

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 1 of 51



- 1- Recycling trailers
- 1- Chicken Soup for the Soul
- 1- Harr Auto Body Ad
- 2- Guest Skater Ava Miller
- 3- Senior Queen Candidates
- 4- Junior Queen Candidates
- 5- Gun Show Ad
- 5- Farmers Union PSA
- 5- Working on Street Light
- 6- Silver Skates Ad
- 7- Today in Weather History
- 8- Today's Forecast
- 9- Yesterday's Weather
- 9- Today's Weather Info
- 9- National Weather Map
- 10- Daily Devotional
- 11- 2018 Community Events
- 12- News from the Associated Press

Today's Events

Friday, Jan. 26

Lewis and Clark Debate at Yankton High School
Boys' Basketball with Clark/Willow Lake at Groton.
7th grade at 4 p.m., 8th grade at 5 p.m., JV at 6:30 p.m. followed by varsity game.

Saturday, Jan. 27

Lewis and Clark Debate at Yankton High School
NEC/DAK12 Classic at Madison: 11:45 a.m., Groton Area vs. Lennox

10 a.m.: Wrestling at Groton (Britton-Hecla, Canton JV, Clark/Willow Lake, Ellendale/Edgeley/Kulm, Huron JV, Ipswich/Leola/Bowdle, Milbank JV, Warner/Northwestern, Sioux Fall O'Gorman JV, Watertown JV, Webster Area, Wolsey/Wessington, Groton Area)

Sunday, Jan. 28

80th Annual Carnival of Silver Skates, 2 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

"From minor scratches to a complete rebuild . . . we can do it all"

NOW OPEN

Harris

Auto Body ABDN

**225 Brown County Hwy 19 South
Aberdeen: 605/725-4900**

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

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 2 of 51

Carnival of Silver Skates Sunday, 2 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.



A special thank you to this year's guest skater...

Ava Miller



We are excited to welcome Ava Miller to the ice this year for a specialty performance. Ava is joining us all the way from Las Vegas, Nevada this year! Ava started her figure skating career here in South Dakota taking lessons with Aberdeen Park and Rec and being part of the Carnival of Silver Skates in 2011. After moving to Las Vegas in June of that year, she began attending skate school twice weekly before moving on to private lessons and eventually competitions. Ava currently skates and does off-ice stretching and strength work three hours per day, six days per week at City National Arena with her coaches David Nickel and Chad Goodwin. She is a member of the United States Figure Skating Association, the Las Vegas Golden Knights Center of Excellence, and the Las Vegas Figure Skating Club, who recently named her Outstanding Club Performer.

Ava is the daughter of Jeff and Amber Miller and the granddaughter of Bob and Shirley Meister of Groton and Ed and Marie Miller of Andover. Ava is 11-years-old and attends sixth grade at Odyssey Charter School. When she has spare time, she enjoys watching and cheering for Team USA Figure Skating, playing with her dogs, drawing, reading, and watching movies.

Queen Candidates

Seniors



Lexi Gustafson



Hannah Lewandowski



Jasmine Schinkel



Madison Sippel

Queen Candidates

Juniors



Kaitlyn Anderson



Taylor Holm



Shyla Larson



Sam Menzia



Emily Thompson



Shannon Wiedrick

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 5 of 51

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)



A worker from Muth Electric worked on a few of the street lights along US12 in Groton yesterday. There were a few that were not working and there is yet one more pole that needs to be installed. (Photo by Tina Kosel)



All auto owners!
Save \$2-\$4 /tank
& grow your local economy
by choosing low carbon
Super Premium E30's
94 octane, more power,
same mileage, fewer
carbon deposits, lower
maintenance costs,
slashed benzene & related
genotoxic, carcinogenic
tailpipe emissions;
*see sdfu.org's E30 tab for
info, E30 prices\locations.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 6 of 51

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!



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 7 of 51

Today in Weather History

January 26, 1977: Four days of very strong winds occurred from the 26th through the 29th with a strong low pressure area over western Ontario. Strong northwest winds of 30 to 45 mph with gusts into the 60s caused widespread blowing and drifting snow with most roads closed with many traffic accidents. The winds combined with subzero temperatures to create wind chills of 60 to 80 below zero. Many schools were closed for several days.

January 26, 2014: A strong Alberta Clipper system generated light snow and strong winds across the region resulting in blizzard conditions. On Sunday morning, a band of moderate to heavy snow showers developed over North Dakota and swept down through our region producing cloud to ground lightning and thundersnow at times. Snowfall amounts were generally three inches or less. Wind gusts ranged from 45 to 55 mph at times. Several no travel advisories were issued due to poor visibilities in blizzard conditions with state officials closing a large portion of Interstate-29 from Brookings to the North Dakota border. Click [HERE](#) for more information. January 2014 will go down as one of the windiest months across the region along with extreme temperatures swings, especially for northeast South Dakota. The constant bombardment from powerful clipper systems from the northwest was responsible for this unusual weather. Click [HERE](#) for more information on this month of extremes.

1772: Possibly the greatest snowfall ever recorded in Washington started on this day. When the storm began, Thomas Jefferson was returning home from his honeymoon with his new bride, Martha Wayles Skelton. The newlyweds made it to within eight miles of Monticello before having to abandon their carriage in the deep snow. Both finished the ride on horseback in the blinding snow. The newlyweds arrived home late on the night of January 26th. In Jefferson's "Garden Book," he wrote "the deepest snow we have ever seen. In Albermarle it was about 3. F. deep." You can read the entry by clicking [HERE](#).

1937: The wettest month ever in Cincinnati, Ohio is January 1937 when 13.68 inches fell. Their average January amount is 3.00 inches of precipitation. The overabundance of precipitation over the Ohio River basin caused near record to record flooding in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Kentucky. On this day, the river gauge reached 80 feet in Cincinnati, the highest level in the city's history. The Ohio River reached 57 feet in Louisville, Kentucky on the 27th, also setting a new record by ten feet. Seventy percent of the city was under water at that time. The NWS Office in Louisville, Kentucky has an informative [webpage](#) on this event.

1978 - A paralyzing blizzard struck the Midwest. One to three feet of snow fell in Michigan, and 20 to 40 inches was reported across Indiana. Winds reached 70 mph in Michigan, and gusted above 100 mph in Ohio. The high winds produced snow drifts twenty feet high in Michigan and Indiana stranding thousands on the interstate highways. Temperatures in Ohio dropped from the 40s to near zero during the storm. (David Ludlum)

1983 - The California coast was battered by a storm which produced record high tides, thirty-two foot waves, and mudslides, causing millions of dollars damage. The storm then moved east and dumped four feet of snow on Lake Tahoe. (22nd-29th) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A winter storm spread heavy snow across the Middle and Northern Atlantic Coast States, with 18 inches reported at Vineland NJ, and wind gusts to 65 mph at Chatham MA. Snow cover in Virginia ranged up to thirty inches following this second major storm in just one week. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A snowstorm in the northeastern U.S. produced 19 inches at Austerlitz NY and Stillwater NY. A storm in the Great Lakes Region left 16.5 inches at Marquette MI, for a total of 43 inches in six days. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 8 of 51

Fri Jan 26	Sat Jan 27	Sun Jan 28	Mon Jan 29	Tue Jan 30	Wed Jan 31	Thu Feb 1
44°F	32°F	18°F	21°F	38°F	27°F	16°F
21°F	6°F	1°F	12°F	19°F	2°F	2°F
SSW 21 MPH	W 14 MPH Precip 20%	N 8 MPH	ENE 5 MPH	S 14 MPH	NNW 14 MPH	NNW 9 MPH

WINDY

Highs In The 40s

**Temperatures Falling
This Weekend**

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

www.weather.gov/abr

GRAPHIC CREATED:
1/26/2018 5:18 AM

Published on: 01/26/2018 at 5:23AM

Above average temperatures will continue across the region with highs forecast to be 15-20° above average Friday and 5-10° above average Saturday. Lows will also remain above average tonight and Friday night before dropping back to the single digits Saturday and Sunday night.

Groton Daily Independent

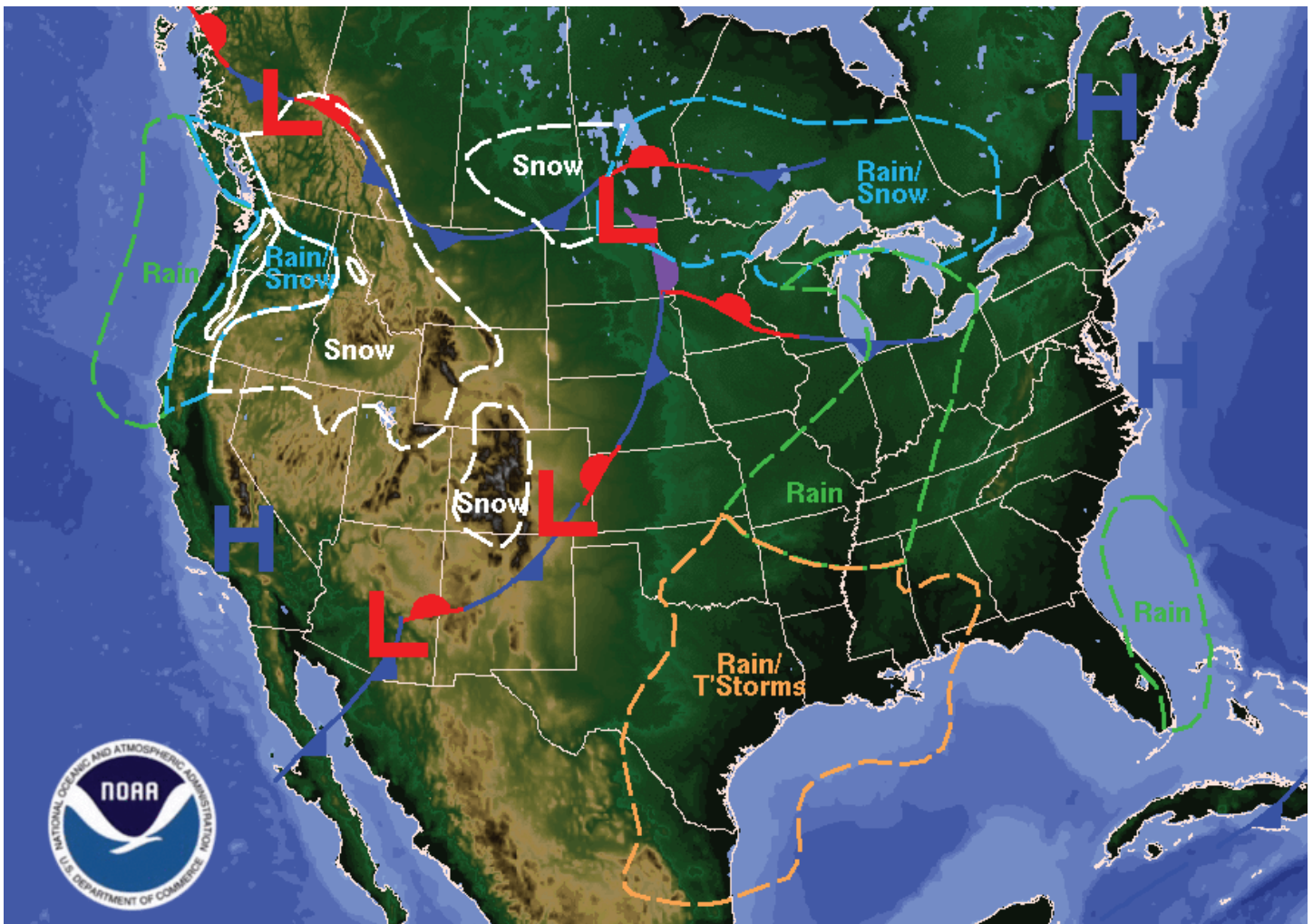
Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 9 of 51

Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 44.1
Low Outside Temp: 16.7
Wind Chill: -
High Gust: 29
Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 58° in 1947
Record Low: -30° in 1950
Average High: 23°F
Average Low: 2°F
Average Precip in Jan: 0.41
Precip to date in Jan: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.41
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:32 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:00 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Fri, Jan 26, 2018, issued 4:22 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Mcreynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

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

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 10 of 51



THE ONLY WAY

A welfare worker, visiting in the home of one of her clients, discovered a crippled child that had never gone to school because he was unable to walk. Her compassionate heart was deeply touched by his condition and she decided to do something out of the ordinary for him.

Initially, she took him to a distinguished orthopedic surgeon who performed several procedures to correct the problems in his legs. Then a podiatrist corrected the problems with his crooked feet. Little by little he learned to walk and run and play. He also learned to read and write and make enough progress to attend school with his friends.

One day, in telling this story to a group of her friends she said, "He is now a grown man. And I want you to tell me where you think he is and what he is doing."

After a few moments her colleagues began to reply: "A doctor?" asked one. "No," she responded. "A minister?" wondered another. "No," she replied. "I know," said a third, "a welfare worker because of your influence on his life."

"No," she said with tears in her eyes. "He is now in prison serving a life term for murder. You see, we spent all of our time in teaching him how to walk and run, read and write, but we did not teach him where to walk and what to read and who he should communicate with."

David prayed, "Teach me Your way, O Lord, and I will walk in Your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear Your name."

Prayer: Father, write on each of our hearts the words of Your Son: "I am the way, the truth and the life!" In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 86:11 Teach me Your way, O Lord; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 11 of 51

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

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 12 of 51

News from the  Associated Press

Thursday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS BASKETBALL

Bon Homme 58, Andes Central/Dakota Christian 45
Aberdeen Christian 57, Waverly-South Shore 39
Arlington 59, Lake Preston 38
Avon 56, Gregory 53
Boyd County, Neb. 58, Burke/South Central 44
Brandon Valley 56, Mitchell 54
Castlewood 61, Hamlin 56
Colman-Egan 41, Deubrook 27
Crow Creek 71, Stanley County 63
Dell Rapids 81, Vermillion 66
Deuel 62, Sisseton 60
Douglas 65, Custer 34
Elkton-Lake Benton 68, Estelline 32
Ethan 70, Mitchell Christian 60
Hill City 68, Wall 42
Hot Springs 65, Crawford, Neb. 54
Irene-Wakonda 54, Freeman Academy/Marion 30
Jones County 59, Kadoka Area 41
Lennox 53, Parkston 26
Leola/Frederick 66, Faulkton 51
Little Wound 64, Bennett County 53
Milbank Area 68, Morris Area/Chokio-Alberta, Minn. 62
Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 52, DeSmet 46
Philip 59, Dupree 44
Potter County 57, Eureka/Bowdle 44
Red Cloud 74, Lead-Deadwood 37
Scotland 50, Wagner 47
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 59, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 51
Sioux Falls Washington 52, Sioux Falls Lincoln 44
Sturgis Brown 54, St. Thomas More 44
Sully Buttes 59, Hitchcock-Tulare 38
Tea Area 96, Garretson 49
Viborg-Hurley 69, Centerville 27
Dakota Oyate Challenge
First Round
Flandreau Indian 86, Marty Indian 49
Lower Brule 77, Takini 50
Omaha Nation, Neb. 87, Crazy Horse 32
Tiospa Zina Tribal 87, Tiospaye Topa 40

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Roncalli 65, Webster 31
Alcester-Hudson 51, Dell Rapids St. Mary 34
Bon Homme 43, Andes Central/Dakota Christian 36

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 13 of 51

Boyd County, Neb. 46, Burke/South Central 34
Centerville 50, Viborg-Hurley 43
Clark/Willow Lake 61, Great Plains Lutheran 35
Crow Creek 73, Stanley County 24
Custer 70, Douglas 60
Dakota Valley 49, Spirit Lake, Iowa 41
Ethan 54, Mitchell Christian 18
Faith 60, Herreid/Selby Area 34
Faulkton 61, Leola/Frederick 54
Florence/Henry 62, Iroquois 14
Freeman 65, Canistota 36
Hamlin 51, Castlewood 41
Hanson 72, Kimball/White Lake 23
Irene-Wakonda 54, Freeman Academy/Marion 25
Kadoka Area 54, Jones County 25
Lennox 52, Beresford 51
Lyman 43, Highmore-Harrold 35
Madison 59, Tea Area 52
McLaughlin 55, Standing Rock, N.D. 49
Morris Area/Chokio-Alberta, Minn. 55, Milbank 48
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 49, Gregory 42
New England, N.D. 68, Harding County 47
Philip 47, Dupree 42
Pine Ridge 72, Todd County 70
Potter County 56, Eureka/Bowdle 31
Red Cloud 58, Lead-Deadwood 34
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 67, Wessington Springs 49
Sisseton 49, Deuel 28
St. Thomas More 63, Sturgis Brown 37
Sully Buttes 65, Hitchcock-Tulare 56
Vermillion 42, Dell Rapids 40
Warner 44, Langford 32
Watertown 48, Brookings 43
Waubay/Summit 37, Wilmot 30
White River 67, Colome 32
Winner 47, Miller 38
Big East Conference Tournament
First Round
Flandreau 63, Baltic 28
McCook Central/Montrose 43, Garretson 23
Parker 62, Howard 57
Sioux Valley 69, Chester 34
Dakota Oyate Challenge
First Round
Lower Brule 79, Tiospaye Topa 57
Marty Indian 66, Crazy Horse 40
Omaha Nation, Neb. 75, Takini 20
Tiospa Zina Tribal 59, Flandreau Indian 42

South Dakota could become first state to repeal Marsy's Law

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Some South Dakota legislators want to repeal a voter-approved constitutional "bill of rights" for crime victims, citing unintended consequences like high costs to counties and protections they say have actually hampered investigations.

