

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 1 of 52



- 1- Recycling trailers
- 1- Chicken Soup for the Soul
- 1- Riddle of the Day
- 1- Groton Chiropractic Clinic Ad
- 2- Editorial from Mr. Bill Duncan
- 2- Omaha Steaks Ad
- 3- Team Ava BBQ Supper on Saturday
- 4- Drowsy Driving: Don't Be Asleep at the Wheel
- 5- Farmers Union PSA
- 5- Groton Prairie Mixed
- 6- Game, Fish and Parks Launches 100 Years of Tradition
- 7- Food Plot Program Provides Supplemental Pheasant Habitat
- 9- Taking care of our heroes, because they took care of us
- 10- Today in Weather History
- 11- Today's Forecast
- 12- Yesterday's Weather
- 12- Today's Weather Info
- 12- National Weather Map
- 13- Daily Devotional
- 14- 2018 Community Events
- 15- News from the Associated Press

**Riddle: A cloud was my mother, the wind is my father, my son is the cool stream, and my daughter is the fruit of the land. A rainbow is my bed, the earth my final resting place, and I'm the torment of man. Who Am I? Answer at end of AP News**

## Groton Chiropractic Clinic

Carol McFarland-Kutter, D.C.  
1205 N 1st St., Groton 397-8204

**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**

### Today's Events

#### Thursday, Feb. 8

Boys Junior High Basketball at Frederick. 7th Grade at 4pm, 8th Grade at 5pm

#### Friday, Feb. 9

Doubleheader at Warner. Girls JV at 4 p.m., Boys JV at 5:15 p.m., Girls Varsity at 6:30 p.m., Boys Varsity at 8 p.m.

## Editorial from Mr. Bill Duncan, Groton Area MS/HS

When I am out in the Work Places with our young people from the high school, I am almost always asked if I work there. In a sense I am, but I am considered a Job Coach, employed through Groton Jr.-Sr High, and Project Skills out of Aberdeen. The goal of Project Skills is to give students who may not have other options for employment available to them in our community an opportunity to learn a skill, earn some money, and learn social and work skills 'on the job' that will help them in the future with employment opportunities and options. Through the years teacher Meri Erickson has worked with Project Skills to give numerous youth in our school system the opportunity to gain skills and employment experience. We would never be able to have this program in our community without the co-operation and the willing support of the local businesses and their employees. This co-operative effort between the school and local businesses is greatly appreciated by the staff and the students involved in Project Skills. I myself am a graduate of a similar work-study program of secondary education when I was in high school fifty years ago. I have always been so very grateful for that wonderful opportunity I experienced, and am grateful now to be able to do this with our youth.

Bill Duncan, Para-professional at Groton Area Public Schools



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# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 3 of 52



The junior high band showed their support for Ava Tunheim, a seventh grader recently diagnosed with leukemia. The seventh graders are planning a fundraiser at the Saturday Mobridge-Pollock doubleheader.



## BBQ Supper for Ava

\$5 Meal includes Sandwich, Chips, & Bar

Saturday, February 10th  
Groton Area Arena Lobby  
\*Basketball Double-Header vs  
Mobridge-Pollock\*  
Serving begins @2:00pm

Ava Tunheim, Groton Area 7th Grader, has recently been diagnosed with leukemia. All proceeds will help defray her medical expenses.

♥ Sponsored by Groton Area 7th Grade Class & Economy Meat Market ♥



## Drowsy Driving: Don't Be Asleep at the Wheel

New AAA Foundation study shows drowsy driving crashes are eight times higher than federal estimates Feb. 8, 2018 - The most in-depth drowsy driving research ever conducted in the U.S. using footage of everyday drivers found that the percentage of crashes involving drowsiness is nearly eight times higher than federal estimates indicate, according to the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.

The difficulty in detecting drowsiness following a crash makes drowsy driving one of the most underreported traffic safety issues. The new research provides an unprecedented analysis of in-vehicle dashcam video from more than 700 crashes, confirming that the danger of drowsy driving soars above official estimates.

"Drowsy driving is a bigger traffic safety issue than federal estimates show," said Dr. David Yang, executive director for the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. "Drivers who don't get enough sleep are putting everyone on the road at risk. By conducting an in-depth analysis using video of everyday drivers, we can now better assess if a driver was fatigued in the moments leading up to a crash."

In the study, researchers examined video of drivers' faces in the three minutes leading up to a crash. Using a scientific measure linking the percentage of time a person's eyes are closed to their level of drowsiness, the researchers determined that 9.5 percent of all crashes and 10.8 percent of crashes resulting in significant property damage involved drowsiness. Federal estimates indicate drowsiness is a factor in only one to two percent of crashes.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that 35 percent of U.S. drivers sleep less than the recommended minimum of seven hours daily. In a recent related AAA Foundation survey, nearly all drivers (96 percent) say they view drowsy driving as a serious threat to their safety and a completely unacceptable behavior. However, 29 percent admitted to driving when they were so tired they had a hard time keeping their eyes open at some point in the past month.

