — It was all in a day's work for the ever-unpredictable Pope Francis.

First he celebrated the first-ever airborne papal wedding, marrying two flight attendants at 36,000 feet during a flight on Thursday to this northern Chilean beachside town.

Then after landing, Francis came to the rescue of a policewoman who was thrown from her rearing horse as his popemobile passed by.

In between, he did what he actually came to do: celebrate Mass for some 50,000 people in a desert-hot field near the town of Iquique.

And as a final gesture to cap a most remarkable day even by Franciscan standards, the 81-year-old Argentine set off a near-national uproar by accusing victims of Chile's most notorious pedophile priest of slander.

Welcome to the Francis papacy, five years on.

It all began with LATAM Flight 1250 from Santiago.

The crew of Chile's flagship carrier was gathering in the first-class section for the usual photo with the pope when flight attendants Paula Podest and Carlos Ciuffardi revealed that they were a married couple.

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Francis motioned for them to sit next to him for the photo and asked if they had been married in the church.

They told Francis that they had been wed in a civil service in 2010 but had been unable to follow up with a church ceremony because the Feb. 27, 2010 earthquake that rocked Chile had damaged the church.

Francis then made a proposal of his own: "I'll marry you!" and they readily agreed. The head of the airline served as the witness.

"He told me it's historic, that there has never before been a pope who married someone aboard a plane," the 41-year-old groom told journalists aboard the flight after he exchanged his "I do's" with his beaming bride.

Ciuffardi said the pope also told them: "This is the sacrament that is missing in the world, the sacrament of marriage. May this motivate others to get the sacrament of marriage. I'll do it for this reason."

Ciuffardi and the 39-year-old Podest have two children, 6-year-old Rafaela and 3-year-old Isabela. They said they plan to take a "mini-honeymoon" and return to Santiago on Friday.

The airborne wedding came about spontaneously, as is often the case with the ever-surprising Francis.

"We told him that we are husband and wife, that we have two daughters and that we would have loved to receive his blessing," Ciuffardi said. "All of a sudden he asked us if we were married in the church, too."

The couple explained that their church's bell tower had fallen during the quake, forcing the cancellation of the church service. One thing led to another, and they never followed up.

"He liked us and he asked, 'Do you want me to marry you?'" Ciuffardi said. "He asked: 'Are you sure?' 'Yes, of course!' we said."

A Vatican official then hastily drew up an official, albeit handwritten, marriage certificate, stating that the two had consented to the sacrament of marriage on Jan. 18, 2018, and that Francis had blessed it "aboard the papal plane from Santiago to Iquique."

Recounting the story to the 70 or so journalists who travel with the pope on his foreign trips, Podest said Francis offered a bit of advice to the not-so-newlyweds.

"He also said that the wedding rings shouldn't be too tight, because they'll torture you, but that if they're too loose, they'll fall off. So we have to be careful," she said blushing.

She said she and Ciuffardi also told the pope that when they first started dating, she was his boss at LATAM. Francis asked if she was still the boss, and both readily agreed.

"And that's why the marriage works," Ciuffardi said.

An hour after the impromptu ceremony, after the flight attendants had passed through the cabin with breakfast trays of fruit cups and warmed croissants, coffee and tea, the plane landed in Iquique and the happy couple bid the passengers farewell.

"We hope you had a good flight," Podest said.

Francis then moved on to the real purpose of his visit, celebrating Mass for the region's migrant community.

During his homily, he urged the Chilean government to continue welcoming migrants and caring for the least fortunate among them, saying, "There is no Christian joy when doors are closed."

The Argentine pope, who has frequently called on wealthy countries to welcome migrants and refugees, praised Iquique for having been a "land of dreams" for so many newcomers. And he urged Chile to continue to be a place of hospitality, employment and justice, especially for migrants, who are often exploited.

"Let us be attentive to the lack of steady employment, which destroys lives and homes," he said. "Let us be attentive to those who profit from the irregular status of many immigrants who don't know the language or who don't have their papers in order."