South Dakota is the first state to seek to repeal "Marsy's Law" of the six that enacted it, said Gail Gitcho, a spokeswoman for Marsy's Law for All. Montana's Supreme Court recently tossed the constitutional amendment that voters approved in 2016, citing flaws in how it was written.

It's named after California college student Marsalee "Marsy" Nicholas, who was stalked and killed in 1983 by an ex-boyfriend. It has restricted access to some victim information and guarantees victims or their families will be notified about such things as court dates and a perpetrator's release. Some of those things are codified separately in state law.

South Dakota House Speaker Mark Mickelson said Thursday that lawmakers would be seeking to strengthen victims' rights provisions already in state law before asking voters to repeal the Marsy's Law constitutional amendment they passed in 2016.

"We're going to strengthen South Dakota victims' rights," Mickelson said. "Part of that is removing the unintended consequences of Marsy's Law from the constitution."

The measure has been approved by voters in California, Ohio, Illinois, Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota.

The South Dakota amendment established constitutional rights for crime victims including privacy, protection from harassment or abuse and timely notice of trial, sentencing and post-judgment proceedings. The rights also extend to a victim's spouse and family members.

"If it goes back into statute, then those rights are spineless. They have no teeth," Gitcho said. "It looks like the speaker wants to take away rights from people that were already guaranteed to them by the constitution."

But Mickelson said he and others are trying to fix unintended consequences from Marsy's Law that have degraded victims' rights. Minnehaha County Sheriff Mike Milstead said his office depends on the eyes and ears of the public to help the Sioux Falls-based department solve cases, but the amendment has limited the information they can provide.

"We struggle sometimes being able to share enough information with the public to have them help us in solving crimes," Milstead said.

The package of legislation aimed at strengthening state law and supplanting the constitutional amendment would clarify that victims have to opt into their rights, expand the definition of victim to encompass additional crimes and allow victims to name representatives to act on their behalf.

The Marsy's Law repeal proposal would go to voters in the November election, potentially with replacement language saying that victims have the "right to be treated with fairness and respect for their dignity and the right to be free from intimidation, harassment and abuse."

A week after Marsy Nicholas was killed, her mother and brother were confronted by the suspect at a store. They did not know the man had been released on bail. Her brother, Broadcom Corp. co-founder Henry Nicholas, campaigned to pass Marsy's Law first in California in 2008, then in other states.

The South Dakota amendment passed with about 60 percent support.

Lawmaker proposes ending citizens' constitutional amendments

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's House speaker on Thursday proposed a measure that would ask voters to end their ability to bypass the Legislature to pursue changes to the state constitution.

Rep. Mark Mickelson said his proposal would better align the amendment process for South Dakota's constitution with how changes to the U.S. constitution are handled. He said the constitution is "pretty sacred."

South Dakota citizens can currently gather signatures to put their own constitutional changes to a public vote. Mickelson's amendment would remove that power, leaving only the Legislature with the authority to

propose changes. Amendments must get voter approval.

Mitch Richter, co-sponsor of a proposed government ethics amendment that would block the Legislature from unilaterally changing the state's ballot question system, said Mickelson must be "scared of what the people would propose."

"It's just shocking to me that he would take that step along with other legislators to repeal the whole process," Richter said.

Mickelson's plan is among several at the Legislature that would make it harder to change the constitution. The Republican lawmaker said he wants it to be part of the conversation this year.

"This idea will be perceived as being kind of the far end of the spectrum, I'm sure, because we're taking away the right of the people to amend our state constitution by a simple majority vote," Mickelson said.

A different measure would ask voters to increase the majority vote threshold required for a constitutional change to 55 percent of the votes cast. Senate lawmakers approved that measure this week, advancing it to the state House.

John Sherrill Houser, creator of divisive Onate statue, dies

By RUSSELL CONTRERAS, Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — John Sherrill Houser, a sculptor whose work includes a statue depicting conquistador Don Juan de Onate in El Paso, Texas, that divided residents along ethnic and social class lines, has died. He was 82.

Houser died of heart failure Jan. 10 in Tucson, Arizona, after a routine heart procedure, according to Kenna Ramirez, chair of the Twelve Travelers Memorial of the Southwest, a group that promoted his art.

In 2003, Houser gained national attention after being commissioned to create a monument depicting Onate, a Spanish explorer who established what would become the cities of Santa Fe, New Mexico and El Paso.

But the project drew criticism from Native Americans who remembered Onate as a man who nearly wiped out Acoma Pueblo in New Mexico, enslaved their children and cut off one foot of any man considered to be of fighting age.

The El Paso City Council eventually voted to change the statue's name to "The Equestrian," but that didn't ease tensions. When the statue was unveiled in 2007 at the El Paso International Airport, supporters and opponents crowded around the event with foes calling Houser a racist.

"It really hurt him," Perry Houser, his nephew, told The Associated Press. "He had lived among Native Americans."

Born in Rapid City, South Dakota, in 1935, Houser was the son of Ivan Houser, an assistant sculptor who worked on Mount Rushmore. The younger Houser later graduated from Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon, and earned a fellowship for graduate art studies at UCLA before traveling through Europe, Morocco, Mexico, Ecuador and the Appalachian region of the U.S.

Houser created a number of other sculptures, including one of El Paso pioneer Susan Shelby Magoffin.

He brought to life the Twelve Travelers Memorial of the Southwest, a sculptural walk through history of twelve monuments of famous, or infamous, people who contributed in making El Paso.

"He was our soul," Ramirez said. "He was the one who got us going."

His first statue for this series was Fray Garcia de San Francisco followed by "The Equestrian."

A 2008 PBS series P.O.V. film depicted the controversy around "The Last Conquistador" and showed the tensions around the 36-foot tall statue Onate statue. In one of the final scenes, Houser reveals that he was going blind.

At the time of his death, Houser and his son, Ethan Houser, were working on a statue of Benito Juarez, Mexico's first Native American president. Ethan Houser said the project will continue.

Perry Houser said his uncle was always thinking about art, even while behind the wheel.

"I hated going driving with him. He'd almost always crash into something," Perry Houser said. "I'd yell, 'Hey, what are you doing?' And he'd say, 'oh, I just couldn't take my eye off that line pattern over there.'"

Associated Press writer Russell Contreras is a member of the AP's race and ethnicity team. Follow him on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/russcontreras>

Army Corps of Engineers seeks Missouri River sandbar project

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — The Army Corps of Engineers has proposed a \$2 million sandbar project on the Missouri River in North Dakota to help threatened and endangered birds.

The federal agency has started the approval process for the project to increase breeding habitats for least tern and piping plover populations on the Missouri River, the Bismarck Tribune reported. The Corps plans to dredge up sand to heighten and widen a submerged sandbar in order to make more open space for the birds to nest.

A similar project was done in South Dakota in 2009, and that area grew from one nest to more than 50 within a year.

In 2017, the Corps reported nearly 270 adult piping plovers and almost 200 least terns from North Dakota's Garrison Dam to the headwater of Lake Oahe in South Dakota. They found more than 630 piping plovers and 320 least terns in the northern region area from Lake Sakakawea in North Dakota to Lake Oahe.

Jeremy Szynskie is the Corps' program director for the Omaha Districts Emergent Sandbar Habitat. Szynskie said they've identified three potential locations for the 30-acre project. The Corps will consider sites near the Fort Clark State Historic Site, Washburn and the Cross Ranch State Park.

The Washburn and the Cross Ranch State Park locations would include two smaller sandbars with the channel cutting through the middle. One large sandbar would be built up for the Fort Clark State Historic Site.

Szynskie said man-made sandbars erode similar to sandbars formed naturally and usually have a projected lifespan of between three to five years. He said the Corps will need to continue rebuilding them in order to meet their goals.

The project is in the public comment stage of the National Environmental Policy Act process.

Information from: Bismarck Tribune, <http://www.bismarcktribune.com>

Sioux Falls daycare for Citibank employees to close

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A 30-year-old daycare in Sioux Falls is set to close next year as Citibank prepares to move into a new campus on the other side of town.

The Bright Horizons Family Care Center has offered child care to the employees of Citi and Sanford Health for decades, the Argus Leader reported. The daycare will close in 2019 as part of Citi's decision to build a new campus for its 1,800 workers in Sioux Falls.

The daycare served as a backup option for working parents when their main child care provider was unavailable.

Citi Spokesman Mark Rodgers said the daycare, which can accommodate up to 450 children, runs at about half capacity.

"Historically, the child care center at our site has been underutilized," said Rodgers. "We are considering different options to assist our employees who may be impacted by this decision."

Citi announced plans in November to build a new 150,000-square-foot (13,935-square-meter) facility for its Sioux Falls operations. Citi is one of the city's largest employers.

Citi's soon-to-be vacant campus buildings in northeast Sioux Falls are listed for lease.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 17 of 51

Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press

Argus Leader, Sioux Falls, Jan. 19

Allow craft brewers to let their business flow

There are a flurry of proposed changes and updates to South Dakota liquor laws that will be debated this legislative session, and at least one seems like a simple and needed fix: the outdated and prohibitive limits on beer production.

Many of our state's craft brewers object to the arbitrary 5,000-barrels-a-year ceiling and want lawmakers to raise their allowable production cap.

And why wouldn't they? These are businesses, after all. And we live in a pro-business state. One that also happens to have what is becoming an annual tax revenue shortfall. Our state is missing an opportunity to take its "experience economy" up a notch.

Reduced wild game populations and other tourism challenges should push us to find other smart revenue-builders. Our fast-growing brewery scene is ripe for the support.

A recent trip to Montana, where microbreweries have become tourism hotspots, inspired Governor Dennis Daugaard's effort to create more growth opportunities for South Dakota's burgeoning small brewers.

Among multiple possible bills to amend standing law — including two from the Department of Revenue and one directly from the governor's office — are provisions to allow microbreweries to produce up to six times the current number of barrels while keeping their taprooms open and maintaining their option to sell wine and cider with a license.

Ready to grow, South Dakota craft brewers back alcohol law overhaul

"Everybody's doing it" isn't necessarily a sound justification for policy change, but current state law puts our brewers at a distinct disadvantage compared to our neighbors. Minnesota and Nebraska's barrel limits for smaller brewers stand at 20,000. Iowa sets no cap.

And in our seven-state border region, only South Dakota and Nebraska forbid small breweries from self-distributing without a wholesaler middleman.

As South Dakota faces continued budget shortfalls, the economic impact other states can attribute to craft breweries (and their growing younger consumer demographic) looks enticing.

Not everyone is rooting for upstarts such as Fernson Brewing in Sioux Falls or Spearfish's Crow Peak to shed their shackles. Opposing interests, specifically distributors and their lobbies, will play a large part in whether these bills advance to become signed law or sink to 41st-day oblivion.

South Dakota's current three-tiered system of alcohol distribution — manufacturer to wholesaler to retailer — was mandated post-Prohibition. Inserting protective layers between distillers and consumers was intended to cut back on intemperate overindulgence by limiting large brewers' control of the market.

Over time, however, some distributors have essentially become extensions of the largest manufacturers. While these distributors can help craft brewers get their products onto retailers' shelves, they can likewise be a barrier and a cost that some small businesses might be hard-pressed to absorb.

Consider also that large breweries are developing products meant to directly compete with craft beers. Several registered lobbyists in Pierre list out-of-state behemoths like MillerCoors and Anheuser-Busch Companies as employers.

More recent additions to the lobbying directory: Fernson Brewing and the South Dakota Craft Brewers Guild, looking to exert their own influence in the capitol.

For states like South Dakota with part-time lawmakers who have minimal staff, lobbyists are a tempting and omnipresent source of topical expertise.

Stakeholders also occupy legislative seats. District 12 Representative Arch Beal and first-term District 13 Senator Jack Kolbeck, both of Beal Distributing, sit on Commerce and Energy committees. The House committee is currently considering the proposed liquor law reforms.

Without recusal requirements to keep legislators from voting on policy that directly affects their business or industry, bad optics at the very least are the result. These conflicts of interest are in no way confined

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 18 of 51

to members employed in the alcoholic beverage industry, but consider this issue a timely microcosm. With multiple proposals on tap, the battles have just begun.

The Daily Leader, Madison, Jan. 24 **Mad Labs will be an exciting project**

The MadLabs building project on the Dakota State University campus is taking more steps forward this week, and we expect to see construction begin in earnest soon.

As of today, there appears nothing different about the southwest corner of campus. Lowry Hall, completed in 1959 as a men's dormitory, and the area around it looks virtually the same as it has for decades.

(A quick side note: That quiet portion of campus was once even quieter, as it was once a rarely-used sloped, outdoor amphitheater surrounded by trees and shrubs.)

Before the current session of the Legislature is a bill that authorizes the destruction of Lowry Hall and the construction of MadLabs. It has passed the joint appropriations committee and the full House of Representatives, without a "nay" vote in either place.

If the bill is passed and gains the governor's signature, we'd expect rapid action, starting with the wrecking ball to Lowry Hall.

The Madison City Commission on Monday approved a request to close a portion of N.E. 6th Street for most of 2018 to accommodate construction equipment and staging of materials.

The MadLabs will be a secure research facility, and unlike most university buildings, will not be open to the public. Nevertheless, the work that will take place within its walls will include groundbreaking information technology work. Most prominent may be secure classified projects for the U.S. government.

We'll be able to drive by and see the construction, but probably not walk in after it's completed. That doesn't dampen our excitement for the prospects the finished building will provide.

Rapid City Journal, Rapid City, Jan. 25 **Resolution just a start for mental health care**

With the exception of one lawmaker, the state House of Representatives passed a resolution Tuesday supporting additional mental health services in western South Dakota.

The 62-1 vote came after the Rapid City Council and Pennington County Commission approved similar resolutions. The effort is being spearheaded by Rapid City attorney Al Scovel, who has made impassioned pleas to bring a state-supported mental health center to western South Dakota. Those who now need treatment from the state must be transported to the Human Services Center in Yankton, which is more than 350 miles from Rapid City. In some cases, that means putting patients in restraints while being hauled across the state by law enforcement. South Dakota is one of five states that allow those suffering from a mental health crisis to be held in jail, a clear sign that lawmakers and state officials have not made their care a priority.

Rep. Taffy Howard, a Rapid City Republican, cast the lone vote against the resolution that simply brings attention to a clear need. While it is a sign of progress that 62 lawmakers have officially acknowledged the problem, the resolution should only be considered the beginning of a process that brings a mental health center and more services to this area.

Perhaps, the Legislature can set aside such pressing legislation as drug tests for lawmakers, requiring public schools to allow "patriotic presentations" or whether they deserve a pay raise or not and give time to an issue of upmost concern in western South Dakota.

Will any West River lawmaker pick up the torch from Al Scovel and lead on this issue or are they more concerned about passing the same concealed carry bill that Gov. Dugaard vetoed last year and will likely veto again if put on his desk?

In fact, it would seem that gun advocates would embrace the opportunity to expand mental health care. Every time a mass shooting occurs in this nation, it is the NRA supporters who respond by saying this is

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 19 of 51

a mental health issue, not a gun issue. If they truly believe that, then they should help solve the problem. Otherwise, what the public hears is nothing more than a well-rehearsed talking point.