"As many Americans struggle to balance their busy schedules, missing a few hours of sleep each day can often seem harmless," said Jake Nelson, director of Traffic Safety Advocacy and Research for AAA. "But missing just two to three hours of sleep can more than quadruple your risk for a crash, which is the equivalent of driving drunk."

Knowing the warning signs of drowsiness can help drivers avoid dozing off behind the wheel. The most common symptoms include:

- Having trouble keeping your eyes open

- Drifting from your lane

- Not remembering the last few miles driven

Drivers however should not rely on their bodies to provide warning signs for drowsiness and should instead prioritize getting at least seven hours of sleep before hitting the road.

"Don't be fooled, the only antidote for drowsiness is sleep," said William Van Tassel, manager of Driver Training for AAA. "Short term tactics like drinking coffee, singing, rolling down the window will not work. Your body's need for sleep will eventually override your brain's attempts to stay awake."

AAA recommends that drivers:

- Travel at times of the day when they are normally awake

- Avoid heavy foods

- Avoid medications that cause drowsiness or other impairment

For longer trips, drivers should:

- Schedule a break every two hours or every 100 miles

- Travel with an alert passenger and take turns driving

Do not underestimate the power of a quick nap. Pulling into a rest stop and taking a quick catnap -- at least 20 minutes and no more than 30 minutes of sleep-- can help to keep you alert on the road.

To help drivers determine if their medications may cause drowsiness, AAA and the AAA Foundation developed Roadwise Rx, a free and confidential online tool that generates personalized feedback about how the interactions between prescription, over-the-counter medicines and herbal supplements can affect safety behind the wheel.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 5 of 52

## Groton Prairie Mixed

**Team Standings:** Jackelopes 4, Shih Tzus 3, Cheetahs 3, Coyotes 1, Chipmunks 1, Foxes 0

**Men's High Games:** Brad Larson 223, 199, Brad Waage 203, 202, Mike Siegler 199

**Women's High Games:** Karen Spanier 189, Nicole Kassube 188, Vicki Walter 165

**Men's High Series:** Brad Waage 585, Brad Larson 581, Mike Siegler 533

**Women's High Series:** Nicole Kassube 488, Karen Spanier 463, Vicki Walter 451



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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")**



## Game, Fish and Parks Launches 100 Years of Tradition

PIERRE, S.D. - The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) announced today that the next couple of years will be dedicated to celebrating 100 Years of Tradition. In 1918, South Dakota established its first pheasant hunting season which was held in Spink County in 1919. Also, in 1919, Custer State Park was named the first official state park.

"In South Dakota, we know that traditions come in all forms of outdoor recreation," stated Kelly Hepler, department secretary. "Over the next two years, we will highlight our hunting, camping and outdoor recreational traditions as well as yours, but

also focus on where we all want to go in the next 100 years."

To kick things off, GFP will showcase 100 Years of Tradition at the 2018 National Pheasant Fest and Quail Classic at the Denny Sanford Premier Center in Sioux Falls, Feb. 16-18. Department staff will be located in the concourse as well as at Booth 1706. Commemorative 100 year hats will be given away throughout the event and staff will be selling hunting, fishing and park entrance licenses on site. Other prizes will also be given away.

"With celebrating 100 years, there will be a strong digital push using #MySDTradition; focusing on the outdoor opportunities that provide us all with great memories of the past. As we reach 100 years of pheasant hunting and state parks in South Dakota, we encourage our recreational users, residents and nonresidents, to take us for a trip down memory lane. We want to learn about your new and old traditions and how they got started," stated Hepler.

In addition, two new partnerships are underway with South Dakota breweries and the South Dakota RV industry. The New Brew Competition asks all breweries in South Dakota to develop a brew honoring the 100 year celebration and focusing on the close relationship with nature, strong ties to community and how the outdoors play a strong role in our future. A Request for Proposals (RFP) was sent to all South Dakota RV dealers this week requesting a donation of a new camper to be given away in 2019.

Additional events, partnerships and opportunities to commemorate the 100 years will continue to be announced as they are finalized.

For more details on how you can get involved, visit <https://gfp.sd.gov/100-years/>.

## Food Plot Program Provides Supplemental Pheasant Habitat

BROOKINGS, S.D. - When considering land management options for upland bird habitat, a major limiting factor landowners often find is nesting cover.

Food plots are one tool a landowner can use to increase nesting cover. The term food plot refers to small plots planted to various crops or crop mixtures intended to serve as forage for wildlife.

"If nesting cover is available in sufficient quantities, then improving habitat components for chick survival and overwinter survival can be beneficial for maintaining healthy bird populations," explained Jimmy Doyle, SDSU Extension Natural Resource Management Field Specialist.

South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks Food Plot Program

To assist landowners in providing winter food sources for wildlife, South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks (SDGFP) developed a food plot program nearly 50 years ago.

Landowners can receive free corn, sorghum seed or a brood mix to plant each spring, plus a payment to help offset planting costs.