After the Mass, as his entourage headed back to Iquique, Francis had a scare when a police horse reared up just as his popemobile was passing by, throwing the rider and forcing the pope's driver to swerve slightly to get out of the way.

Francis, who wasn't hurt, had his driver stop so he could get out to check on the officer, described by the Vatican as a Chilean policewoman.

Francis stayed with her, bending down to speak with her, until an ambulance arrived. The Vatican said the rider remained conscious "and received some words of consolation from the Holy Father."

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After she was taken away, Francis resumed his ride.

It was the second such incident in recent months. Francis got a black eye in Cartagena, Colombia, in September when his popemobile stopped short and he hit his head on the side rail. He cut his eyebrow and wore a cassock stained with a few drops of blood for the rest of the day.

Francis has insisted on using minimally covered popemobiles on his foreign visits so he can be close to his flock. But Thursday's incident again underscored his vulnerability in the open-sided vehicles that often pass through tight, crowded spaces.

Earlier in the trip, Francis was hit in the head with a flying object that someone in the crowd had thrown toward him. He wasn't hurt, and the Vatican later revealed the offending object: A rolled up canvas hat with the words "Pray for the Chilean family."

Francis' visit though ended on a sour note for many in Chile, as he was asked by a Chilean reporter about his controversial decision to appoint a bishop accused of helping keep quiet about the crimes of Chile's most prominent sexual abuser, the Rev. Fernando Karadima.

Francis said that until he sees proof that Bishop Juan Barros was complicit in covering up Karadima's crimes, accusations of complicity by the victims of against Barros are "all calumny."

Patricio Navia, political science professor at Diego Portales University in Santiago, said the comment will likely erase any good will the pope had won over the issue.

Trump wades into PA race seen as test of GOP strength

By JILL COLVIN and BILL BARROW, Associated Press

CORAOPOLIS, Pa. (AP) — President Donald Trump waded into a potentially risky race on Thursday, throwing his support behind a Pennsylvania Republican in a contest widely viewed as a test of whether his party can stave off Democratic 2018 gains.

Speaking at a Pittsburgh-area factory, Trump praised state lawmaker Rick Saccone as "a real friend and a spectacular man."

And he told reporters he planned to come back to Pennsylvania — where he won in 2016 — to campaign for Saccone, who is trying to keep a House seat in Republican hands in the first congressional race of the year.

"I'll be back for Rick, and we're going to fill up a stadium and we're going to do something really special for Rick. I look forward to it," Trump said.

The White House had insisted Trump's visit had nothing to do with politics. And indeed, the speech he delivered at H&K Equipment largely stuck to the script, touting the tax cuts he signed into law just before Christmas, and trying to turn the conversation back to his accomplishments after weeks dominated by distractions, including questions about his mental health and comments about immigration that some considered racist.

But hours before he left Washington, Trump made clear the visit had a second purpose.

"We will be going to Pennsylvania today in order to give my total support to RICK SACCONA," Trump tweeted, adding: "We need more Republicans to continue our already successful agenda!"

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders quickly sought to correct the record, insisting in a statement that Trump was going to Pennsylvania to talk about tax cuts, not to campaign.

A campaign event would require that taxpayers be reimbursed for some of Trump's travel expenses. Trump's re-election campaign reimbursed the Treasury \$68,000 for political travel last year.

In his remarks, Trump said the tax cuts he'd signed into law were already boosting the economy and helping companies like H&K.

"We are coming back bigger and better and stronger than ever," he said, speaking to workers flanked by construction equipment. "At the center of America's resurgence are the massive tax cuts that I just signed into law."

"The signs of America's comeback can be seen at companies like this one, which just had its most successful year in its 35-year history," he said.

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He also praised companies that have been passing their tax savings onto employers, largely in the form of one-time bonuses.

"Nobody thought that the companies were going to step up and pay all of these great bonuses to people," he said.