It is also an appropriate time for the three candidates for governor — Republicans Marty Jackley and Kristi Noem and Democrat Billie Sutton — to declare their support or opposition to a mental health center in western South Dakota. Will they lead, follow or dismiss the issue?

In the meantime, Gov. Daugaard should take the resolution seriously and at the very least appoint a task force to study it this summer with the goal of proposing legislation in 2019 to bring some sanity to the state's approach to mental health care.

Supreme Court rules in favor of Buffalo Chip City

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Supreme Court says a community that started as a campground is indeed a city.

The decision released Thursday reverses a circuit court ruling against the Buffalo Chip Campground and the Meade County Board. Circuit Judge Jerome Eckrich said in April the board commissioners failed to follow state law in approving Buffalo Chip's petition to become a municipality. Eckrich ruled that people who voted to approve the incorporation didn't live at addresses where they registered to vote.

Nearby Sturgis and others opposed the campground's efforts to become a municipality.

The Rapid City Journal reports the Supreme Court ruled the circuit court lacks jurisdiction in the case. Because Buffalo Chip City operates as a de facto corporation, any legal challenge must be brought by the state.

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

Volga famer convicted of disturbing protected wetlands

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — An eastern South Dakota farmer faces up to six months in prison and a \$10,000 fine after being convicted of disturbing protected wetlands.

A federal jury recently convicted 61-year-old Kevin Mast of Volga, following a trial in Sioux Falls.

U.S. Attorney Ron Parsons says Mast installed drain tile on some of his property despite selling an easement to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that prohibited draining any wetland areas on the property. Parsons says Mast was warned against the project but went ahead with it in 2013.

Mast is to be sentenced April 9.

SUV crashes into Sioux Falls auto shop

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Police say speed appears to be a factor when a driver lost control of an SUV and crashed into an auto shop in Sioux Falls.

One adult and two juveniles in the SUV suffered minor injuries when the vehicle struck Billion Car Care Center Wednesday. No one in the shop was hurt. The Argus Leader reports an employee estimated damage at \$100,000.

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

Sanford Health donates land for future school projects

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sanford Health has donated 35 acres of land in northwest Sioux Falls to the school district for a future school building.

The Argus Leader reports school board members voted to approve the donation Monday night, though there are currently no plans for the next school building.

Sanford Executive Vice President Kevin Lampe says investing in education is a good way to support the community for decades to come.

Sanford about a month ago announced a 30-acre land donation to Sioux Falls Lutheran School.

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

Trump praises African leader after White House dustup

By CATHERINE LUCEY, Associated Press

DAVOS, Switzerland (AP) — President Donald Trump sought to mend relations Friday with a key African leader in the aftermath of his controversial comments about African nations, praising the U.S. partnership with Rwanda along the sidelines of the annual World Economic Forum.

Trump's meeting with Rwandan President Paul Kagame came shortly after Trump drew widespread condemnation for allegedly referring to African nations as "shithole countries" in dismissing a bipartisan immigration proposal, according to those at the meeting.

The president has denied using that language. Other present insist he did.

Trump described having "tremendous discussions" with Kagame, who is beginning a one-year term as head of the African Union, a 55-member continental body that criticized the U.S. president's remarks. Neither Trump nor Kagame made any mention of the row during brief comments to reporters.

"It really truly is a great honor," Trump told Kagame, noting his role with the African Union. "So please give my regards, I know you're going to your first meeting very shortly. Please give my warmest regards. But it's an honor to have you as a friend."

Trump tweeted after the meeting that it "was an honor" to meet with Kagame. "Many great discussions!"

Kagame said they had "good discussions" on economic and trade issues. He said the African Union is "looking forward to working with the United States." Trump's national security adviser H.R. McMaster had said the two would discuss security and economic issues.

The African Union and several African nations expressed shock and condemnation over Trump's remark, with an African Union spokeswoman saying the organization was "frankly alarmed." Dozens of former U.S. ambassadors to African countries wrote to Trump expressing "deep concern" over his comments.

The State Department hurried to reassure African nations, with the department's Bureau of African Affairs tweeting that "the United States will continue to robustly, enthusiastically and forcefully engage" with them.

Heads of state are expected to come up with another response to Trump at an African Union summit that starts Sunday in Ethiopia. The U.S. will be represented at the summit by Ambassador Mary Beth Leonard, the U.S. envoy to the AU, instead of the traditional high-level delegation.

Kagame has led his East African nation of 12 million people since the end of its genocide in 1994 in which more than 800,000 people died. He has been praised for the country's economic growth, but human rights groups accuse his government of using state powers to silence opponents.

Rwandan authorities have denied the charges.

Associated Press writers Cara Anna in Johannesburg and Ken Thomas in Washington contributed to this report.

Trump predicts Davos speech will be 'well received'

By CATHERINE LUCEY, Associated Press

DAVOS, Switzerland (AP) — President Donald Trump said he planned to offer a "positive message" at the World Economic Forum Friday, predicting it would be "very well received."

Trump was set to address the Swiss Alps summit frequented by political and business elites. The gathering had viewed Trump with skepticism, given his "America First" message, but the White House has insisted that his protectionist policies and international cooperation can go hand-in-hand.

While interest in the president's remarks has been keen, the moment was shadowed by a report in The New York Times that he had ordered the firing of special counsel Robert Mueller last June, but backed off

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 21 of 51

after White House lawyer Don McGahn threatened to resign.

Asked about the report as he entered the conference center, Trump said: "Fake news, folks. Fake news. Typical New York Times fake stories."

The first sitting president to attend Davos since Bill Clinton in 2000, Trump was expected to use his speech to tout his economic agenda and argue America is open for business. He'll also stress his commitment to free markets under what he sees as fair terms.

Trump used his time at the summit to meet with world leaders, attend a reception in his honor and host business executives at a dinner. On his way in Friday he declared that his visit had been a success, adding: "We have a tremendous crowd and a crowd like they've never had before."

Trump sought earlier Friday to ease tensions with a key African leader, meeting with Rwandan President Paul Kagame and calling him a "friend" in the aftermath of his controversial comments about African countries.

The meeting came after Trump drew widespread condemnation for allegedly referring to African nations as "shithole countries" in discussing immigration, according to those at the meeting. The president has denied using that language. Others present say he did.

And a day after Trump sought to make nice with British Prime Minister Theresa May, he said in a new interview that he "would certainly apologize" for retweeting anti-Muslim videos from a far-right British group.

Trump told British journalist Piers Morgan that "I know nothing about" the Britain First group and "would certainly apologize, if you'd like me to do that." A clip of the interview was released Friday, with the full interview scheduled to air Sunday on ITV.

Fire at hospital kills 37, injures scores in South Korea

By AHN YOUNG-JOON and HYUNG-JIN KIM, Associated Press

MIRYANG, South Korea (AP) — A fire raced through a small South Korean hospital with no sprinkler system on Friday, killing 37 people, many of them elderly, and injuring more than 140 others in the country's deadliest blaze in about a decade.

Sejong Hospital in the southeastern city of Miryang has a separate nursing ward where 94 elderly patients were being treated, but all of them were safely evacuated, fire officials said.

Most of the victims were on the first and second floors of the hospital's six-story general ward, where its emergency room and intensive-care unit were located. Officials believe the fire started in the emergency room.

Miryang police official Kim Han-su said 34 of the dead were women and 26 were in their 80s or older. He said police may be able to announce the cause of the fire on Saturday.

Police and forensic investigators dressed in white clothes, masks and helmets examined burned equipment in the blackened emergency room.

Dark smoke and flames were pouring from the emergency room when firefighters arrived, so they used ladders to enter second-floor windows. Some carried patients on their backs to other rescuers below, who moved them on stretchers to ambulances.

Several fabric escape chutes were hanging from the building's sixth floor windows after being used to evacuate patients and hospital staff.

Dozens of fire trucks and two helicopters were sent to the hospital as thick smoke blanketed nearby streets. The blaze was extinguished in about three hours.

Three of the dead worked at the hospital — an emergency room doctor and a nurse and nurse assistant on the second floor — said Son Kyung-cheol, head of the foundation that operates the facility. The National Fire Agency said officials were trying to identify other victims.

Most of the deaths appeared to be due to suffocation, with only one victim suffering burns, a National Fire Agency official said on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to speak to the media.

Authorities said 143 people were injured, including seven who were in serious condition.

Son said the hospital did not have sprinklers because they were not required by law. Fire officials said

the hospital wasn't big enough to require them.

Fire official Choi Man-wu said authorities were investigating whether the hospital had missed any mandatory safety inspections, although Son said it had not.

If safety issues were involved in the fire, hospital and local authorities are likely to receive harsh public criticism. In 2014, South Korea grappled with the aftermath of a ferry sinking that killed more than 300 people and exposed serious shortcomings in public safety. Officials blamed crew members' negligence, overloaded cargo, improper storage, unprofessional rescue work and corruption by the ship's owners.

President Moon Jae-in held an emergency meeting with senior advisers and ordered officials to provide necessary medical treatment to those rescued, find the exact cause of the fire and work out measures to prevent future fires, spokesman Park Su-hyun said.

South Korea is one of the fastest-aging countries in the world and has many nursing hospitals, which are preferred for elderly people who need long-term doctors' care.

In 2014, a fire set by an 81-year-old dementia patient killed 21 people at a hospital for the elderly.

In other recent fires, 29 people were killed in late December in a building in central Seoul, which was the country's deadliest blaze in the past decade before the hospital fire. Last weekend, a fire at a Seoul motel killed six people. Police arrested a man suspected of setting it in anger because he had been denied a room for being heavily drunk.

Kim reported from Seoul, South Korea. Associated Press writer Youkyung Lee and Kim Tong-hyung in Seoul contributed to this report.

Trump turns again on immigration, allies bash 'Amnesty Don'

By STEVE PEOPLES, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Fearing betrayal on a signature campaign issue, President Donald Trump's loyalists across the country are lashing out against his proposal to create a path to citizenship for nearly 2 million "Dreamer" immigrants.

Trump-aligned candidates from Nevada and Virginia rejected the notion outright. The president's most loyal media ally, Breitbart News, attacked him as "Amnesty Don." And outside groups who cheered the hard-line rhetoric that dominated Trump's campaign warned of a fierce backlash against the president's party in November's midterm elections.

"There's a real potential for disaster," said Mark Krikorian, executive director of the far-right Center for Immigration Studies. "The president hasn't sold out his voters yet. But I think it's important that his supporters are making clear to him that they're keeping an eye on him."

The public scolding was aimed at a president who has changed course under pressure before. Yet Trump has faced no greater test on a more significant issue than this one, which dominated his outsider candidacy and inspired a coalition of working-class voters that fueled his unlikely rise. Now, barely a year into his presidency, Trump can bend either to the will of his fiery base or the pressure to govern and compromise.

His leadership may determine the fate of hundreds of thousands of young immigrants and whether his party can improve its standing among a surging group of Hispanic voters. It may also alienate those who love him most.

"There's a Trump movement. And it's not necessarily about Donald Trump," said Corey Stewart, a Republican Senate candidate in Virginia and a vocal Trump ally. "It's about the things that Donald Trump campaigned and stood for during his campaign. Ultimately, every elected leader needs to stay true to the message that they ran on, otherwise people will leave them."

The passionate response underscores the Republican Party's immigration dilemma in the age of Trump.

Much of the country, including independents and moderate Republicans, favor protections for thousands of young people brought to the country as children illegally and raised here through no fault of their own. But a vocal conservative faction emboldened by Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric will never accept anything viewed as "amnesty." And many view legal protection for these young immigrants as just that.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 23 of 51

Trump's proposal includes billions for border security and significant changes to legal immigration long sought by hard-liners. Several Democrats and immigration activists rejected it outright. But his supporters' focus on "amnesty" for Dreamers highlights how dug in the base is and how little room Trump has to maneuver.

The president told reporters this week that he favored a pathway to citizenship for those immigrants, embracing a notion he once specifically rejected. Legal protection for roughly 700,000 immigrants enrolled in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA, has emerged as the driving priority for Democrats, who forced a government shutdown over this issue last week. The businessman president appears to have set out to cut a deal.

"It is concerning why anyone would attempt to repeat history by granting amnesty," said Mississippi state Sen. Chris McDaniel, who is mulling a primary challenge against Republican Sen. Roger Wicker. McDaniel likened the Trump proposal to the "amnesty" granted in 1986 immigration overhaul backed by President Ronald Reagan.

Such a policy, he said, would harm American workers and "invite more illegals," while emboldening liberals in future debates. Making a deal now would ensure that a future Congress will be "held hostage by open border advocates."

In Virginia, Stewart said "any amnesty, including an extension of DACA," would lead to a "humanitarian crisis" at the border and could draw millions of new immigrants into the country illegally.

"I'm not happy about it," he said.

In Nevada, where Trump loyalty is the centerpiece of Republican Danny Tarkanian's primary challenge against Sen. Dean Heller, Tarkanian also broke from the president.

"It's his decision," Tarkanian said of Trump. "But I don't believe we should grant citizenship to people who have come to the country illegally."

He would, however, support permanent legal status for children who entered the country illegally, but said he draws the line at citizenship.

The consequences could be severe for the GOP as it struggles to energize voters heading into the 2018 midterm elections, when Republican majorities in the House and Senate are at stake. Recent Democratic victories in Alabama and Virginia suggest that the GOP has cause for concern — especially as Trump's approval number hover near record lows.

Protections for more immigration of these young immigrants could trigger wholesale revolt by Trump's base in November, said Bob Dane, executive director of the conservative Federation for American Immigration Reform.

"There's widespread fear that if Trump capitulates to the Democrats and fails to deliver on his campaign promises on immigration, there's not going to be any more campaign promises for the GOP to make in the future, because the base will inflict a scorched-earth policy in midterms," Dane said, noting that his organization has "a longstanding position of opposing amnesty in any form, including the extension of the DACA protections."

Some allies hoped Trump comments and the proposal were an early step in negotiations that could change. Trump has zig-zagged on the issue before.

With Congress pushing Trump to clearly state his position, the White House plans to formally unveil a legislative framework next week.

But Trump on Wednesday left little wiggle room in his support for citizenship.

"It's going to happen, at some point in the future, over a period of 10 to 12 years," he said.

AP writers Thomas Beaumont in Des Moines, Iowa and Bill Barrow in Atlanta contributed to this report.

Trump calls report he ordered Mueller's firing 'fake news'

By TOM LOBIANCO, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Friday dismissed as “fake news” a New York Times report that he ordered the firing of special counsel Robert Mueller last June, but backed down after White House lawyer Don McGahn threatened to resign.

The newspaper reported Thursday that Trump demanded Mueller's firing just weeks after the special counsel was first appointed by Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein.

Trump pushed back against the report, without addressing the specific allegation, as he arrived Friday at the site of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

“Fake news, folks. Fake news. Typical New York Times fake stories,” Trump told reporters.

McGahn said he would not deliver the order to the Justice Department, according to The Times, which cites four people familiar with the request by the president.

Trump argued at the time that Mueller could not be fair because of a dispute over golf club fees that he said Mueller owed at a Trump golf club in Sterling, Virginia. The president also believed Mueller had a conflict of interest because he worked for the same law firm that was representing Trump's son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner.

Peter Carr, a spokesman for Mueller, did not immediately return a call for comment Thursday night. Ty Cobb, a White House lawyer working on the response to the Russia probe, declined comment Thursday night.

The response from Democrats was nearly immediate. Sen. Mark Warner, D-Va., vice chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, said that if the report in The Times is true, Trump has crossed a “red line.”

“Any attempt to remove the Special Counsel, pardon key witnesses or otherwise interfere in the investigation would be a gross abuse of power, and all members of Congress, from both parties, have a responsibility to our Constitution and to our country to make that clear immediately,” Warner said.

The report comes as Mueller moves ever closer to interviewing Trump himself. The president said Wednesday that he would gladly testify under oath — although a White House official quickly said afterward that Trump did not mean he was volunteering to testify.

Last June, when Trump was considering how to fire Mueller, the special counsel's probe had not progressed far, at least not in public.