The brood mix has only been offered since 2015, Doyle explained. "South Dakota's native wildlife typically don't starve to death during a normal winter cycle, so traditional grain-based food plots are more of a novelty to wildlife than a necessity," Doyle said.

The mix was collaboratively developed by biologists from Pheasants Forever and South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks in an effort to increase the value of food plot acres throughout the year.

"While traditional corn and sorghum food plots offer excellent food sources during extreme winter months, they lack much value to wildlife during other times of the year," said Brian Pauly, Private Lands Biologist, SDGFP.

Developing the brood mix

In 2014, after two years of collaboration the biologists tested the brood mix concept on a handful of Game Production Areas throughout the state.

The trial plantings were monitored throughout the growing season, and observations were made to determine which plant species performed ideally and which did not.

Using those observations, a final seed mix was developed for the inaugural planting season in 2015, when the brood mix was first offered to the public as part of the food plot program.

"The concept of growing habitat types that benefit wildlife for more than just the winter months was easily understood by landowners," Pauly said.

He explained that those landowners looking for a way to enhance pheasant populations on their properties were eager to try the new mix.

In its first three years 50 percent of all landowners enrolled in the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks' food plot program have tried the brood mix already.

Frequently Asked Questions

What's in the brood mix?

The brood mix is an annual mixture of cover crop species (i.e. canola, flax, millet, radish, sunflower), designed to flower from spring through fall and produce seed for wildlife to forage on during winter.

By flowering, the brood mix provides pollinator habitat that traditional corn and sorghum food plots lack. Pollinating insects (i.e. bees and butterflies) thrive in areas with flowering plants.

Insects comprise nearly 100 percent of a pheasant chick's diet, therefore making habitats with high insect numbers for pheasant chicks to forage a key component of pheasant production.

Simply put, more pollinating plants equal more bugs equal more food for young pheasants equal more roosters in the fall.

First and foremost, healthy pheasant populations begin with large blocks of idle grasslands for hens to nest in successfully during spring. After hatching, pheasant chicks rely on quality pollinator plants to provide both insects for food, as well as cover to hide from predators. The brood mix offers landowners a way to provide young pheasants the habitat they need to survive between hatching on the grasslands in the spring to fledging in the fall.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 8 of 52

How should the brood mix be planted?

The brood mix can be planted anytime in spring after the danger of frost has passed, and it can be drill seeded or broadcasted and drug in.

Typically, the month of May has been an ideal time to plant the brood mix in previous years, but that may vary depending on which part of the state a property is located in and what weather trends are doing in a particular year.

Before planting, it is important the site is prepared properly. The brood mix cannot be sprayed with any chemicals once it starts growing, so it is recommended to plant this mix in an area that does not have a current weed problem.

If planted in the right area, at the right time, the plants will outcompete weeds naturally, thus negating the need to spray with chemicals at all. A long-term management plan by alternating food plots between corn/sorghum and the brood mix year-after-year will help to achieve clean, weed-free pollinator habitat annually, year-in and year-out.

How can someone enroll in the SDGFP food plot program?

SDGFP private lands biologists work with landowners to enroll in the food plot program.

Funding for these projects comes from sales of hunting licenses, and landowners must agree to allow free and reasonable hunting access.

Landowners still retain and may regulate all hunting access privileges on enrolled lands; however they cannot charge anyone a fee in exchange for hunting access.

To learn more about the food plot program, or other wildlife habitat improvements, contact SDGFP or SDSU Extension.

Pheasant Fest is Feb. 16-18, 2018

For landowners, managers, hunters or anyone interested in wildlife habitat management, the upcoming Pheasant Fest and Quail Classic in Sioux Falls is a great opportunity to learn more.

Pheasant Fest runs from February 16-18, 2018 at the Denny Sanford Premier Center in Sioux Falls. To learn more visit [www.pheasantsforever.org](http://www.pheasantsforever.org).

The event includes a trade show as well as numerous seminars covering habitat management, bird dog training, wild game cooking, and more.

A workshop on the intersection of precision agriculture, wildlife habitat, and profitability will be of particular interest to farmers and landowners.



# Broton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 9 of 52



**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT  
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**



**Larry Zimmerman  
Secretary**

## **Taking care of our heroes, because they took care of us**

It's that time of the year when we are rushing off to the card shop, candy store and flower shops to find the perfect Valentine's Day gift for our loved ones. It's also my favorite time of the year to visit Mount Rushmore and pay tribute to four great heroes who are carved into the mountainside in the Black Hills.

In his own words, master carver Gutzon Borglum, says he selected George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt to commemorate the founding, growth, preservation and development of the United States of America. As I sit at the base of Mount Rushmore, I can't help but ponder on the many chapters of American history that these four men were a part of – Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, purchase of the Louisiana Territory, construction of the Panama Canal, ensuring the rights of the working man, the American Revolutionary War, the Civil War, preservation of the union, and abolishing of slavery. Accomplishments that enriched all our lives.

One of my favorite Abraham Lincoln quotes is "Honor to the soldier and sailor everywhere, who bravely bears his country's cause. Honor, also, to the citizen who cares for his brother in the field and serves, as he best can, the same cause."