Saccone, a 59-year-old state representative, faces Conor Lamb, a 33-year-old lawyer and former Marine, in the March 13 special election to replace Republican Tim Murphy, who resigned last year after acknowledging an extramarital affair.

The election is shaping up as the next test of Democratic enthusiasm and GOP resilience in the Trump era and an early indicator of whether a midterm wave may be coming in November, as Democrats hope. The party that controls the White House traditionally loses seats in Congress in the following midterm election.

While Trump easily won the district in 2016, the Congressional Leadership Fund, a political action committee aligned with House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., has opened offices in the district with paid canvassers. Political groups bankrolled by the billionaire Ricketts family, owners of the Chicago Cubs, are also airing television ads on Saccone's behalf.

As for Democrats, spokeswoman Meredith Kelly, at the national party's House campaign headquarters, praised Lamb's "long record of public service to our country." But the party hasn't included the district on its official list of GOP-held targets, which now includes 91 seats. Democrats must capture 24 GOP-held seats to regain a majority in the House.

In 2017, Democrats managed surprisingly competitive races in four special congressional races in heavily Republican districts, but lost all four.

Lamb must "run a perfect campaign," said Mike Mikus, a Democratic campaign strategist who has run congressional races in the Pittsburgh area. "But it can be done," Mikus added.

Registered Democrats outnumber Republicans in the district by about 70,000, a reflection of organized labor's influence. But many of those union households embraced Trump's populist, protectionist message in 2016.

Saccone has framed his candidacy as an extension of the agenda that propelled Trump to office.

"It's only natural to have him come out to see his core constituency and have us celebrate his successes with him," Saccone said.

Barrow reported from Atlanta. Associated Press reporters Marc Levy in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania contributed to this report.

Russia probes come up against claims of executive privilege

By CHAD DAY and TOM LOBIANCO, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House and lawmakers haggled Thursday over what former chief strategist Steve Bannon and other top aides to President Donald Trump can tell Congress as it investigates possible connections with Russia.

Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle have been critical of the White House's sweeping interpretation of executive privilege and its contention that pretty much everything is off limits until the president says it's not.

Bannon had been subpoenaed to return to the House Intelligence Committee on Thursday to face additional questions about his interactions with the president, but documents obtained by The Associated Press show he now has until the week of Jan. 29. The committee gave him more time to "clarify the White House's instructions" regarding what he can tell lawmakers, the documents show.

The postponement of Bannon's interview came after his attorney, Bill Burck, sent a letter to the committee, arguing that it had failed to give him proper time to respond or review documents the committee may want to ask him about. According to the letter, obtained by the AP, the committee asked Burck to work with the White House to define the scope of the "privilege the President may wish to assert" over Bannon.

The negotiations will put Burck in the position of working out what one of his clients — Bannon — can

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say with an office overseen by another client, White House counsel Don McGahn. Burck is representing McGahn in special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into contacts between the Trump campaign and Russia.

While those negotiations continue, a scheduled interview for Friday with longtime Trump aide Hope Hicks was postponed, according to a person familiar with the committee's investigation. A new date for her interview has not been set, said the person who spoke on condition of anonymity because the person wasn't authorized to speak publicly about the matter.

The postponements come after Bannon's contentious, day-long interview earlier this week.

As lawmakers in the closed-door session probed Bannon's time working for Trump, his attorney phoned the White House counsel's office, relaying questions and asking what Bannon could tell Congress, according to a White House official and a second person familiar with the interview.

The answer was a broad one. Bannon couldn't discuss anything to do with his work on the presidential transition or later in the White House itself.

The development brought to the forefront questions about White House efforts to control what current and former aides may or may not tell Congress about their time in Trump's inner circle, and whether Republicans who hold majorities on Capitol Hill will force the issue. It was also the broadest example yet of the White House using executive privilege to limit a witness' testimony without making a formal invocation of that presidential power.

The White House has argued that Bannon, like every current and former member of the administration, starts under the assumption that he is covered by executive privilege and can only answer certain questions unless Trump explicitly says otherwise.