At that time he had yet to call on any major witnesses to testify and had not yet issued any charges or signed any plea deals. But that would change just a few months later, when federal agents would arrest former Trump campaign adviser George Papadopoulos and ultimately turn him into a cooperating witness.

Since then, Trump has largely stopped talking about explicitly trying to fire Mueller, but has instead shifted to accusing Mueller and his team of being biased and unable to complete a fair investigation.

The latest evidence the president has cited was a string of text messages from a former agent on Mueller's probe, which show that agent vociferously opposing the president. But Mueller swiftly removed the agent, Peter Strzok, from his probe after learning about his texts.

Former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort and former Trump adviser Rick Gates were charged by Mueller with criminal conspiracy related to millions of dollars they earned while working for a pro-Kremlin Ukrainian political party. And former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn agreed to cooperate with investigators in a plea deal revealed two months ago. Flynn was charged with lying to the FBI.

Mueller's investigators have been focusing their inquiry on questions surrounding Trump's firing of Flynn and also his firing of former FBI Director James Comey. They have slowly been calling in more witnesses closer to the president himself and, recently, began negotiating the terms of a possible interview with the president.

On Thursday, Trump's lawyer said that more than 20 White House employees have given interviews to the special counsel in his probe of possible obstruction of justice and Trump campaign ties to Russian election interference.

John Dowd, Trump's attorney, said the White House, in an unprecedented display of cooperation with Mueller's investigation, has turned over more than 20,000 pages of records. The president's 2016 campaign has turned over more than 1.4 million pages.

The number of voluntary interviews included eight people from the White House counsel's office.

An additional 28 people affiliated with the Trump campaign have also been interviewed by either the special counsel or congressional committees probing Russian election meddling. Dowd's disclosure did only not name the people nor provide a breakdown of how many were interviewed only by Mueller's team.

2 former lawyers of rap mogul 'Suge' Knight arrested

By MICHAEL BALSAMO, Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Two Los Angeles attorneys who represented former rap mogul Marion "Suge" Knight were arrested on warrants alleging they were accessories after the fact to a felony, authorities said.

The attorneys, Matthew Fletcher and Thaddeus Culpepper, were arrested Thursday by Los Angeles County sheriff's deputies, sheriff's department spokeswoman Nicole Nishida told The Associated Press. The warrants allege they were accessories after the fact to a crime, she said, without providing any additional details.

Fletcher, 53, was arrested around 2 p.m. and was being booked at the county jail, officials said. Jail records showed he was being held on \$1 million bail. No information was listed about Culpepper.

In a court filing in August, prosecutors accused Fletcher and Knight of witness tampering in the rap mogul's pending murder case. Transcripts of recorded conversations suggested the two had discussed fabricating testimony and Knight had tried to pay off potential witnesses with his lawyer's help, the filing said.

The alleged talks of bribery came in a series of recorded calls in 2015 between Knight, who was in jail and Fletcher, along with Knight's fiancée and his business partner.

Fletcher is one of several lawyers who has represented Knight, the Death Row Records co-founder, since he was charged with murder and attempted murder after he ran over two men outside a Compton burger stand in January 2015, killing one of them. Knight has pleaded not guilty and is scheduled to go on trial later this year.

The people on the calls discuss payments of as much as \$25,000 to witnesses to say the victims or others at the burger stand were armed at the time, bolstering Knight's argument that he was acting in self-defense.

In one call, Fletcher said he would "pay anything" to bikers who were at the scene.

"If we can get the two or three versions from the bikers on tape and we can get ... we're done," he said. "It's going home time. Right? That's a fair ... investment, you know, 20, 25 thousand dollars."

After the court filing, Fletcher vehemently denied that he was suggesting bribing witnesses and said he was talking about bikers who may have had cellphone video that could be useful to the defense.

The filing also included accusations that Culpepper had contacted a sheriff's department informant and had agreed to pay for his testimony that he was present at the time of the crime and witnessed events that would be favorable for the defense's case.

A text message sent to Fletcher's cell phone Thursday night was not immediately returned and a woman who answered the phone at his law office declined comment and hung up without giving her name. A telephone message left for Culpepper was also not immediately returned.

Follow Michael Balsamo on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/MikeBalsamo1> .

Trump's infrastructure plan comes with a huge hole

By JOAN LOWY and ZEKE MILLER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When President Donald Trump unveils his plan to beef up the nation's infrastructure plan next month, it will include a crater-sized hole.

The trust fund that pays for most federal highway and transit aid is forecast to go broke in about three

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 26 of 51

years unless the government significantly scales back its transportation spending or comes up with more money. But Trump's infrastructure plan is silent on the looming problem, an administration official familiar with the plan told The Associated Press. The official wasn't authorized to speak publicly about the plan and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Fulfilling a campaign promise, Trump's plan proposes to generate \$1 trillion in infrastructure spending over 10 years. But the plan seeks only \$200 billion in federal dollars, relying instead on state and local governments and private investors to come up with most of the rest of the money.

The administration views the plan as a supplement to current infrastructure spending. The money would be distributed through new types of programs that are designed to generate greater state and local government and private sector spending. Also, there's no guarantee how much of the money will go to transportation projects since the administration is broadly defining infrastructure as everything from building water treatment plants to expanding high-speed Internet access to rural areas.

The administration is open to working with Congress to address the trust fund later, although those conversations haven't yet begun, the official said.

Republican leaders have been waiting to see what the White House will propose. There is wide, bipartisan support for continuing, and even increasing, transportation spending. But most lawmakers have been unwilling so far to back tax increases or spending cuts to pay for it.

The federal government is currently spending \$15 billion a year more than the Highway Trust Fund takes in through gasoline and diesel taxes. Authorized trust fund spending for the current federal budget year that ends on Sept. 30 is about \$56 billion.

"Addressing the solvency of the Highway Trust Fund is the most important infrastructure issue facing us today," said Bud Wright, executive director of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, which represents state transportation departments.

"A failure to address the long-term solvency of the (trust fund) could mean a 40 percent drop in highway spending in 2021," Wright said. "We're hopeful the president will play a strong leadership role in addressing this challenge."

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce last week called for a 25-cent, phased-in increase in the federal gas tax to shore up the trust fund. Congress hasn't passed a gas tax increase since 1993, primarily because being associated with a highly visible tax hike felt by most Americans is viewed by many lawmakers as political poison. Asking lawmakers to vote for an increase in an election year seems a stretch. On the other hand, 26 states have raised their own fuel taxes since 2013 without significant political repercussions.

The American Trucking Associations has proposed increasing the wholesale transportation fuels tax by 5 cents a gallon a year over four years — a little less visible than an increase at the pump. That would generate about \$340 billion over 10 years, the group estimated.

Passing the administration's infrastructure plan without bolstering the trust fund would amount to "taking one step forward and two steps back," said David Bauer, executive vice president at the American Road & Transportation Builders Association.

Michael Sargent, a transportation and infrastructure expert at the conservative Heritage Foundation, said the administration appears to view the trust fund shortfall as "Congress' problem."

And, even if it's not in the infrastructure plan, "a gas tax increase is still on the table — the administration hasn't written it off," he said.

Chris Spear, president of the trucking group, said passage of a tax overhaul bill last month provides lawmakers with political cover if they decide to raise fuel taxes.

"You have a situation where the White House and Congress sent historic amounts of money back to the taxpayer," he said. "We're here to help this president get a bill passed ... but there has to be real dollars in there."

Some liken Michigan State to Penn State amid abuse scandal

By ED WHITE and DAVID EGGERT, Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Sports doctor Larry Nassar is on his way to prison for the rest of his life for molesting scores of young female athletes, but the scandal is far from over at Michigan State University as victims, lawmakers and a judge demand to know why he wasn't stopped years ago.

Some are likening Michigan State to Penn State University, where three senior officials, including the school's president, were sentenced to jail last year for failing to tell authorities about a sexual abuse allegation involving coach Jerry Sandusky.

Nassar, a 54-year-old former member of Michigan State's sports medicine staff, has admitted penetrating elite gymnasts and other athletes with his fingers while he was supposedly treating them for injuries.

Some of the more than 150 women and girls who have accused him said they complained to the sports medicine staff, a campus counselor and the women's gymnastics coach as far back as the late 1990s.

In Michigan, it is a misdemeanor punishable by up to three months in jail and a \$500 fine for certain professionals to fail to report a suspected case of child abuse.

Lou Anna Simon, who resigned under pressure Wednesday as Michigan State's president, insisted, "There is no cover-up." But the university last week asked Michigan's attorney general to conduct a review. And in sentencing Nassar to 40 to 175 years in prison Wednesday, Judge Rosemarie Aquilina called for "a massive investigation as to why there was inaction, why there was silence."

Jennifer Paine, a Michigan lawyer who specializes in child protection law and is not involved in the Nassar case, said there are probably grounds for charging some Michigan State staff members for failing to report what victims were saying.

"The obligation to report doesn't mean anything unless people enforce. That's why it's there," she said. No one has been charged in the scandal besides Nassar.

John Manly, an attorney who represents more than 100 victims in lawsuits, said Michigan State, USA Gymnastics and the U.S. Olympic Committee "miserably failed children." Nassar was a team doctor at USA Gymnastics, which trains Olympians.

"They had an opportunity, instead of being Penn State, to make them a beacon of how to handle this," Manly said. "It's too late. You can't fix it now."

Penn State's former president, Graham Spanier, and two other ex-administrators, Tim Curley and Gary Schultz, were prosecuted for child endangerment for not reporting a 2001 complaint about Sandusky showering with a boy. Sandusky's arrest a decade later blew up into a scandal that brought down legendary football coach Joe Paterno.

Sandusky is serving 30 to 60 years in prison for sexually abusing 10 boys. As of last year, Penn State had paid nearly \$250 million in fines, settlements and other costs associated with the scandal.

Nassar has also been sentenced to 60 years in federal prison for child pornography. Federal prosecutors have declined to say if they are looking at any other aspects of the case.

Elsewhere, in Texas, the Walker County sheriff's office said it is investigating the Karolyi Ranch, which was a training site for Olympic gymnasts. Some gymnasts said Nassar assaulted them there.

In Washington, U.S. senators from both parties are calling for creation of a select committee to investigate the U.S. Olympic Committee. The NCAA said it has sent Michigan State a letter of inquiry about potential rules violations.

In the Penn State scandal, the NCAA fined the school \$48 million, reduced the number of football scholarships, barred the team from postseason play and invalidated 112 victories. Some penalties were later eased.

Kyle Stephens, who was a Nassar family friend, said he molested her for years at his Lansing-area home. She said she told a campus counselor, Gary Stollak, about the abuse in 2004. Nassar met with Stollak and denied it, and no police report was made.

Stollak, now retired, testified in 2016 that he couldn't remember anything because of a stroke.

"He didn't report it, and he's a mandatory reporter," Stephens said, referring to those who are legally required to report sexual abuse. "Michigan State keeps saying that 'we didn't know.' Who should I have

told? Tell me who I should have told so I know what I should have done. ... They are continuing to drag out my pain, and that is inappropriate.”

A 2014 police investigation into other assault allegations ended with no charges against Nassar. The university, however, told him that he needed to have a chaperone in the room during certain exams. He was fired in 2016 for failing to do so.

Some victims say they reported Nassar to Kathie Klages, who ran camps for teen gymnasts and was Michigan State women's gymnastics coach until last February. She has denied wrongdoing.

State Sen. Margaret O'Brien said college coaches should be added to Michigan's list of mandatory reporters, which includes therapists and medical professionals. In the state House, lawmakers sent a letter to Michigan State on Thursday requesting certain reports about Nassar.

White reported from Detroit.

Trump plan offers citizenship path to 1.8 million immigrants

By ZEKE MILLER, JILL COLVIN and ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House has unveiled a proposal that provides a pathway to citizenship for 1.8 million young immigrants living in the country illegally, in exchange for new restrictions on legal immigration and \$25 billion in border security.

The plan, announced Thursday, was applauded by some in Congress, but blasted by conservative activists as “amnesty” and slammed by a slew of Democrats, who accused President Donald Trump of holding “Dreamers” hostage to his hard-line immigration agenda.

Senior White House officials cast the plan as a centrist compromise that could win support from both parties and enough votes to pass the Senate. But it comes with a long list of concessions that many Democrats, and also conservative Republicans, especially in the House, may find impossible to swallow.

The plan would provide a pathway to citizenship for the roughly 690,000 younger immigrants protected from deportation by the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program — as well as hundreds of thousands of others who independent estimates say qualify for the program, but never applied.

Trump announced last year that he was doing away with the program, but gave Congress until March to come up with a legislative fix.

The plan would not allow parents of those immigrants to seek lawful status, the officials said.

In exchange, Trump's plan would dramatically overhaul the legal immigration system. Immigrants would only be allowed to sponsor their spouses and underage children to join them in the U.S., and not their parents, adult children or siblings. The officials said it would only end new applications for visas, allowing those already in the pipeline to be processed. Still, immigration activists said the move could cut legal immigration in half.

It would also end a visa lottery aimed at diversity, which drew Trump's attention after the New York City truck attack last year, redirecting the allotment to bringing down the existing backlog in visa applications.

The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss the plan before its release.

On Wednesday, Trump said he was open to a pathway to citizenship for the younger immigrants. “We're going to morph into it,” Trump told reporters. “It's going to happen, at some point in the future, over a period of 10 to 12 years.” It was a reversal for the president, who had previously said he was opposed to a pathway to citizenship for Dreamer immigrants.

Under the plan, recipients could have their legal status revoked due to criminal behavior or national security threats, the officials said, and eventual citizenship would require still-unspecified work and education requirements — and a finding that the immigrants are of “good moral character.”

The nonpartisan Migration Policy Institute said it believes the largest share of the White House's 1.8 million people who'd be eligible for citizenship — 1.3 million — are people who currently meet all of DACA's eligibility requirements. These include years in the U.S., their ages now and when they entered this country, and whether they have a high school or equivalent education.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 29 of 51

Another 400,000 are people who'd be eligible for DACA protection but for their education. And 100,000 more are people who are under age 15 —the minimum age allowed for most people requesting protection under the program.

Trump ended the DACA program in September, setting a March 5 deadline for Congress to provide legal protections or the program's recipients would once again be subject to deportation. The officials said Trump would only sign legislation providing those protections if the other immigration changes he is proposing are implemented.

Trump earlier this month had deferred to a bipartisan, bicameral group of lawmakers to craft an immigration proposal, saying he would sign whatever they passed. But as talks on Capitol Hill broke down — in part because of controversy Trump ginned up using vulgar language to describe African countries — the White House decided to offer its own framework.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and others had also complained the president had failed to sufficiently lay out his priorities, leaving them guessing about what he might be willing to sign. One official said the Thursday release represents a plan for the Senate, with the administration expecting a different bill to pass the House.

McConnell thanked the president and his aides for providing the outline. "I am hopeful that as discussions continue in the Senate on the subject of immigration, Members on both sides of the aisle will look to this framework for guidance as they work towards an agreement," he said in a statement.

Doug Andres, a spokesman for House Speaker Paul Ryan, echoed the sentiment saying: "We're grateful for the president showing leadership on this issue and believe his ideas will help us ultimately reach a balanced solution."

Rep. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., an immigration hard-liner, called Trump's plan "generous and humane, while also being responsible" and said he'd work toward its passage. He said that besides protecting DACA recipients, "It also will prevent us from ending up back here in five years by securing the border and putting an end to extended-family chain migration."

But some of Congress' more conservative members seemed unwilling to open the citizenship door for the Dreamers.

"DACA itself didn't have a pathway to citizenship," said Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, who battled Trump in 2016 for the GOP presidential nomination. "So I think it would be a profound mistake and not consistent with the promises we made to the voters to enact a pathway to citizenship to DACA recipients or to others who are here illegally."

Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, said he supports a more conservative, more sweeping immigration bill proposed by House members, including House Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte, R-Va., which has won strong support from House conservatives. Speaker Paul Ryan has promised to push for support for that measure.

The conservative Breitbart News, seen as a barometer of Trump's nationalist base, declared it "Don's Amnesty Bonanza."

Democrats were also raging. House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., blasted the plan as "an act of staggering cowardice which attempts to hold the Dreamers hostage to a hateful anti-immigrant scheme."

In a statement Thursday night, Pelosi said the framework was "part of the Trump Administration's unmistakable campaign to make America white again."

Democratic Whip Dick Durbin, D-Ill., urged Republicans to join together with Democrats to reach a bipartisan alternative.