That quote causes me to think about all the care we provide our veterans at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home. Our Home stands as a tribute to our heroes who answered their country's call to arms. We provide our heroes with high quality, long-term care and our warm, friendly, and compassionate staff are dedicated to the health and welfare of our heroes.

I challenge all of you to visit our website and take a virtual tour of this state-of-the-art facility (<http://vetaffairs.sd.gov/veteranshome/Features.aspx>). Every veteran has a private room with a private bath. The rooms are organized into neighborhoods. Amongst the neighborhoods is our beautiful Town Square which is comprised of a library, game room, chapel, post office, barber/beauty shop, pharmacy, gift shop, and bistro. We have on-site physical, speech, and occupational therapists.

Please call our team (605-745-5127) to learn more about the home and the admission criteria. We are here to serve those who have served us all.

In 2014 we launched the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home Endowment Fund to enhance and maintain the quality of life for our residents at the home. The goal is to build a \$3 million permanent endowment. The investment income from the fund will be used for activities for the veterans, robotics, new medical equipment, a columbarium, and a veterans' memorial garden to name a few. You can learn more about the fund at: <https://sdcommunityfoundation.org/for-donors/find-funds/michael-j-fitzmaurice-state-veterans-home-endowment-fund/>

We believe this fund embodies those 17 great words that Abraham Lincoln used in his inaugural address – "To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan."

There is something about military service that creates a bond between veterans that no one else can fully understand. The fact that we fought together and survived together is a bond that will never be broken and will never be exhausted.

Larry Zimmerman, Secretary

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 10 of 52

## Today in Weather History

February 8, 2000: A very warm airmass was over central and northeast South Dakota where record highs were set in Aberdeen, Pierre, and Sisseton. Aberdeen rose to 62 degrees, Sisseton rose to 53 degrees, and Pierre rose to a warm 69 degrees.

1956: From February 1-8, heavy snow fell over the Panhandle of Texas. Snowfall amounts include 43 inches in Vega, 24 inches in Hereford, and 14 inches in Amarillo. This storm caused 23 deaths and numerous injuries. It snowed continuously for 92 hours in some locations.

1968: The highest 1-day snow at the Savannah Airport in South Carolina occurs on this date when 3.6 inches of snow fell.

1989: Mammoth traffic jams in Los Angeles area as freak snow struck California. Snow was reported from the beaches of Malibu to the desert around Palm Springs.

2013: A nor'easter produced heavy snowfall over the New England states. Total snowfall in Boston, Massachusetts, reached 24.9 inches, the fifth-highest total ever recorded in the city. New York City officially recorded 11.4 inches of snow at Central Park, and Portland, Maine, set a record of 31.9 inches. Hamden, Connecticut recorded the highest snowfall of the storm at 40 inches. Many surrounding cities picked up at least 1 foot. In addition to the significant snowfall totals, hurricane-force wind gusts were recorded, reaching 102 mph in Nova Scotia, 89 mph at Mount Desert Rock, Maine, and 84 mph off the coast of Cuttyhunk, Massachusetts. Boston experienced a storm surge of 4.2 ft. The storm affected Atlantic Canada after hitting the Northeastern United States.

1835 - A severe cold wave gripped the southeastern U.S. The mercury dipped to 8 above at Jacksonville FL, and to zero at Savannah GA. Orange trees were killed to the roots. (David Ludlum)

1936 - The temperature at Denver CO plunged to a record 30 degrees below zero. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1985 - Blue Canyon, CA, set a 24-hour February snowfall record by receiving 42 inches of snow from February 7th-8th.

1987 - A powerful storm produced blizzard conditions in the Great Lakes Region. Winds gusted to 86 mph at Janesville WI and Cleveland OH received 12 inches of snow. North winds of 50 to 70 mph raised the water level of southern Lake Michigan two feet, and produced waves 12 to 18 feet high, causing seven million dollars damage along the Chicago area shoreline. It was the most damage caused by shoreline flooding and erosion in the history of the city of Chicago. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Arctic air invaded the north central U.S. Hibbing MN reported a morning low of 30 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - A winter storm over California produced snow from the beaches of Malibu to the desert canyons around Palm Springs, and the snow created mammoth traffic jams in the Los Angeles Basin. Sixteen cities in the western U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. Marysville CA reported an all-time record low reading of 21 degrees above zero. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Unseasonably mild weather prevailed across the south central and eastern U.S. Twenty-two cities, including five in Michigan, reported record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 53 degrees at Flint MI surpassed their previous record by ten degrees, and the high of 66 degrees at Burlington IA exceeded their old record by eight degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

2009 - Snow falls at levels above elevations of 11,000 feet on the Big Island's Mauna Loa and Mauna Kea in Hawaii. The Weather Doctor