During his testimony earlier this week, Bannon sought to extend this privilege to his conversations after he had left the White House in August.

According to Burck's letter, Bannon refused to discuss any "advice" he gave Trump after his last day in the White House, though he did answer an undisclosed question about his "communications" with the president.

Bannon's silence provoked bipartisan criticism and prompted the subpoena from the committee's Republican chairman, Devin Nunes of California,

The criticisms echoed those from last summer when Attorney General Jeff Sessions baffled some lawmakers by refusing to answer questions about his conversations with the president, while also maintaining he was not citing executive privilege. Following Sessions' testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee, Democratic Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse said, "As someone who served in the Justice Department, I would love to know what he is talking about."

Michael Dorf, a constitutional law professor at Cornell University, said that while traditionally Congress has required a formal assertion of executive privilege in order for a witness to refuse to answer a question, more recently "we've seen people just not answer questions without asserting privilege."

"It's kind of a game of separation-of-powers chicken that's going on there," he said. "Because nobody knows the full scope of executive privilege — other than that it's not absolute from the Nixon case — no one really wants to push it."

Dorf referred to the court case surrounding the Supreme Court's rejection in 1974 of President Richard Nixon's assertion that he could use executive privilege to prevent the release of tape recordings involving him and other aides.

Earlier this week, White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said the phone conversations Burck had with the White House counsel's office during the interview were standard procedure.

Burck spoke with Uttam Dhillon, deputy White House counsel, during Bannon's interview. A White House official and a second person familiar with Bannon's interview confirmed the details of the conversations. They spoke only on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

While the congressional negotiations play out, Bannon is set to meet with Mueller's investigators for an interview instead of appearing before a grand jury. A person familiar with that issue confirmed the

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interview. That person was not authorized to speak publicly about private conversations. Peter Carr, a spokesman for the special counsel's office, declined comment.

Bannon is expected to cooperate with Mueller, and if the White House attempts to invoke privilege to keep him from answering Mueller's questions, it would be a departure from other White House interviews.

White House lawyers to date have made documents and witnesses available to Mueller without asserting privileges that could slow the investigation in a protracted legal fight. The goal of the cooperation, from the White House perspective, has been to help the investigation conclude as quickly as possible.

Associated Press writers Jonathan Lemire in New York and Zeke Miller, Eric Tucker and Mary Clare Jalonick in Washington contributed to this report.

US stock indexes are mostly higher in morning trading

By ALEX VEIGA, AP Business Writer

The major U.S. stock indexes were mostly higher in morning trading Friday as gains by retailers and consumer goods companies outweighed losses in other sectors. Technology stocks were among the biggest decliners. Energy companies fell along with the price of crude oil. Bond yields surged to the highest level in more than three years. Investors were monitoring developments in Washington ahead of a possible federal government shutdown this weekend.

KEEPING SCORE: The Standard & Poor's 500 index rose 4 points, or 0.2 percent, to 2,802 as of 11:30 a.m. Eastern Time. The Dow Jones industrial average slid 31 points, or 0.1 percent, to 25,987. The Nasdaq added 21 points, or 0.3 percent, to 7,317. The Russell 2000 index of smaller-company stocks picked up 10 points, or 0.7 percent, to 1,587. More stocks rose than fell on the New York Stock Exchange.

SHUTDOWN SHOWDOWN: U.S. House lawmakers voted for a stopgap funding bill to keep agency doors open and federal workers at their jobs until mid-February, but Senate Democrats and some Republicans were expected to block it on Friday. A shutdown could hurt consumer spending and rattle markets, though it's unlikely to cause widespread economic damage, Credit Suisse economists said in a note on Thursday.

THE QUOTE: Going by past federal government shutdowns, they typically don't last very long and the majority of the government remains funded, noted Jeramey Lynch, global investment specialist with J.P. Morgan Private Bank in Michigan.

"We expect the market to move past it and not to be too caught off guard if that were to happen," Lynch said.