"Dreamers should not be held hostage to President Trump's crusade to tear families apart and waste billions of American tax dollars on an ineffective wall," he said in a statement.

Rep. Michelle Lujan Grisham, D-N.M., who chairs the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, said the White House was using DACA recipients "as bargaining chips for sweeping anti-immigrant policies."

And Lorella Praeli, with the American Civil Liberties Union, called it "a hateful, xenophobic immigration proposal that would slash legal immigration to levels not seen since the racial quotas of the 1920s, eliminate legal immigration channels for African countries, and spend \$25 billion for a harmful, wasteful border

wall and an increase in Border Patrol and ICE agents.”

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

Report: Trump wanted Mueller fired, backed off

By TOM LOBIANCO, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump ordered the firing of special counsel Robert Mueller last June, but he backed off the order after White House lawyer Don McGahn threatened to resign, according to a report Thursday in The New York Times.

The newspaper reports that Trump demanded Mueller’s firing just weeks after the special counsel was first appointed by Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein.

McGahn said he would not deliver the order to the Justice Department, according to The Times, which cites four people familiar with the request by the president.

Trump argued at the time that Mueller could not be fair because of a dispute over golf club fees that he said Mueller owed at a Trump golf club in Sterling, Va. The president also believed Mueller he had a conflict of interest because he worked for the same law firm that was representing Trump’s son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner.

Peter Carr, a spokesman for Mueller, did not immediately return a call for comment Thursday night. Ty Cobb, a White House lawyer working on the response to the Russia probe, declined comment Thursday night.

The response from Democrats was nearly immediate. Sen. Mark Warner, D-Va., vice chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, said that if the report in The Times is true, Trump has crossed a “red line.”

“Any attempt to remove the Special Counsel, pardon key witnesses or otherwise interfere in the investigation would be a gross abuse of power, and all members of Congress, from both parties, have a responsibility to our Constitution and to our country to make that clear immediately,” Warner said.

The report comes as Mueller moves ever closer to interviewing Trump himself. The president said Wednesday that he would gladly testify under oath — although a White House official quickly said afterward that Trump did not mean he was volunteering to testify.

Last June, when Trump was considering how to fire Mueller, the special counsel’s probe had not progressed far, at least not in public.

At that time he had yet to call on any major witnesses to testify and had not yet issued any charges or signed any plea deals. But that would change just a few months later, when federal agents would arrest former Trump campaign adviser George Papadopoulos and ultimately turn him into a cooperating witness.

Since then, Trump has largely stopped talking about explicitly trying to fire Mueller, but has instead shifted to accusing Mueller and his team of being biased and unable to complete a fair investigation.

The latest evidence the president has cited was a string of text messages from a former agent on Mueller’s probe, which show that agent vociferously opposing the president. But Mueller swiftly removed the agent, Peter Strzok, from his probe after learning about his texts.

Former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort and former Trump adviser Rick Gates were charged by Mueller with criminal conspiracy related to millions of dollars they earned while working for a pro-Kremlin Ukrainian political party. And former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn agreed to cooperate with investigators in a plea deal revealed two months ago. Flynn was charged with lying to the FBI.

Mueller’s investigators have been focusing their inquiry on questions surrounding Trump’s firing of Flynn and also his firing of former FBI Director James Comey. They have slowly been calling in more witnesses closer to the president himself and, recently, began negotiating the terms of a possible interview with the president.

On Thursday, Trump’s lawyer said that more than 20 White House employees have given interviews to

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 31 of 51

the special counsel in his probe of possible obstruction of justice and Trump campaign ties to Russian election interference.

John Dowd, Trump's attorney, said the White House, in an unprecedented display of cooperation with Mueller's investigation, has turned over more than 20,000 pages of records. The president's 2016 campaign has turned over more than 1.4 million pages.

The number of voluntary interviews included eight people from the White House counsel's office.

An additional 28 people affiliated with the Trump campaign have also been interviewed by either the special counsel or congressional committees probing Russian election meddling. Dowd's disclosure did only not name the people nor provide a breakdown of how many were interviewed only by Mueller's team.

Woods brings back big crowds, big cheers with a 72

By DOUG FERGUSON, AP Golf Writer

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Tiger Woods has been away from the PGA Tour too long to know for certain when a shot is as good as it looks.

This was a 6-iron on the par-3 16th hole on the South Course at Torrey Pines, from 188 yards to a slightly elevated green with a pin tucked behind a deep bunker. The sun was setting behind the Pacific late Thursday afternoon, and the glare made it tough to follow the flight of the ball.

"We can't see anything land from back there, so we're just listening for some noise," Woods said. "And people started cheering."

The ball rolled to the hole and broke a few inches in front of the cup for a tap-in birdie .

Woods brought big crowds back to golf in his latest return to the PGA Tour, and he even produced a few big roars.

There just weren't enough cheers for his liking.

Playing for the first time since recovering from a fourth back surgery that cost him another year on the PGA Tour, Woods was mostly steady, sometimes spectacular and ended his day with an even-par 72 that left him seven shots behind Tony Finau.

"It was fun to compete again," Woods said. "It was fun to be out there."

The next trick is to stay at Torrey Pines beyond Friday. With virtually no wind making this a day for reasonable scoring, Woods was tied for 84th and will start the second round on the North Course just outside the cut line.

Finau birdied his opening two holes on the North and finished with a 35-foot birdie putt for a 65.

Woods had a few big moments that looked familiar to fans who stood as many as four-deep around the greens.

His three birdie putts were from a combined 30 inches. The longest of his birdie putt was from just inside 2 feet on No. 10 that got him back to even par for the round. He was one rotation away from making a long eagle putt on the par-5 sixth.

He was never under par the entire round, and his near ace on the 16th brought him back to even par.

But he needed those three birdies to offset his mistakes, and the sobering part of his return is that Woods didn't make a putt longer than 4 feet. That was on the second hole, when his approach from the bunker landed 6 feet behind the hole and went over the back into light rough.

He also gave away a shot on the par-5 13th, when he laid up from the rough and hit a wedge that drifted right and went into the bunker. He blasted that out to 3 feet, which was the hard part. And then he missed the short par putt .

Woods made his other two bogeys from greenside bunkers, both times missing 12-foot putts.

He played the par 5s in even par, and didn't give himself any other birdie chances inside 15 feet.

"It's hard to make a lot of birdies when you're not giving yourself any looks, and I didn't do that today," Woods said. "Tomorrow, hopefully, I'll drive a little better, get my irons obviously a lot closer and we get the better of the two greens tomorrow. So we'll see what happens."

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 32 of 51

But there was no mistaking his presence.

Fans lined both sides of the opening fairway in anticipation of seeing Woods, who was playing the PGA Tour for only the second time since August 2015. That was right before he had a second and third surgery on his back, which kept him away for some 15 months. He returned at Torrey Pines last year and opened with a 76 on his way to missing the cut. A week later, he withdrew after a 77 in Dubai with back spasms and was gone again.

Regardless of the score, Woods looked as though he's back for the long haul. The fusion surgery eliminated the pain. And while he wasn't sharp, Woods hit the ball plenty far and saw at least a little bit of golf that made him such a dominant figure.

The South Course, which hosted the 2008 U.S. Open that Woods won, typically is far stronger than the North at Torrey Pines. That's no longer the case with the North getting a makeover two years ago, with bent greens that are firm this week and narrower fairways.

The average score on the South was 71.62, compared with 71.31 on the North. Forty-one of the 73 players who broke par were on the South.

Finau birdied his opening two holes to set the tone for his round, and he wound up with nine birdies, the last one from 35 feet to take the lead.

"It played a lot tougher than it did in the past," Finau said. "I think it's just a credit to my start. From there I was just able to let the golf course come to me. The par 5s are very reachable for me hitting some irons in there. Again, I think it was just my start. I got off to a good start and was able to ride that momentum all the way through the round."

He had a one-shot lead over Ryan Palmer and Ted Potter Jr., who each had a 66 on the South.

Defending champion Jon Rahm, who can reach No. 1 in the world by winning, opened with a 68 on the South. He hit into the water with his second shot on the par-5 18th, but he saved par with a 15-foot putt.

"Just unfortunate it happened, but I made a good putt, had a couple really good putts down the stretch and had a good finish," Rahm said. "Good momentum going to tomorrow."

Trump plan offers citizenship path to 1.8 million immigrants

By ZEKE MILLER, JILL COLVIN and ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House unveiled a proposal Thursday that provides a pathway to citizenship for 1.8 million young immigrants living in the country illegally, in exchange for new restrictions on legal immigration and \$25 billion in border security. The plan was applauded by some in Congress, but blasted by conservative activists as "amnesty" and slammed by a slew of Democrats, who accused President Donald Trump of holding "Dreamers" hostage to his hard-line immigration agenda.

Senior White House officials cast the plan as a centrist compromise that could win support from both parties and enough votes to pass the Senate. But it comes with a long list of concessions that many Democrats, and also conservative Republicans, especially in the House, may find impossible to swallow.

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Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 33 of 51

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On Wednesday, Trump said he was open to a pathway to citizenship for the younger immigrants. "We're going to morph into it," Trump told reporters. "It's going to happen, at some point in the future, over a period of 10 to 12 years." It was a reversal for the president, who had previously said he opposed a pathway to citizenship for Dreamer immigrants.

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Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 34 of 51

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

Kentucky shooting suspect ordered held in juvenile court

By **ROBERT RAY, BRUCE SCHREINER and CLAIRE GALOFARO, Associated Press**

BENTON, Ky. (AP) — The 15-year-old accused of killing two classmates with a handgun in a school shooting that left 18 others bleeding and broken was ordered held Thursday on preliminary charges of murder and assault.

The juvenile court judge found probable cause to keep detaining the teenager as authorities gather evidence to support trying him as an adult for the attack at Marshall County High School, Assistant Marshall County Attorney Jason Darnall said.

And while the legal process began for the suspect, others in the small rural community sought to show solidarity with the victims.

Nearly 300 people, many faces visibly etched with pain, thronged a park Thursday evening and lit flickering candles for the victims. “It always happens somewhere else, you know, but this week it was our community,” said Misti Drew, an organizer of the vigil. With faces aglow from the candles, participants lofted banners and some wore T-shirts embossed with the words, “Marshall Strong.”

Earlier, Vicki Jo Reed painted a “Marshall Strong” sign on a storefront, and reflected on her grandson’s close call.

“This is one of the hardest things for me to ever have to paint,” she said. “Had a grandson that was in the commons area through the whole thing, and he, like all the other kids, is not handling it very good.”

Reed said her grandson is also 15, like the shooting suspect and their two slain classmates, and is haunted by the horror he saw.

“He wakes up to the gunshots every morning,” Reed said.

The mother of Bailey Nicole Holt, who died at the scene, said she got a call from her daughter’s phone, but couldn’t hear her.

“She called me and all I could hear was voices and chaos in the background and she couldn’t say anything,” Secret Holt told WKRN-TV in Nashville. “I called her name over and over and she never responded, so we rushed to the high school and they wouldn’t let us get through.”

Authorities are gathering evidence for a grand jury, hoping to discover why the suspect fired into a crowd of his classmates, all 14 to 18, as they waited for the morning bell.

Thursday’s closed-door hearing began a journey through the criminal justice system that is slightly more complicated than it would be if the suspect were an adult charged with the same crimes. After an initial series of hearings in juvenile court, which is closed to the public and the records sealed under Kentucky

law, the case will be presented to a grand jury that next meets on Feb. 13.

If the grand jury returns an indictment, the case will move to circuit court, at which point the prosecution would proceed like an ordinary criminal trial. But the boy will have some protections: the law requires that he remain at a juvenile jail, not in the general population of a county facility. And if he's found guilty at trial, he will not face the state's most severe sentences.

Kentucky juries can typically recommend a range of sentences, up to death, for adults convicted of murder.

But the U.S. Supreme Court has barred states from sentencing juveniles to death or to life without parole, finding that children should be treated differently because their still-developing brains leave young people prone to poor judgment.

And Kentucky has been through this before, when a teenager convicted in a school shooting that drew national attention more than two decades ago was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole for 25 years.

Michael Carneal was 14 in 1997 when he killed three students and injured five at Heath High School in Paducah, not far from Marshall County. Convicted and sentenced in 2001, he's now 34 and eligible for parole in four years, according to state records.

Damon Preston, the state's public advocate, said the law remains unsettled on whether the Supreme Court's 2012 decision abolishing juvenile life without parole should also extend to life without the possibility of parole for 25 years.

Whatever the sentence, a convicted juvenile in Kentucky will remain until his 18th birthday in a juvenile detention center, where the law requires that he get an education and be spared punitive measures like solitary confinement, said Acena Beck, the executive director of the state's Children's Law Center.

Once 18, a convicted juvenile goes back before a judge, who can then decide whether or not to formally impose the trial jury's sentence and send the offender to an adult prison.

There was some positive news Thursday, as two more patients were released from Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, and both remaining boys were in stable condition, spokeswoman Kristin Smart said Thursday.

Schreiner reported from Frankfort, Kentucky. Galofaro reported from Louisville, Kentucky.

Trump 'looking forward' to being questioned under oath

By ERIC TUCKER and CHAD DAY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump declared he's "looking forward" to being questioned — under oath — in the special counsel's probe of Russian election interference and Trump's possible obstruction in the firing of the FBI director.

Trump said he would be willing to answer questions under oath in the interview, which special counsel Robert Mueller has been seeking but which White House officials had not previously confirmed the president would grant.

"I'm looking forward to it, actually," Trump said late Wednesday when asked by reporters at the White House. As for timing, he said, "I guess they're talking about two or three weeks, but I'd love to do it."

He said, as he has repeatedly, that "there's no collusion whatsoever" with the Russians, and he added, "There's no obstruction whatsoever."

The full scope of Mueller's investigation, which involves more than a million pages of documents and dozens of witness interviews, is unknown. And there have been no signs that agents aren't continuing to work on ties between Trump's campaign and a Russian effort to tip the 2016 election.

But now that Mueller's team has all but concluded its interviews with current and former Trump officials, and expressed interest in speaking with the president himself, the focus seems to be on the post-inauguration White House. That includes the firing of FBI Director James Comey and discussions preceding the ouster of White House national security adviser Michael Flynn.

The timing and circumstances of a Trump interview are still being ironed out. But soon it will probably

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 36 of 51

be the president himself who will have to explain to Mueller how his actions don't add up to obstruction of justice. And that conversation will be dominated by questions tied to whether he took steps to thwart an FBI investigation.

Asked if he thinks Mueller will be fair, Trump replied: "We're going to find out." He then reiterated that there is "no collusion."

In a potential signal of his defense, Trump suggested that he didn't obstruct — he simply fought back against a false accusation.

So far, witness interviews and the special counsel's document requests make clear Mueller has a keen interest in Comey's May 9 firing and the contents of Comey's private conversations with the president, as well as the ouster months earlier of Flynn and the weeks of conversations leading up to it.

On Thursday, a Trump attorney, John Dowd, released a document confirming the White House had provided thousands of pages of documents related to Comey and "issues regarding Michael Flynn and Russia." Those documents were among more than 20,000 pages of materials the White House has provided to Mueller as part of what Dowd's document called "unprecedented" cooperation and transparency. Among some of the documents, Dowd noted, is material the White House considers to be covered by some kind of privilege.

So far, more than 20 White House officials have given voluntary interviews to Mueller. That includes eight employees in the White House counsel's office. In addition, the document notes, about 30 people affiliated with the president's campaign have given interviews to Mueller or congressional committees probing Russian election interference.

In total, the president's campaign has provided more than 1.4 million pages of documents to Mueller. Special counsel spokesman Peter Carr declined to comment on Dowd's document.

A focus on potential obstruction has been evident almost since Mueller's appointment as special counsel. And interviews with administration officials — including White House counsel Don McGahn, former chief of staff Reince Priebus and the president's son-in-law, Jared Kushner — have shown that Trump is dealing with prosecutors who already have amassed a wealth of knowledge about the events he'll be questioned about.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who had urged Comey's firing, was interviewed for hours last week, becoming the highest-ranking Trump administration official known to have submitted to questioning. Mueller also wants to interview former adviser Steve Bannon, who has called Comey's firing perhaps the biggest mistake in "modern political history."