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 11 of 52

Thu Feb 8	Fri Feb 9	Sat Feb 10	Sun Feb 11	Mon Feb 12	Tue Feb 13	Wed Feb 14
10°F	9°F	15°F	24°F	24°F	23°F	29°F
-5°F	-11°F	-2°F	4°F	5°F	6°F	-8°F
NNE 10 MPH Precip 50%	N 9 MPH	WSW 10 MPH	W 10 MPH	ESE 10 MPH	WNW 10 MPH	WNW 15 MPH



## Light Snow expected Today & Tonight

### Potential Snowfall Ranges

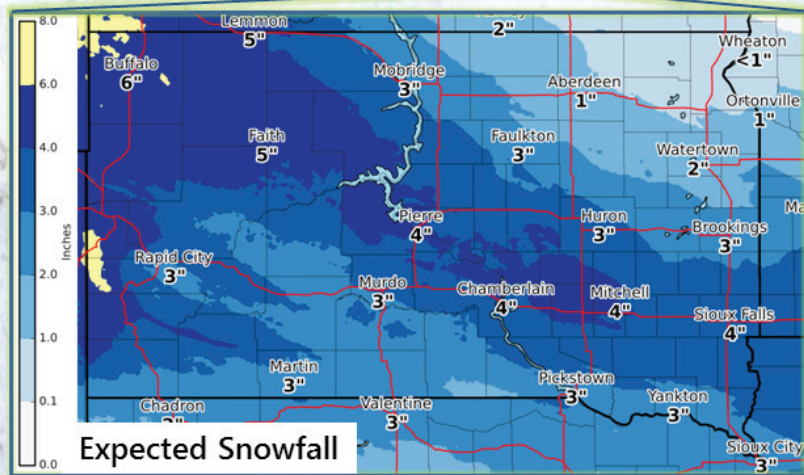
Location	Low End Snowfall	Expected Snowfall	High End Snowfall
Aberdeen, SD	<1	1	3
Miller, SD	2	4	5
Mobridge, SD	1	3	4
Ortonville, MN	0	1	2
Pierre, SD	2	4	6
Redfield, SD	1	2	4
Sisseton, SD	0	<1	2
Watertown, SD	<1	2	3

- Light Snow over central SD this morning to expand across much of the area this afternoon

- Most of the snow to shift across S and SE SD overnight and into Friday morning

Looking for specifics, or have upcoming travel?

Check [weather.gov](http://weather.gov)



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

[www.weather.gov/abr](http://www.weather.gov/abr)

Graphic Created  
2/8/2018 5:17 AM

Published on: 02/08/2018 at 5:26AM

Light snow over central SD this morning is will expand across much of the area this afternoon. Most of the snow will fall this afternoon and evening, before sinking across south and southeastern SD. Visibilities could be reduced to around a mile or less at times, especially where the higher snow amounts are expected, from northwest SD, southeast across Pierre and Chamberlain, and into the Sioux Falls area. Get your most up to date forecast at [www.weather.gov/abr](http://www.weather.gov/abr)

# Groton Daily Independent

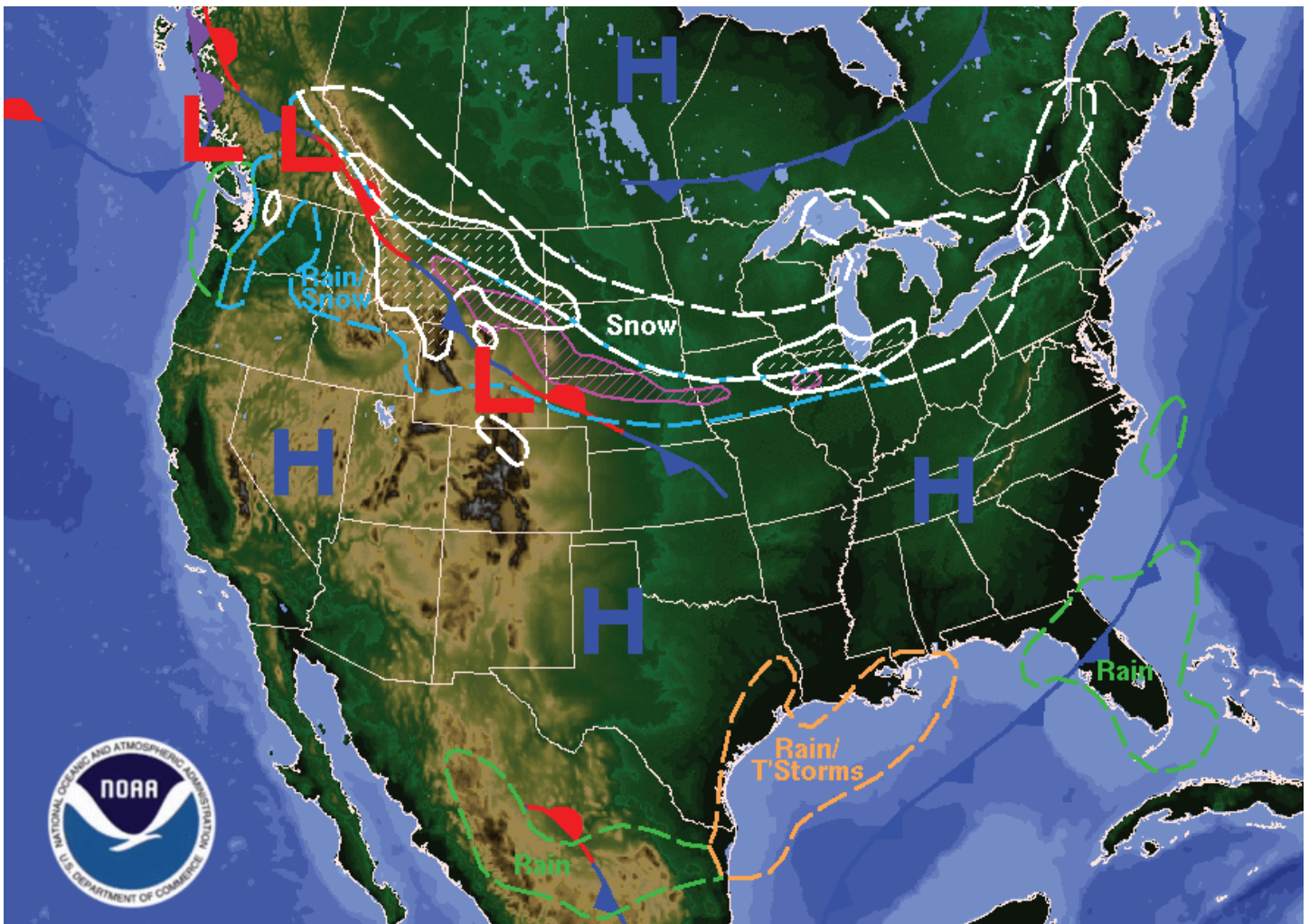
Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 12 of 52