BOND YIELDS: Bond prices fell. The yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 2.64 percent from 2.63 percent late Thursday. The yield is now at the highest level since September 2014, when it hit a high of 2.647 percent.

NOT A DRAG: Tobacco companies, beverage makers and other consumer products stocks rose. Altria Group gained 86 cents, or 1.2 percent, to \$70.89. Philip Morris International picked up \$2.26, or 2.2 percent, to \$107.33.

RISING RETAIL: Investors bid up shares in retailers, cruise lines and other consumer-focused companies. Nike led the pack, climbing 3.6 percent. The stock was the biggest gainer in the S&P 500 index, adding \$2.29 to \$66.41.

BOARDROOM MAKEOVER: Lowe's rose 3 percent after the home-improvement supply retailer named three new directors. The stock added \$3.06 to \$104.42.

BETTING ON BANKS: Financials stocks posted solid gains. Regions Financial picked up 39 cents, or 2.1 percent, to \$18.54.

PRIME HIKE: Amazon was trading higher after the e-commerce giant said it will raise the price of its Prime membership monthly plan by nearly 20 percent. Starting Friday, new monthly members will pay \$12.99 a month, up from \$10.99. The stock picked up \$2.98 to \$1,296.30.

TECH SLIDE: Technology stocks were among the biggest decliners, giving up some of their recent gains. Qorvo slid \$3.11, or 4.4 percent, to \$67.59.

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NOT BUYING: American Express fell 2.4 percent after the credit card issuer suspended its share buy-back program for six months. The stock shed \$2.38 to \$97.48.

ENERGY: Oil futures were down after the International Energy Agency said U.S. oil production would rise sharply this year. Benchmark U.S. crude lost 63 cents to \$63.32 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange. Brent crude, used to price international oils, fell 79 cents to \$68.52 a barrel.

The decline in oil prices weighed on energy sector stocks. Range Resources slid 45 cents, or 2.7 percent, to \$16.02.

CURRENCIES: The dollar fell to 110.63 yen from 111.98 yen on Thursday. The euro weakened to \$1.2228 from \$1.2242.

BITCOIN: The price of bitcoin gained 3.7 percent to \$11,663, according to the tracking site CoinDesk. Bitcoin futures on the Cboe Futures Exchange were down 0.4 percent to \$11,720. The futures allow investors to make bets on the future price of bitcoin.

MARKETS OVERSEAS: Major stock indexes in Europe notched gains. Germany's DAX rose 1 percent and France's CAC 40 added 0.4 percent. Britain's FTSE 100 gained 0.3 percent. In Asia, Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 edged up 0.2 percent, while South Korea's Kospi gained 0.2 percent. Hong Kong's Hang Seng ended 0.4 percent higher.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, Jan. 19, the 19th day of 2018. There are 346 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 19, 1953, CBS-TV aired the widely watched episode of "I Love Lucy" in which Lucy Ricardo, played by Lucille Ball, gave birth to Little Ricky. (By coincidence, Ball gave birth the same day to her son, Desi Arnaz Jr.)

On this date:

In 1807, Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee was born in Westmoreland County, Virginia.

In 1861, Georgia became the fifth state to secede from the Union.

In 1867, the song "The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze" by Gaston Lyle, Alfred Lee and George Leybourne was first published in London.

In 1915, Germany carried out its first air raid on Britain during World War I as a pair of Zeppelins dropped bombs onto Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn in England.

In 1937, millionaire Howard Hughes set a transcontinental air record by flying his monoplane from Los Angeles to Newark, New Jersey, in 7 hours, 28 minutes and 25 seconds.

In 1942, during World War II, Japanese forces captured the British protectorate of North Borneo. A German submarine sank the Canadian liner RMS Lady Hawkins off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, killing 251 people; 71 survived.

In 1955, a presidential news conference was filmed for television and newsreels for the first time, with the permission of President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

In 1966, Indira Gandhi was chosen to be prime minister of India by the National Congress party.