The White House initially said the firing was based on the Justice Department's recommendation and cited as justification a memo that faulted Comey's handling of the Hillary Clinton email investigation. But Trump himself said later he was thinking of this "Russia thing" and had intended to fire Comey anyway.

Sessions, the target of the president's ire since he stepped aside last March from the Russia investigation, would have been able to offer close-up insight into the president's thinking ahead of the termination. He also could have been able to speak to the president's relationship with Comey, which Comey documented in a series of memos about conversations with Trump that bothered him.

In one memo, Comey described a January 2017 meeting over dinner at which he said the president asked him to pledge his loyalty. Separately, a person familiar with the conversation said this week that Trump in a meeting last year with FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe brought up McCabe's wife's political background following the revelation that she had accepted campaign contributions during a state Senate run from the political action committee of then-Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe, a close Clinton ally.

The Washington Post reported Tuesday night that Trump had also asked McCabe whom he voted for in the presidential race. McCabe replied that he did not vote. Trump said Wednesday he did not recall asking that question.

Another of Comey's memos centered on a February conversation at the White House in which he said Trump told him he believed Flynn, the fired national security adviser, was a "good guy" and encouraged Comey to drop an investigation into him. The FBI had interviewed Flynn weeks earlier about whether he had discussed sanctions with the Russian ambassador during the transition period between the election

and the inauguration. Flynn pleaded guilty in December to lying to the FBI during that interview.

Mueller has been investigating the events leading up to Flynn's dismissal from the White House, including how officials responded to information from former acting Attorney General Sally Yates that Flynn had misled them by saying that he had not discussed sanctions. Despite that warning, and despite an FBI interview days after Trump's inauguration, Flynn was not forced to resign until Feb. 13 — the night of media reports about Yates' conversation with McGahn.

Mueller will likely want to know what Trump understood, before asking Comey to let the Flynn investigation go, about Flynn's interview with the FBI — and whether he had made false statements — and about his conversation with the Russian ambassador.

Four people have so far been charged in the Mueller investigation, including Flynn and former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort. Flynn and former campaign foreign policy adviser George Papadopoulos have pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI.

Associated Press writers Zeke Miller and Jill Colvin contributed to this report.

Read the document from Dowd: <http://bit.ly/2naD2ZB>

Follow Eric Tucker and Chad Day on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/etuckerAP> and <https://www.twitter.com/ChadSDay>

Gymnasts' parents say they'll 'never get rid of the guilt'

By DAVID EGGERT and TAMMY WEBBER, Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Some parents thought they were misinterpreting the doctor's techniques. Others assumed their children were lying or mistaken.

But as more details emerged, the mothers and fathers had to face an awful truth: A renowned sports doctor had molested their daughters.

These parents, many fighting back tears, confronted Larry Nassar during his long sentencing hearing, lamenting their deep feelings of guilt and wondering how they could have missed the abuse that sometimes happened when they were in the same room.

"I willingly took my most precious gift in this world to you, and you hurt her, physically, mentally and emotionally. And she was only 8," Anne Swinehart told Nassar. "I will never get rid of the guilt that I have about this experience."

Many of the young athletes had come to Nassar seeking help with gymnastics injuries. He was sentenced Wednesday to up to 175 years in prison after admitting sexually assaulting patients under the guise of medical treatment while employed by Michigan State University and USA Gymnastics, the sport's governing body, which also trains Olympians.

He counted on his charm and reputation to deflect any questions. He was so brazen that he sometimes molested patients in front of their parents, shielding the young girls with his body or a sheet. His clinic on the university campus was decorated with signed photos of Olympic stars, bolstering his credentials to star-struck athletes and their families.

Parents who voiced concern say Nassar dismissed their questions. The mother of one 12-year-old victim said she questioned Nassar about not wearing gloves and he "answered in a way that made me feel stupid for asking."

"I told myself, 'He's an Olympic doctor, be quiet,'" the woman said. "The guilt that I feel, and that my husband feels, that we could not protect our child, is crippling."

Some victims said they were so young that they did not understand they had been abused until they were adults, so did not tell anyone.

What's more, coaches told the parents that Nassar was the best and could help their daughters achieve their dreams.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 38 of 51

Paul DerOhannesian, a former prosecutor in New York who has written a book on sexual assault trials, said abusers in positions of authority often hold "tremendous power" over both children and parents. Some parents also fear what will happen to their child if they report abuse, and children often have difficulty talking to parents about anything sexual.

"It shouldn't turn into a situation where we blame parents," DerOhannesian said.

But even when Nassar's abuse was reported to coaches and law enforcement authorities, many of them did not believe Nassar had done anything wrong, causing many parents and girls to second-guess themselves.

Donna Markham recounted how her then-12-year-old daughter Chelsey began sobbing in the car as they were headed home after a session with Nassar.

Her daughter said, "Mom, he put his fingers in me and they weren't gloved," then begged her mother not to confront Nassar, fearing it would derail her gymnastics career.

The next day, Donna Markham told her daughter's coach, who did not believe it. Markham said she also asked other mothers if their daughters had mentioned inappropriate touching by Nassar. "They gave me a look like, 'You're lying to me,'" she told the judge, choking back tears.

Chelsey Markham quit gymnastics not long afterward and entered a "path of destruction" and self-loathing and eventually killed herself.

"It all started with him," Markham told the judge. "It has destroyed our family. We used to be so close. ... I went through four years of intense therapy trying to deal with all this, until I could finally accept the fact that this was not my fault."

Some parents did not believe their daughters at first, finding it incomprehensible that the man they trusted could have done anything wrong.

Kyle Stephens, whose family was close with Nassar's, said he repeatedly abused her from age 6 to 12 during family visits to his home near Lansing, Michigan. But her parents did not believe her when she finally told them and made her apologize to Nassar.

Years later, her father realized she was telling the truth, and she blamed his 2016 suicide partly on the guilt he felt.

"Perhaps you have figured it out by now, but little girls don't stay little forever," Stephens told Nassar. "They grow into strong women that return to destroy your world."

Dancer Olivia Venuto, who said Nassar abused her from 2006, when she was 12, until 2013, said her parents did not believe her at first and sent Nassar messages of support after a 2016 Indianapolis Star investigation revealed the abuse.

Swinehart said that when her 15-year-old daughter, Jillian, told her she had been abused, "I tried to believe that there was some medical necessity for this treatment," she said. "The alternative was just too horrific, to think that I had let this happen to my child when I was sitting right there."

Police in Michigan investigated Nassar twice. One inquiry from 2004 concluded that his actions were medically appropriate. Another investigation in 2014 and 2015 did not result in charges.

Judge Rosemarie Aquilina, who sentenced Nassar, told parents not to feel guilty. "The red flags may have been there, but they were designed to be hidden," she said.

Swinehart said other people can't know how they would have reacted in the same situation.

"Quit shaming and blaming the parents," she said. "Trust me, you would not have known. And you would not have done anything differently."

Webber reported from Indianapolis. Associated Press Writer Mike Householder in Lansing, Michigan, contributed to this story.

Undeterred by failed appeal, Brazil's da Silva vows to run

By MAURICIO SAVARESE, Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — A day after a corruption conviction cast serious doubts on his future, Former Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva insisted on Thursday that he'll be on October's presidential ballot, while also appearing to acknowledge that he could be sidelined.

The comments to high-ranking members of his left-leaning Workers' Party underscored the conundrum facing the party that governed Brazil between 2003 and 2016: Its best chance of winning the presidency rests with da Silva, but the once wildly popular former leader may ultimately be ineligible or even jailed.

His chances of running went down sharply on Wednesday when an appellate court upheld a graft conviction against him and even increased the sentence to more than 12 years.

"I hope this candidacy does not depend on Lula," the former leader told Thursday's meeting, hinting that others in the Workers' Party must be ready to carry forward its vision for the country. "You have to put the Brazilian people in motion."

Party stalwarts at Thursday's meeting doubled down on their insistence that da Silva will run and that nobody is entertaining alternatives.

"There is no plan B to Lula's candidacy," said party chairwoman Gleisi Hoffmann. "Lula is plan A to Z."

A few hundred members symbolically voted in favor of da Silva's candidacy and the party intends to register him on Aug. 15, the last day to do so. Many members expressed interest in registering da Silva even if he is in jail.

At the same time, however, local news media say supporters are quietly considering other candidates, including former Sao Paulo Mayor Fernando Haddad and former Bahia Gov. Jaques Wagner, who held several cabinet positions during Workers' Party administrations.

But neither politician comes anywhere close to da Silva in preference polls.

"We have Pele on our team and 15 matches to the final," said former Health Minister Alexandre Padilha, referring to the former soccer star. "No one here thinks we should leave Pele out just in case a defender wants to kick him off the pitch after five matches."

Under Brazilian law, a criminal conviction that has been upheld on appeal makes the person ineligible to run for office, although da Silva still has several avenues to get on the ballot by appealing to higher courts. Ultimately, the country's Supreme Electoral Tribunal makes decisions about candidacies, and the Supreme Court could also weigh in on the case.

Da Silva, president from 2003 to 2010, has been leading in polls, often describes his legal troubles as an elitist plot to get him out of the race. On Thursday, he called his corruption and money laundering conviction "the works of a cartel."

Prosecutors say that as president da Silva traded favors with construction company OAS in return for the promise of a beachfront apartment. He argues never bought it, had the keys to it or spent a night there.

It is just one of a series of graft allegations against him amid a mushrooming corruption scandal that has taken down top politicians and business executives in Latin America's largest nation.

On Thursday, da Silva cancelled a trip to Africa after a judge ordered federal police to seize his passport hours before the trip. The passport order was issued in relation to a criminal case against da Silva alleging influence peddling. It did not involve Wednesday's decision by an appeals court.

Oscar Vilhena Vieira, dean of the law school at Fundacao Getulio Vargas university, said da Silva would most likely eventually be barred from running, but maybe not until weeks before the election.

"We will have a difficult year, but I think in the end the election will take place and people will accept its results," he said.

AP writer Sarah DiLorenzo contributed from Sao Paulo.

More than 20 WH employees quizzed by Mueller, lawyer says

By CHAD DAY and MARY CLARE JALONICK, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — More than 20 White House employees have given interviews to the special counsel in his probe of possible obstruction of justice and Trump campaign ties to Russian election interference, according to a document released Thursday that underscores the breadth of the investigation.

The document, released by President Donald Trump's attorney John Dowd, details what the White House calls its unprecedented cooperation with Robert Mueller's investigation, including that it has turned over more than 20,000 pages of records. The president's 2016 campaign has turned over more than 1.4 million pages.

However, the number of voluntary interviews, including eight people from the White House counsel's office, also suggests the scope of Mueller's work so far. And the document confirms Mueller's interest in the circumstances surrounding two men the president fired: former FBI Director James Comey and former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn.

An additional 28 people affiliated with the Trump campaign have also been interviewed by either the special counsel or congressional committees probing Russian election meddling, the document notes. It does not name the people nor provide a breakdown of how many were interviewed by Mueller's team.

According to Dowd, the White House produced nearly 13,000 pages of documents related to Comey and "issues regarding Michael Flynn and Russia."

Dowd released his detailed list of cooperation by the White House and the campaign a day after the president said he was looking forward to being questioned by Mueller's team. Ground rules for that encounter's content and setting are still being negotiated, but Trump said Wednesday it could occur in two or three weeks.

Separately, transcripts of interviews held behind closed doors in congressional investigations into Russian meddling could soon become public. Those will include the president's elder son.

Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa, the Republican chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said Thursday he will work with the panel's top Democrat, Dianne Feinstein of California, to release the transcripts of interviews with Donald Trump Jr. and others who attended a June 2016 meeting between campaign officials and Russians at Trump Tower in New York.

"Let's get them out there for everyone to see," Grassley said.

Feinstein said they also should be turned over to Mueller.

The rare bipartisan move brings the focus, at least momentarily, back to the initial subject of several different congressional investigations into Russian meddling in the 2016 elections and whether Trump's campaign was involved. In recent weeks, many Republicans have pivoted to instead focus on whether the FBI conspired against Trump when it began investigating the campaign, citing anti-Trump texts between two Justice Department officials who were at one point part of special counsel Mueller's investigation.

Trying to stem some of that criticism, the Justice Department's internal watchdog said Thursday that it had located several months' worth of text messages the department had previously said it couldn't find.

Inspector General Michael Horowitz said in a letter to Congress that his office "succeeded in using forensic tools" to recover messages from FBI devices, including those swapped by a counterintelligence agent, Peter Strzok, and FBI lawyer Lisa Page between December 2016 and May 2017.

Strzok was reassigned from Mueller's Russia investigation following the discovery of anti-Trump text messages he and Page, who was also briefly detailed to Mueller's team, had shared.

Trump has fumed about the missing messages, saying on Twitter that they represent "one of the biggest stories in a long time."

Several congressional committees have been reviewing text messages and have been slowly releasing them. Senate Judiciary is one of those panels, and late Thursday, Grassley revealed additional texts in a letter he sent to FBI Director Christopher Wray. In the newly released texts, Strzok and Page discuss the investigation of Hillary Clinton campaign emails and note that she could be the next president.

"The last thing you need us going in there loaded for bear," Page texts, referring to dealing with Clinton.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 41 of 51

Meanwhile, Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer criticized the Republicans who have been escalating attacks on the FBI and Justice Department as Mueller's investigation has come closer to Trump's inner circle. Schumer singled out a classified memo that the House intelligence committee has produced and may move to make public. Republicans have said the memo alleges FBI misconduct and some have argued that the public should see it.

"What began as an attempt to discredit the investigator has now devolved into delusional, self-serving paranoia," Schumer said in a Senate floor speech.

In a letter Wednesday, the Justice Department warned the House intelligence panel's Republican chairman, California Rep. Devin Nunes, that releasing the classified memo could be "extraordinarily reckless" and asked to review it.

Assistant Attorney General Stephen Boyd wrote Nunes that given the panel's role in overseeing the nation's intelligence community, "you well understand the damaging impact that the release of classified material could have on our national security and our ability to share and receive sensitive information from friendly foreign governments."

Republican senators have been mostly silent on the memo as House Republicans have hinted at its eventual release. But John Cornyn of Texas, the No. 2 Senate Republican and a member of that chamber's intelligence committee, said Thursday that Nunes and the Justice Department need to work out their differences.

The memo "may be innocuous, but it also may not be innocuous, and they need to work through that," Cornyn said.

He said he had been briefed by Nunes on the memo but had not yet read it.

Associated Press writers Eric Tucker and Sadie Gurman contributed to this report.

The sex abuse scandal is far from over at Michigan State

By ED WHITE and DAVID EGGERT, Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Sports doctor Larry Nassar is on his way to prison for the rest of his life for molesting scores of young female athletes, but the scandal is far from over at Michigan State University as victims, lawmakers and a judge demand to know why he wasn't stopped years ago.

Some are likening Michigan State to Penn State University, where three senior officials, including the school's president, were sentenced to jail last year for failing to tell authorities about a sexual abuse allegation involving coach Jerry Sandusky.

Nassar, a 54-year-old former member of Michigan State's sports medicine staff, has admitted penetrating elite gymnasts and other athletes with his fingers while he was supposedly treating them for injuries.

Some of the more than 150 women and girls who have accused him said they complained to the sports medicine staff, a campus counselor and the women's gymnastics coach as far back as the late 1990s.

In Michigan, it is a misdemeanor punishable by up to three months in jail and a \$500 fine for certain professionals to fail to report a suspected case of child abuse.

Lou Anna Simon, who resigned under pressure Wednesday as Michigan State's president, insisted, "There is no cover-up." But the university last week asked Michigan's attorney general to conduct a review. And in sentencing Nassar to 40 to 175 years in prison Wednesday, Judge Rosemarie Aquilina called for "a massive investigation as to why there was inaction, why there was silence."

Jennifer Paine, a Michigan lawyer who specializes in child protection law and is not involved in the Nassar case, said there are probably grounds for charging some Michigan State staff members for failing to report what victims were saying.

"The obligation to report doesn't mean anything unless people enforce. That's why it's there," she said.

No one has been charged in the scandal besides Nassar.

John Manly, an attorney who represents more than 100 victims in lawsuits, said Michigan State, USA Gymnastics and the U.S. Olympic Committee "miserably failed children." Nassar was a team doctor at USA

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 42 of 51

Gymnastics, which trains Olympians.