## Yesterday's Weather

**High Outside Temp: 14.4 F at 3:50 PM**  
**Low Outside Temp: -12.4 F at 8:24 AM**  
**Wind Chill:**  
**High Gust: 21.0 Mph at 12:19 AM**  
**Precip: 0.00**

## Today's Info

**Record High: 62° in 2000**  
**Record Low: -46° in 1895**  
**Average High: 26°F**  
**Average Low: 5°F**  
**Average Precip in Feb: 0.12**  
**Precip to date in Feb: 0.00**  
**Average Precip to date: 0.59**  
**Precip Year to Date: 0.00**  
**Sunset Tonight: 5:50 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:44 a.m.**



### Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Thu, Feb 08, 2018, issued 4:32 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

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 13 of 52



## NO PLACE TO HIDE

It looked old and worn and held together with many stitches. It didn't look like much of a doll but Missy loved it more than anything in her world. It was stuffed with dry beans. Each day she would play with it and every night she would sleep with it. It brought her pleasure and comfort.

One day while her brother was building a model airplane, she accidentally bumped into it and knocked it to the floor. Looking at the bits and pieces that were scattered before him, he shouted angrily, "Look what you did! You just wait Missy – I'll get even with you!"

The next day Missy and her Mom went shopping. As soon as they left, he found her doll, took it outside and buried in his mother's rose garden. Smiling to himself he said, "She'll never find that old doll now!"

When Missy returned home and could not find her doll she burst into tears and ran to her room. When asked, Darren denied knowing anything about the doll, claiming, "She just left it some place. It'll turn up." And it did.

A few days later, their Mom was cutting some roses for the dinner table and discovered an arm from the doll sticking out of the dirt. She asked her son, "Did you do this?" Looking at the doll he said, "Yes, Mom, but I should have known better."

It's that way with our sins. We try to cover them – but along comes God and uncovers them. "Our iniquities, the secrets of our heart and its sins, (which we would like to hide even from ourselves) are made known to You and us through Your holiness and the work of Your Spirit."

Prayer: We only fool ourselves, Father, if we think we can fool You. Forgive us of our foolishness and sins. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 90:8 You have set our iniquities before You, Our secret sins in the light of Your countenance.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 14 of 52

## 2018 Groton SD Community Events

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

## News from the Associated Press

### **Belle Fourche councilwoman pleads not guilty to charges**

BELLE FOURCHE, S.D. (AP) — Belle Fourche City Councilwoman Toni Moncur has pleaded not guilty to witness tampering and simple assault.

The 55-year-old Moncur was indicted by a Butte County grand jury on Dec. 18, the same day she was sworn in to office.

Authorities say the charges stem from an altercation involving her son and another man in November. Moncur told the Black Hills Pioneer that the charges stem from an alleged rental payment dispute.

She could face up to 11 years in prison if convicted.

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

### **Sioux Falls teen pleads guilty in fatal crash**

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Sioux Falls teen accused of manslaughter and murder in a fatal crash has pleaded guilty to criminal charges as part of an agreement with prosecutors.

Seventeen-year-old Alexander Lingor was initially charged with at least 15 counts, but on Wednesday afternoon he entered guilty pleas to second-degree manslaughter, aggravated assault with a dangerous weapon and distributing marijuana to a minor. Lingor was driving a truck and forced a sedan off the road during a chase in February 2017. Fifteen-year-old Kareem Cisse was a passenger in the sedan and died when it crashed.