In 1970, President Richard M. Nixon nominated G. Harrold Carswell to the Supreme Court; however, the nomination was defeated because of controversy over Carswell's past racial views.

In 1977, President Gerald R. Ford pardoned Iva Toguri D'Aquino, an American convicted of treason for making radio broadcasts aimed at demoralizing Allied troops in the Pacific Theater during World War II. (Although she was popularly referred to as "Tokyo Rose," D'Aquino never used that name.)

In 1987, Guy Hunt became Alabama's first Republican governor since 1874 as he was sworn into office, succeeding George C. Wallace.

In 1998, "rockabilly" pioneer Carl Perkins died in Jackson, Tennessee, at age 65.

Ten years ago: Republican John McCain won a hard-fought South Carolina primary; Democrats Hillary

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Rodham Clinton and Barack Obama split the spoils in the Nevada caucuses. A U.S. soldier was killed south of Baghdad in a roadside bomb attack; it was the first American death to occur on a newly introduced, heavily armored vehicle known as MRAP. Death claimed actress Suzanne Pleshette in Los Angeles at age 70; John Stewart, a former member of the Kingston Trio, in San Diego at age 68; and former Chicago Mayor Eugene Sawyer at age 73.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama said the U.S. stood ready to provide whatever assistance Algerian officials needed in the aftermath of a deadly terrorist attack at a natural gas complex in the Sahara, a siege which finally came to an end with a second assault by special forces. Thousands of gun advocates gathered peacefully at state capitals around the U.S. to rally against stricter limits on firearms. Death claimed baseball Hall of Famers Stan Musial at age 92 and Earl Weaver at age 82.

One year ago: With fireworks heralding his big moment, Donald Trump swept into Washington on the eve of his presidential inauguration and pledged to unify a nation sorely divided and clamoring for change. Treasury secretary-nominee Steven Mnuchin clashed with Democrats during a lengthy confirmation hearing over his handling of thousands of mortgage foreclosures and his failure to initially disclose to the committee \$100 million in assets and interests in a Cayman Islands corporation. Actor Miguel Ferrer died at his Los Angeles home at age 61.

Today's Birthdays: Former U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar is 98. Actress Tippi Hedren is 88. Former PBS newsman Robert MacNeil is 87. Movie director Richard Lester is 86. Actor-singer Michael Crawford is 76. Actress Shelley Fabares (fab-RAY) is 74. Country singer Dolly Parton is 72. Former ABC newswoman Ann Compton is 71. TV chef Paula Deen is 71. Rock singer Martha Davis is 67. Singer Dewey Bunnell (America) is 66. Actor Desi Arnaz Jr. is 65. Actress Katey Sagal is 64. Comedian Paul Rodriguez is 63. Conductor Sir Simon Rattle is 63. Reggae musician Mickey Virtue (UB40) is 61. Rock musician Jeff Pilson (Foreigner) is 60. Actor Paul McCrane is 57. Actor William Ragsdale is 57. Basketball coach Jeff Van Gundy is 56. International Tennis Hall of Famer Stefan Edberg is 52. Rock singer Whitfield Crane (Ugly Kid Joe) is 50. Singer Trey Lorenz is 49. Actor Shawn Wayans is 47. Rock singer-musician John Wozniak (Marcy Playground) is 47. Actress Drea (DRAY-uh') de Matteo is 46. Comedian-impressionist Frank Caliendo is 44. Actor Drew Powell is 42. Actress Marsha Thomason is 42. Actress Bitsie Tulloch is 37. Actress Jodie Sweetin is 36. Movie director Damien Chazelle is 33. Actor Logan Lerman is 26. Olympic gold medal gymnast Shawn Johnson is 26. Rapper Mac Miller is 26.

Thought for Today: "America is woven of many strands. I would recognise them and let it so remain. Our fate is to become one, and yet many. This is not prophecy, but description." — Ralph Ellison, American author (1913-1994).

Riddle Answer: A Cold