"They had an opportunity, instead of being Penn State, to make them a beacon of how to handle this," Manly said. "It's too late. You can't fix it now."

Penn State's former president, Graham Spanier, and two other ex-administrators, Tim Curley and Gary Schultz, were prosecuted for child endangerment for not reporting a 2001 complaint about Sandusky showering with a boy. Sandusky's arrest a decade later blew up into a scandal that brought down legendary football coach Joe Paterno.

Sandusky is serving 30 to 60 years in prison for sexually abusing 10 boys. As of last year, Penn State had paid nearly \$250 million in fines, settlements and other costs associated with the scandal.

Nassar has also been sentenced to 60 years in federal prison for child pornography. Federal prosecutors have declined to say if they are looking at any other aspects of the case.

Elsewhere, in Texas, the Walker County sheriff's office said it is investigating the Karolyi Ranch, which was a training site for Olympic gymnasts. Some gymnasts said Nassar assaulted them there.

In Washington, U.S. senators from both parties are calling for creation of a select committee to investigate the U.S. Olympic Committee. The NCAA said it has sent Michigan State a letter of inquiry about potential rules violations.

In the Penn State scandal, the NCAA fined the school \$48 million, reduced the number football scholarships, barred the team from postseason play and invalidated 112 victories. Some penalties were later eased.

Kyle Stephens, who was a Nassar family friend, said he molested her for years at his Lansing-area home. She said she told a campus counselor, Gary Stollak, about the abuse in 2004. Nassar met with Stollak and denied it, and no police report was made.

Stollak, now retired, testified in 2016 that he couldn't remember anything because of a stroke.

"He didn't report it, and he's a mandatory reporter," Stephens said, referring to those who are legally required to report sexual abuse. "Michigan State keeps saying that 'we didn't know.' Who should I have told? Tell me who I should have told so I know what I should have done. ... They are continuing to drag out my pain, and that is inappropriate."

A 2014 police investigation into other assault allegations ended with no charges against Nassar. The university, however, told him that he needed to have a chaperone in the room during certain exams. He was fired in 2016 for failing to do so.

Some victims say they reported Nassar to Kathie Klages, who ran camps for teen gymnasts and was Michigan State women's gymnastics coach until last February. She has denied wrongdoing.

State Sen. Margaret O'Brien said college coaches should be added to Michigan's list of mandatory reporters, which includes therapists and medical professionals. In the state House, lawmakers sent a letter to Michigan State on Thursday requesting certain reports about Nassar.

White reported from Detroit.

NBC's Holt says he approached North Korea with eyes open

By DAVID BAUDER, AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — NBC News anchor Lester Holt learned while going through customs in North Korea that his request to visit the heavily-fortified border with South Korea had been denied, and he was headed to a ski resort instead.

His schedule was not his own, and Holt is only the latest journalist to learn the price of peeking into one of the world's most restrictive societies. Holt's first trip to North Korea was timely, with international tensions high and NBC weeks away from broadcasting the Winter Olympics from South Korea. But Holt and NBC also faced criticism for presenting an air-brushed view of the dictatorship.

"I absolutely think the trip was worth it," the NBC "Nightly News" anchor said. "We talk about this place, we hear the bellicose language from its leader and we hear the reaction from our country. It's important to get on the ground. You go to a place like North Korea with your eyes wide open."

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 43 of 51

Holt's reports began Saturday and continued after he returned to the U.S. on Tuesday — and there was a marked change in tone after he got home.

Critics like former Fox News commentator Eric Bolling tweeted disgust with Holt's on-air comment on Monday that he had been treated with respect by the North Koreans. The New York Post, in an editorial, said that "we're still trying to figure out why NBC 'Nightly News' and Lester Holt decided to shill for North Korea's dictatorship."

It was clear even from Holt's early reporting that he was being shown only what the regime wanted him to see. While at the ski resort, he said on Sunday's "Today" show that "what you're seeing here certainly flies in the face of a country that's undergoing crippling sanctions and that may be part of the reason we were invited to see this."

Still, he watched his words. Holt operated under the assumption that everything that was said, including internal editorial discussions among NBC colleagues, was being monitored while he was still in their country, he said.

"I don't want to say we censor ourselves, but you have to be mindful of the fact that you're continuing the trip there," he said. "You're considerably more free when you're out of there in how you frame certain things."

In his report Tuesday after returning home, Holt said that he hadn't seen many cars on the road and that while the ski resort was a source of pride for the North Koreans, it appeared to only be open to the nation's elite. He made note of apparent poverty in rural areas when he was on the road, including the preponderance of manual labor, but his NBC camera operators were told to delete video it had taken.

The Tuesday report was coupled with an interview with a former North Korean turned dissident and now in hiding for fear of assassination — one that surely wouldn't have aired while he was still in the country.

"As a reporter, you always want more," he said. "We want to be able to control where we go, who we can talk to, and we weren't able to. That's frustrating, but it wasn't like we didn't know that going in."

Network news crews need to carefully weigh the value of such trips, particularly when money is tight, said Tom Nagorski, executive vice president of the Asia Society and a longtime executive at ABC News, where he was involved in planning the network's overseas coverage. Ultimately, when you're seeking a depth of understanding, there's no substitute for traveling to the country and seeing the people, even if the picture is incomplete, he said.

The true value comes in multiple trips to a country like North Korea, when a reporter becomes attuned to subtle changes in how people act and even what they wear, he said. He noted recent reporting by ABC News' Bob Woodruff that illustrated his depth of knowledge about the country.

Even when she traveled to restricted areas in North Korea, Myanmar and China, veteran Boston Globe reporter Indira Lakshmanan said she soaked up valuable information. It's important for journalists to be up front about the limits they were placed under so viewers or readers can keep the information in context, said Lakshmanan, an analyst for the Poynter Institute.

"Reporting under the strictures of a repressive regime is often the only legal and safe way into a place," she said.

Holt believes the ski resort was selected so North Koreans could show that the country wasn't as backward as depicted. While there, he also met with sports representatives to talk about the country's participation in the Olympics and had a meeting with a top government official that he said turned into a lecture.

Holt, who said he learned three weeks ago that a longstanding request to get in the country had been approved, suggested the North Koreans were motivated "by a sense that they want to move past the nuclear issue, and to declare that 'we are a nuclear nation, deal with it, and we want relations on another level now.'"

He said that it was interesting to hear the voice of the people. "Even though you know you're not sure that you're hearing their true voice, it's certainly the voice of the country."

Visits by western news organizations are rare, but not unheard of: CNN's Will Ripley has visited North Korea 17 times since 2014. The Associated Press has maintained a video office in North Korea since 2006,

and in 2012 added a text and photo bureau, the first by a western news agency. Both are staffed regularly by visiting international journalists.

Trump in Davos: threatens Palestinians, reassures Brits

By CATHERINE LUCEY, Associated Press

DAVOS, Switzerland (AP) — President Donald Trump barreled into a global summit in the Swiss Alps on Thursday, threatening to stop U.S. aid to the Palestinians and dismissing as a “false rumor” the idea that there are tensions in the U.S. relationship with Britain.

Trump’s debut appearance at the glitzy World Economic Forum was hotly anticipated, with longtime attendees of the free-trade-focused event wondering how the “America First” president would fit in. Crowds clustered around Trump as he entered the modern conference hall, the president telling passers-by that he was bringing a message of “peace and prosperity.”

Trump framed his visit as a sign of positive things happening for the U.S. economy.

“When I decided to come to Davos, I didn’t think in terms of elitist or globalist, I thought in terms of lots of people that want to invest lots of money and they’re all coming back to the United States, they’re coming back to America,” the president told CNBC.

His meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a close ally, was their first since the president announced earlier this month that he would recognize Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and move the U.S. embassy there. The declaration delighted Netanyahu and outraged Palestinians, who declared a new U.S.-led peace push dead and refused to meet with Vice President Mike Pence during his recent visit to the Mideast.

Trump took that as an affront.

“They disrespected us a week ago by not allowing our great vice president to see them and we give them hundred of millions of dollars in aid and support,” Trump said. “That money is not going to them unless they sit down and negotiate peace.”

Netanyahu was effusive in his praise for Trump, saying the president’s recent announcement on Jerusalem was a “historic decision that will be forever etched in the hearts of our people.” The Palestinians, in turn, said Trump’s “language of dictation is unacceptable,” in the words of spokesman Nabil Abu Rdeneh.

Past American presidents have expressed irritation with the Palestinian leadership but no previous administration has threatened to cut off assistance to the Palestinians unless they agreed to negotiate with Israel.

Washington has contributed over \$5 billion in economic and security aid to the Palestinians since the mid-1990s. Annual economic aid since 2008 has averaged around \$400 million, much of it devoted to development projects. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said all bilateral assistance to the Palestinians, including economic security aid, is at risk if the Palestinians don’t come to the negotiating table.

Trump, who has called an agreement to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict the “ultimate deal,” said Thursday that he had taken Jerusalem— one of the thorniest issues — “off the table,” although U.S. officials have stressed repeatedly that the decision has no impact on negotiations over the borders or sovereignty of the holy city. Trump told Netanyahu that Israel had “won” on the matter but would have to make concessions to the Palestinians in any eventual talks.

Trump met separately with British Prime Minister Theresa May, batting away the idea that their relationship is strained after he canceled a recent visit to London and May criticized him for retweeting a U.K. far-right group’s anti-Muslim videos.

Trump declared it a “really great relationship.” May described it as a “really special relationship.”

But their meeting was more muted than Trump’s session with Netanyahu and they did not respond to shouted questions about the videos.

After the meeting, May’s office said the two leaders “concluded by asking officials to work together on finalizing the details of a visit by the President to the UK later this year.” White House officials said the visit would be a “working visit,” featuring less pomp than a full state visit. They said plans for an official state visit would come later.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 45 of 51

Absent from the Davos scene: first lady Melania Trump. She was originally scheduled to attend the forum but later scrapped that plan, citing scheduling and logistics problems. The reversal came after reports emerged of an adult film star's account of an alleged affair with Donald Trump in 2006.

Trump is the first sitting president to attend Davos since Bill Clinton in 2000. The protectionist-leaning president's last-minute decision to attend the annual gathering for political and business elites was unexpected. Trump has criticized global pacts, withdrawing from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) on trade, demanding changes to the North American Free Trade Agreement and announcing his intent to exit the Paris climate accord.

But he drew enthusiastic praise for his tax-cut law at a dinner that he hosted Thursday for more than a dozen business executives from Nokia, Adidas, SAP and other companies, with the business leaders praising his tax plan and pledging to invest more in the United States before their tucks into their beef tenderloin.

Trump called the assembled executives, all male, "some of the greatest business leaders in the world," before asking them to go around the table and talk about how their businesses are doing in the U.S.

While the businesses praised Trump, another Davos takeaway was that, without Trump's participation, other countries are still moving forward with trade deals.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau revealed at Davos this week that his country and the 10 remaining members of the Trans-Pacific Partnership have revised their trade deal following the U.S. withdrawal.

Trump said in an interview with CNBC that he would consider re-entering the TPP if it was a "better deal" for the U.S.

"The deal was terrible, the way it was structured was terrible," he said.

Top Trump officials this week insisted that "America First" did not mean "America alone." Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said the philosophy simply means that "President Trump is looking out for American workers and American interests, no different than he expects other leaders would look out for their own."

Other administration officials had a clear message for critics.

Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao said Davos "should feel very flattered" by Trump's attendance. She added: "Those that don't want to listen, you can — they can — leave."

AP Writer Matthew Lee contributed from Warsaw, Poland.

Man waits for shot at freedom 2 years after landmark ruling

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN, Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — A landmark ruling by the nation's highest court gave Henry Montgomery his first chance at freedom after nearly a half-century behind bars. Two years later, the 71-year-old Louisiana man is still waiting for a parole hearing that could set him free.

Thursday is the two-year anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in Montgomery's favor. The decision enabled roughly 2,000 inmates to argue for release after receiving mandatory life-without-parole sentences as juveniles.

Louisiana's parole board delayed a hearing on Montgomery's parole request from Dec. 14 to Feb. 19. The board is waiting for a legal opinion from Louisiana's attorney general on how many board members must hear Montgomery's case. Under Louisiana law, a three-member panel is required for juvenile parole hearings, while at least five members are required for a parole hearing when a violent crime was committed against a law enforcement officer.

Montgomery was 17 when he killed Charles Hurt, an East Baton Rouge sheriff's deputy, in 1963. He was initially sentenced to death after a jury convicted him. After the Louisiana Supreme Court ruled he didn't get a fair trial and threw out his murder conviction in 1966, Montgomery was retried, found "guilty without capital punishment" and automatically sentenced to life without parole.

The Supreme Court decided in 2012 that mandatory life-without-parole sentences for juveniles are unconstitutional "cruel and unusual" punishment.

In January 2016, the justices made their decision retroactive, deciding in *Montgomery v. Louisiana* to

extend its ban on such sentences to people already in prison.

Justice Anthony Kennedy said prisoners like Montgomery "must be given the opportunity to show their crime did not reflect irreparable corruption; and, if it did not, their hope for some years of life outside prison walls must be restored."

The decision ushered in a wave of new sentences and the release of inmates from Michigan to Pennsylvania, Arkansas and beyond. But other former teen offenders are still waiting for a chance at resentencing in states and counties that have been slow to address the court ruling, an Associated Press investigation found. In Michigan, for example, prosecutors are seeking new no-parole sentences for nearly two-thirds of 363 juvenile lifers.

A state judge who resentenced Montgomery to life with the possibility of parole said in June that he's a "model prisoner" who appears to be rehabilitated.

Fossil shows modern humans left Africa earlier than thought

By **SETH BORENSTEIN, AP Science Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — A fossil found in Israel indicates modern humans may have left Africa as much as 100,000 years earlier than previously thought.

Scientists say that an ancient upper jawbone and associated stone tools could also mean that Homo sapiens — modern humans — arose in Africa far earlier than fossils now show. And it may cause rethinking about how we evolved and interacted with now-extinct cousin species, such as Neanderthals.

"When they start moving out of Africa and what geographical route they choose to do it are the two most important questions in recent human evolution," said Tel Aviv University anthropologist Israel Hershkovitz, lead author of a study published in the journal Science .

The jawbone, complete with several well-preserved teeth, was found to be somewhere between 177,000 and 194,000 years old.

Previously, the oldest fossils of modern humans found outside of Africa were somewhere from 90,000 to 120,000 years old, also in Israel. So given the range in both those estimates, the jawbone might be about 50,000 to 100,000 years older.

The jaw was found in 2002 in the collapsed Misliya (miss-LEE-uh) cave on the western slope of Mount Carmel. Researchers spent the last decade-and-a-half looking for more remains and other fossils before publishing their study. They say the jaw belonged to a young adult of unknown gender.

The Science paper suggests modern humans could have left Africa 220,000 years ago, with some of the authors saying maybe it was even earlier. That's in part because the cave also contained about 60,000 flint tools, mostly blades and sharp points, some of which are 250,000 years old, said study co-author Mina Weinstein-Evron.

"Now we have to write another story," Weinstein-Evron said. "People were moving all the time."

Scientists believe our species dispersed from Africa more than once.

The tool supply in the cave and other evidence were so complete it basically showed "industry" by the early modern humans, she said. "This guy or woman would have been very busy," she said. "He didn't have enough time do this. He couldn't have made all of it. He must have had some friends."

One of the interesting things about the tools is that while they were used on animal hides for meat and skin use, they were more frequently used on vegetables, Weinstein-Evron said.

Eric Delson, a paleoanthropologist at Lehman College and the American Museum of Natural History who wasn't part of the study, said in an email, "Misliya may be one of several 'out of Africa' migrations" and even though it is the oldest modern human fossil, there may have been even earlier migrations.

He and others said the jawbone finding makes sense and is an exciting discovery.

Israel Hershkovitz, an anthropologist at the Tel Aviv University in Israel and the study's lead author, said the ages of the jaw and the tools suggest our species had left Africa 200,000 years ago or earlier. And that, he said, suggests we may have appeared in Africa as long as 500,000 years ago. The oldest known fossils of our species are about 300,000 years old.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 47 of 51

Weinstein-Evron and Hershkovitz insist those tools could only have been made by Homo sapiens. But Delson and two other experts unconnected to the study disagreed, saying the tools may have been made by Neanderthals or another of our evolutionary cousins.