The Argus Leader reports Cisse and two others had agreed to meet Lingor to buy marijuana. When the three took off without paying, Lingor chased them. A sentencing date has not yet been set.

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

### **Airport agents to get training after Native church's lawsuit**

By **FELICIA FONSECA, Associated Press**

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — A wooden box carried an eagle feather and bone whistle, a gourd rattle and a feather fan — items that carry spiritual energy and are used in Native American religious ceremonies.

The man holding the box asked security agents at the San Antonio International Airport to allow him to display the items so their energy wouldn't be polluted. The agents declined, roughly handling the items and shoving them back in the box, former Native American Church of North America President Sandor Iron Rope alleged.

His lawsuit against the Transportation Security Administration recently was settled, with neither side acknowledging fault and the agency agreeing to better educate its employees about Native American religious items at more than a dozen airports nationwide.

"There was a policy in place designed to provide some protection for us, but they don't have training," Iron Rope said Wednesday. "Not everybody is familiar with the policies."

The TSA did not respond to messages seeking comment this week.

The Native American Church has multiple chapters around the country and an estimated 250,000 members. The church that formed in 1918 blends Native American beliefs and Christianity but doesn't have formal buildings. Instead, its members meet in teepees for lengthy ceremonies and use peyote as a sacrament.

Its most visible legal battles have been over peyote, a hallucinogenic that only grows naturally in the United States in southern Texas. States had varied laws on Native Americans' use of the cactus until the early 1990s, when a federal law allowed Native Americans who are part of the church to possess peyote.

For anyone else, it's illegal, in the same category as heroin and cocaine. Membership cards cite the

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 16 of 52

federal law and another that allows Native Americans to possess migratory birds.

One of Iron Rope's attorneys, Forrest Tahdoahnippah, said church members have had enough bad experiences to discourage them from air travel. He said Iron Rope had no indication agents believed his ceremonial items were dangerous.

"That's part of the reason we felt there should have been a lawsuit in the first place," he said. "Screening of items should be reserved for things TSA has a legitimate suspicion are going to be a danger to traveler safety."

Passengers can do their part by alerting the TSA at least 72 hours in advance to carry-on items that need additional screening and by clearly communicating beliefs, said Richard Bloom, director of terrorism, intelligence, and security studies at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona.

Security agents cannot be trained in all religions, but he said they can improve on dealing with the unknown.

"A little bit of sensitivity and respect and really being open to the unique needs of a religious individual can go a long way toward negotiating something that works for the individual and for the TSA," Bloom said.

Not all religious items would be allowed on planes with passengers, however.

The TSA prohibits religious knives like the kirpan. Sikhs who carry them do not view them as weapons or accessories but as extensions of their being and their belief that they are protectors of the weak.

The Sikh Coalition, a civil rights organization, has issued travel guidelines alerting the community that kirpans can be in checked baggage only, and the faithful generally adhere. But the coalition has represented at least one Sikh man in a case where he was charged for carry kirpans through airport security. The case eventually was dropped.

As part of the settlement with the Native American Church of North America, the TSA and the plaintiffs will collaborate on a webinar that will be available to agents who work with passengers well ahead of their flights to move items through security.

Those webinars will be shown to TSA employees in Albuquerque and Farmington, New Mexico; Durango, Colorado; Great Falls, Montana; Minot, North Dakota; Rapid City and Sioux Falls, South Dakota; and San Antonio, Laredo and McAllen, Texas.

Certain TSA employees in Saint Paul, Minnesota; Omaha, Nebraska; Oklahoma City; Phoenix; and Denver will have to review guidelines for screening Native American religious items.

A fact sheet for travelers with Native American religious items will be published in the next three months, and the church will be able to advise and make recommendations to the TSA.

"We're hopeful we'll have a place at the table now so that any future concerns will be addressed quicker and more efficiently than through a lawsuit," Tahdoahnippah said.

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Associated Press video producer Noreen Nasir in Washington, D.C., contributed to this story.

## SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Dakota Cash

07-08-10-22-33

(seven, eight, ten, twenty-two, thirty-three)

Estimated jackpot: \$149,000

Lotto America

15-25-36-45-51, Star Ball: 9, ASB: 5

(fifteen, twenty-five, thirty-six, forty-five, fifty-one; Star Ball: nine; ASB: five)

Estimated jackpot: \$20.24 million



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 17 of 52

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$136 million

Powerball

23-34-35-40-47, Powerball: 10, Power Play: 2

(twenty-three, thirty-four, thirty-five, forty, forty-seven; Powerball: ten; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$165 million

## Wednesday's Scores

By The Associated Press

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Little Wound 93, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 55

## State lawmakers reject push to extend legislative terms

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota lawmakers have rejected a plan that would have asked voters to double their current two-year terms in office.