There is "very solid data" that Neanderthals used the same type of tool about 290,000 years ago in western Europe, and that species was around western Europe from 400,000 years ago until about 40,000 years ago, said Paola Villa of the University of Colorado Museum of Natural History.

Follow Seth Borenstein on Twitter at @borenbears . His work can be found here .

Cow escapes farm to run free with wild bison in Poland

By VANESSA GERA, Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — A farmyard cow in Poland has chosen freedom this winter, roaming with a herd of bison for three months after escaping its pen.

The reddish brown cow has been spotted following bison across corn and rapeseed fields bordering the Bialowieza Forest in eastern Poland as they forage for abandoned corn cobs and other food.

Rafal Kowalczyk, a bison expert who has managed to photograph the unusual sight, said the cow seems to be in good condition. That indicates that she is managing to find food, even though she is sometimes spotted on the margins of the herd. Thick fur common to her Limousin breed and the mild winter in eastern Poland so far this year have also helped her, he told The Associated Press on Thursday.

Kowalczyk, director of the Mammal Research Institute at the Polish Academy of Sciences, described the situation as exceptional, saying it's the first time he has witnessed a cow living among bison. But it's also dangerous to both sides.

If the cow mates with male bison and gets pregnant, she could die during delivery because her hybrid calf would be bigger than a normal cow calf.

Any offspring could also contaminate the gene pool of the tiny and endangered bison population in Poland, which became extinct in the wild after World War I and has been restored based on some captive survivors.

For now, the story of a rebel cow who defied the fate of the slaughterhouse to roam free with the bison is a hit on Kowalczyk's Facebook page.

One of his followers reposted the photo with the words: "Next time when I think that something stops me from fulfilling my dreams, I will remember the cow who became a bison."

But scientists will want to remove the cow from the herd by summer to prevent the risk of mating, though Kowalczyk said that won't be an easy operation.

"One question is whether when winter ends the cow will follow the bison into the forest, which is not the habitat that this cow knows," Kowalczyk said. "The more time she spends in the herd, the riskier it will be."

Push is on to raise sexual misconduct awareness at Grammys

By NEKESA MUMBI MOODY, AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The music industry hasn't been rocked with as many public allegations of sexual misconduct as Hollywood, but insiders are still seeking to show solidarity with the Me Too movement on its biggest night.

Key executives have called on artists and employees to wear a white rose on Sunday in support of Time's Up as the Grammys celebrate its 60th anniversary with a ceremony in New York City. The Time's Up organization was formed by key Hollywood celebrities and executives including Reese Witherspoon, Shonda Rhimes and America Ferrera, and most stars wore black and a Time's Up pin in support of the movement at the Golden Globes earlier this month.

Among those artists who have already confirmed they will wear the rose on Sunday include Dua Lipa and Halsey, who read an emotional poem detailing sexual abuse at the Women's March in New York City on Saturday. More names are expected to be released Thursday.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 48 of 51

"We have not had the tsunami that politics and Hollywood has had, but we are still women," Meg Harkins, senior vice president of marketing at Roc Nation and one of the people behind the Time's Up push at the Recording Academy ceremony, told The Associated Press on Wednesday night.

"I would want to see men and women wearing white roses and I would like men and women to be able to have meaningful Grammy Award speeches when those speeches happen."

After the Globes, Harkins was commiserating with fellow industry executive Karen Rait, head of rhythm promotions at Interscope/Geffen/A&M records, about what could be done at the Grammys.

"We all agreed it was really necessary," Harkins said. "We've all felt the political and cultural change in the last couple of months."

The women gathered others for a meeting Monday, and by Wednesday sent out an initial email urging people to wear a white rose and also noted that Rapsody, the only woman nominated for best rap album, would be doing so.

"We choose the white rose because historically it stands for hope, peace, sympathy and resistance," the email said. "Please let us know if we can add your name to our list of supporters. The world is listening."

In a matter of hours, there were hundreds of people who had confirmed, said Harkins. The push was buoyed by the support of the co-chairs at Atlantic Records, Julie Greenwald and Craig Kallman. Greenwald sent the missive out to staff members, a representative for the label confirmed.

"They have really encouraged not only their artists but also their employees to sign," Harkins said.

The white rose was chosen in part because it could be done quickly but also because the color has been long used as part of the women's suffragette movement; Hillary Clinton wore white when she accepted the Democratic nomination for president in 2016.

"It's not just a visual cue to feel empowered; it's about actually giving money toward women who need the help," said Harkins.

Time's Up is not only trying to raise awareness about sexual harassment but also money for a legal defense fund for people in all industries battling sexual misconduct. Over \$15 million has already been raised.

Music mogul Russell Simmons is perhaps the biggest industry name accused of sexual misconduct; former Epic label head L.A. Reid has also faced accusations. But compared with film, TV or even politics, the scandals have been relatively few in music, causing many to ask when the reckoning will come to that industry.

"It's a legitimate question. I don't know the answer," said Harkins. She added: "If and when it comes, we want to be super-proactive. ... We are being loud in our voices before a crisis, so we can avert a crisis."

Online:

<https://www.timesupnow.com/>

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

US likely to send 1st aircraft carrier since war to Vietnam

By **ROBERT BURNS, AP National Security Writer**

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — A U.S. Navy aircraft carrier is expected to make a port visit to Vietnam in March, U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Thursday. It would be the first such visit in the postwar era.

The planned visit to Danang is likely to irritate China, which is critical of U.S. moves to add to its military muscle in the region.

Mattis and his counterpart, Ngo Xuan Lich, discussed the planned carrier visit during a closed-door meeting, Pentagon spokesman Navy Capt. Jeff Davis said. Davis said the Vietnamese are awaiting final approval by more senior government authorities, but Mattis appeared to indicate it was a done deal.

"Thank you for the increasing partnership with our aircraft carrier coming in to Danang here in March," Mattis said in remarks opening a meeting with Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong.

Mattis also thanked him for Vietnam's support for toughening United Nations Security Council sanctions

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 49 of 51

against North Korea.

The Vietnamese Defense Ministry said separately that the two defense ministries had submitted their proposals for a U.S. carrier port visit to their leaders. The idea was floated last summer when Lich met Mattis at the Pentagon.

The two met again in Hanoi on Thursday during Mattis' first trip to the Southeast Asian nation.

"We recognize that relationships never stay the same. They either get stronger or they get weaker, and America wants a stronger relationship with a stronger Vietnam," Mattis told Lich.

In a written statement after Mattis's meeting with Lich, the Vietnamese Defense Ministry said Lich had given Mattis "war artifacts of U.S. military personnel in the war." It did not elaborate.

The visit also included a meeting with President Tran Dai Quang.

"From postwar legacy issues to what Minister Lich called the positive trajectory of our military-to-military relations, I'm confident we're on the right trajectory, sir," Mattis said in his opening remarks at the presidential palace, where he and the president sat side-by-side beneath a large bust of revolutionary leader Ho Chi Minh.

Earlier Thursday, Mattis broke from his usual pattern of official business meetings to pay his respects at one of Vietnam's oldest pagodas, where he spoke at length with a senior monk and remarked on the serene setting. The Tran Quoc Buddhist pagoda stands on a small island at the edge of a lake in Hanoi, a short distance from a concrete marker noting where Sen. John McCain was shot down during a Navy attack mission over the city in 1967. McCain was retrieved from the lake and imprisoned at the infamous "Hanoi Hilton."

As he strolled among tourists at the 6th century pagoda, Mattis said to the monk, "Beautiful. Peaceful. It makes you think more deeply."

Mattis joined the Marine Corps Reserves in 1969, while the decade-long Vietnam War was ongoing, but did not serve in Vietnam.

His visit happened to come just days before the Vietnamese celebrate Tet, the Lunar New Year.

Next week will mark the 50th anniversary of the Tet Offensive, in January 1968, when the Communist North launched synchronized, simultaneous attacks on multiple targets in U.S.-backed South Vietnam, including the city of Hue. The offensive was a military failure, but it turned out to be a pivotal point in the war by puncturing U.S. hopes of a swift victory. The war dragged on for another seven years before the U.S. completed its withdrawal.

Mattis noted earlier this week that Vietnam's proximity to the South China Sea makes the country a key player in disputes with China over territorial claims to islets, shoals and other small land formations in the sea. Vietnam also fought a border war with China in 1979.

UN official says not safe yet for Rohingya return to Myanmar

By JULHAS ALAM, Associated Press

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — It is not yet safe for the hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims living in refugee camps in Bangladesh to begin returning to Myanmar, a senior United Nations official said Thursday.

While many Rohingya want to eventually return to their villages, UNICEF deputy executive director Justin Forsyth said that no one he met during visits to Bangladesh's refugee camps said they would go back now.

"This moment is not safe to go back," he said. "We have to improve the security situation inside Myanmar to send them back."

More than 680,000 Rohingya fled Myanmar's Rakhine state beginning in August, after Myanmar security forces began "clearance operations" in their villages in the wake of attacks by Rohingya insurgents on police posts. While most of the refugees left Myanmar in the first weeks of the crisis, Rohingya are continuing to trickle across the border into Bangladesh, complaining of mistreatment at home.

Forsyth spoke one day after former New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson resigned suddenly from an advisory panel on the crisis, calling it a "whitewash and a cheerleading operation" for Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 50 of 51

"She blames all the problems that Myanmar is having on the international media, on the U.N., on human rights groups, on other governments, and I think this is caused by the bubble that is around her, by individuals that are not giving her frank advice," Richardson, once a close friend of Suu Kyi, said Wednesday in an interview with The Associated Press in Yangon, Myanmar's largest city.

Richardson said Suu Kyi appeared to want the 10-member international advisory group, one in a string of Rohingya commissions set up by the Myanmar government, to endorse her policies.

"I'm not going to be part of it because I think there are serious issues of human rights violations, safety, citizenship, peace and stability that need to be addressed," said Richardson, who often works as an international troubleshooter. "I just felt that my advice and counsel would not be heeded."

Forsyth said he didn't know the details of the resignation but that "I understand his frustration."

Gradual repatriations of Rohingya were to begin Tuesday under agreements signed by Myanmar and Bangladesh, but Bangladeshi officials delayed the returns at the last minute, saying more time was needed amid questions about safety and whether the refugees were returning voluntarily.

Forsyth urged Myanmar authorities to allow international organizations access to all the areas affected by the crisis.

Rohingya have long faced repression in Myanmar. They are widely dismissed as having migrated illegally from Bangladesh and are denied some of the most basic rights, including the freedom of movement. In 1982, nearly all Rohingya were stripped of their citizenship rights.

Associated Press writer Foster Klug in Yangon, Myanmar, contributed to this report.

Asian shares recoup losses, dollar steady as eyes on Trump

By **YOUKYUNG LEE, AP Business Writer**

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Shares are modestly higher in Asia, recouping losses from earlier in the week as the dollar steadies against other currencies. Investors are watching for President Donald Trump's comments later Friday to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's Nikkei 225 added 0.2 percent to 23,703.83 and South Korea's Kospi added 0.2 percent to 2,566.15. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index jumped 1.1 percent to 32,998.48 and the Shanghai Composite index added 0.3 percent to 3,559.23. Stocks in Southeast Asia were mixed. Australian markets were closed for a holiday.

WORDS ON DOLLAR: On Thursday, U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin sought to clarify earlier comments on the desirability of a weak dollar that had precipitated a dip in its value against other major currencies. In the long run, "I fundamentally believe in the strength of the dollar," Mnuchin said. The dollar steadied after that comment and one by Trump, who said that "ultimately, I want to see a strong dollar."

CURRENCIES: The dollar fell to 109.39 yen from 109.43 yen while the euro strengthened to \$1.2427 from \$1.2397.

ANALYST'S TAKE: "The plunge in the dollar (down 13 percent since the start of 2017) is basically a monetary easing for the U.S. and will further boost U.S. growth, profits and shares. However, it's working against Fed tightening, increasing the likelihood that it will get more hawkish and U.S. tariff hikes risk driving a stronger, not weaker, U.S. dollar," Shane Oliver of AMP Capital said in a commentary.

DATA WATCH: The U.S. domestic product for the fourth-quarter of 2017 is due to be released Friday and is expected to show continued strong expansion of the world's largest economy.

WALL STREET: U.S. stocks finished mixed on Thursday. The Standard & Poor's 500 index inched up 0.1 percent to 2,839.25 and the Dow Jones industrial average gained 0.5 percent to 26,392.79. The Nasdaq composite fell 0.1 percent to 7,411.16. The Russell 2000 index of smaller-company stocks rose 0.1 percent to 1,601.67.

OIL: Benchmark U.S. crude lost 5 cents to \$65.46 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract fell 10 cents to close at \$65.51 a barrel on Thursday. Brent crude, used to price international oils, dropped 19 cents to \$70.23 per barrel in London.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 199 ~ 51 of 51

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, Jan. 26, the 26th day of 2018. There are 339 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 26, 1788, the first European settlers in Australia, led by Capt. Arthur Phillip, landed in present-day Sydney.

On this date:

In 1531, a major earthquake struck Lisbon in the Kingdom of Portugal, followed by a tsunami and several strong aftershocks; an estimated 30,000 people died.

In 1784, in a letter to his daughter Sarah, Benjamin Franklin expressed unhappiness over the choice of the bald eagle as the symbol of America, and stated his own preference: the turkey.

In 1837, Michigan became the 26th state.

In 1870, Virginia rejoined the Union.

In 1915, President Woodrow Wilson signed the Rocky Mountain National Park Act, which created America's 10th national park.

In 1942, the first American Expeditionary Force to head to Europe during World War II arrived in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

In 1950, India officially proclaimed itself a republic as Rajendra Prasad took the oath of office as president.

In 1962, the United States launched Ranger 3 to land scientific instruments on the moon — but the probe ended up missing its target by more than 22,000 miles.

In 1979, former Vice President Nelson A. Rockefeller died in New York at age 70.

In 1988, Australians celebrated the 200th anniversary of their country as a grand parade of tall ships re-enacted the voyage of the first European settlers. The Andrew Lloyd Webber musical "Phantom of the Opera" opened at Broadway's Majestic Theater.

In 1993, Vaclav Havel was elected president of the newly formed Czech Republic.

In 1998, President Bill Clinton forcefully denied having an affair with a former White House intern, telling reporters, "I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky."

Ten years ago: Barack Obama routed Hillary Rodham Clinton in the South Carolina Democratic primary. Maria Sharapova won the Australian Open, beating Ana Ivanovic 7-5, 6-3 for her third Grand Slam singles title. Mirai Nagasu, at 14, became the second-youngest female (after Tara Lipinski) to win the ladies' title at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships held in St. Paul, Minnesota. Christian Brando, the troubled eldest son of the late actor Marlon Brando, died in Los Angeles at age 49. Radical PLO leader George Habash died in Amman, Jordan, at age 81.

Five years ago: Thousands of people, many holding signs with names of gun violence victims, joined a rally in Washington, D.C. for gun control. Victoria Azarenka won her second consecutive Australian Open title, beating Li Na 4-6, 6-4, 6-3. Ashley Wagner became the first woman since Michelle Kwan in 2005 to win back-to-back titles in the U.S. Figure Skating Championships, holding off up-and-comer Gracie Gold in Omaha, Nebraska.

One year ago: Tensions flared between President Donald Trump and Mexico, with Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto scrapping a planned visit to Washington and the White House threatening a 20 percent tax on imports to pay for Trump's proposed wall along the southern border. Actor Mike Connors, 91, who starred as TV's hard-hitting private eye "Mannix," died in Los Angeles. Actress Barbara Hale, 94, who played steadfast secretary Della Street on "Perry Mason," died at her home in Sherman Oaks, California.

Today's Birthdays: Cartoonist Jules Feiffer is 89. Sportscaster-actor Bob Uecker is 83. Actor Scott Glenn is 79. Singer Jean Knight is 75. Activist Angela Davis is 74. Actor Richard Portnow is 71. Rock musician Corky Laing (Mountain) is 70. Actor David Strathairn (streh-THEHRN') is 69. Producer-director Mimi Leder is 66. Alt-country singer-songwriter Lucinda Williams is 65. Rock singer-musician Eddie Van Halen is 63. Reggae musician Norman Hassan (UB40) is 60. Actress-comedian-talk show host Ellen DeGeneres is 60. Rock