The House State Affairs Committee voted Wednesday to defeat the resolution. Republican Rep. Chris Karr, the sponsor, says it would strengthen the legislative branch and build the continuity of knowledge in the Legislature.

The proposed constitutional change would have extended lawmakers' terms from two years to four. It would have also staggered when lawmakers would be elected and altered how South Dakota's 8-year term limits would have been applied to currently serving lawmakers.

Republican Rep. David Lust, who opposed the constitutional amendment, says the current two-year cycle keeps lawmakers accountable.

## Craft brew bills pit beer distributors against microbrewers

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Competing bills overhauling rules for microbrewers are pitting powerful beer distributors against South Dakota's growing craft brewing industry at the state Legislature.

The Senate State Affairs Committee voted 7-2 Wednesday to approve a distributor-backed bill that critics say doesn't sufficiently deregulate microbreweries. A different Senate panel passed Gov. Dennis Daugaard's brewer-supported legislation the day before despite concerns from beer wholesalers.

The governor's bill would allow craft brewers to produce up to 30,000 barrels annually before losing privileges such as being able to sell growlers — large refillable jugs — for customers to take away and operate multiple locations. The limit now is 5,000 barrels.

It would also let microbreweries bypass distributors to sell their beer directly to bars and stores. Current law prohibits a craft brewer from even moving beer between two locations it owns.

"This bill will look to the free market and will take away onerous regulations that hold back South Dakota businesses," Patrick Weber, a policy adviser to the governor, recently told lawmakers.

Senate Majority Leader Blake Curd's bill, supported by distributors, would increase the barrel limit to 12,000 each year, but wouldn't permit self-distribution by brewers. Under the bill, a brewer would be able to transfer up to 1,500 barrels of beer from its brewery to retail locations it owns.

Supporters said the bill would allow craft breweries to grow while protecting the three-tiered system of brewers, distributors and retailers.

"The three-tier system can evolve," said Jeremy Rambo, general manager of a Rapid City-based beer distributor. "We can make improvements to it, but I don't think we need to really throw the baby out with the bathwater on it."

## South Dakota county pursues property for \$4.5M courthouse

OLIVET, S.D. (AP) — A county commission is moving forward with plans for a new \$4.5 million courthouse in southeast South Dakota amid opponents trying to put the project to a vote.

Hutchinson County's current courthouse was built in 1881 and is the oldest in use in the state.

County commissioners decided Tuesday to pursue property for the new courthouse in Olivet, just west of the current courthouse, Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan reported . The 22,000-square-foot (2,040-sq. meter) facility is projected to cost about \$4.5 million.

Commissioner Jerome Hoff said the new courthouse will include garage space, particularly for the sheriff's department to provide safer inmate transport.

Hutchinson County set up a construction fund in anticipation of the new courthouse. Auditor Diane Murtha said the fund contains \$2.7 million, and the rest of the project funding would be borrowed.

Murtha said they'd like to start construction this spring, though no final decisions have been made.

"Our construction manager has estimated 14 months to complete it, so we're looking at moving into the building next year," said Murtha.

Olivet resident Josh Hora said opponents are circulating a petition to put the proposed courthouse on the ballot.

Murtha confirmed that commissioners have heard of the petition, but they don't know what it requests or how many people have signed it.

"We feel that we're spending the county's money wisely," said Commissioner Steve Friesen. "It's a challenge, but we feel that we're at a point where something needs to be done."

Commissioners will hold a public meeting about the project sometime this month.

\_\_\_ Information from: Yankton Press and Dakotan, <http://www.yankton.net/>

## Gophers add 3 players from Minnesota as preferred walk-ons

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Minnesota has added eight preferred walk-ons to the program, including three players from the state.

Minnetonka linebacker Ty Barron, Mounds View tight end Max Janes and Chaska linebacker Micah Roane committed Wednesday to the Gophers for the 2018 season. Barron and Roane were Associated Press first team all-state selections.

Two walk-ons came from Wisconsin: defensive lineman Jack Kern (Eau Claire Memorial) and tight end Jack McNeil (Madison Edgewood). Another came from South Dakota: kicker Brock Walker (Sioux Falls Washington).

The Gophers used the new early signing period to put 26 new players on scholarship Dec. 20 and complete the 2018 class. Other teams around the country added recruits Wednesday on what has historically been national signing day, but most prospects had already signed in the first window.

## South Dakota Senate panel rejects open government measure

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A legislative panel has rejected a bill that would have made some government correspondence such as emails public records under South Dakota law.

The Argus Leader reports that Gov. Dennis Daugaard's office spearheaded the effort Wednesday to kill the legislation. A Senate panel voted 5-2 to reject it.

Democratic Sen. Billie Sutton, the bill's sponsor, says documents produced using taxpayer funds should be available to them. He is running for governor.

The bill would have also made state officials' calendars, memoranda and phone records subject to open record law.

The governor's chief of staff, Tony Venhuizen, worried that records requests would force attorneys to go through emails to see if materials couldn't be disclosed or should be redacted.

A House committee defeated a similar bill earlier this week.

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

## House panel kills Sioux Falls students' free speech bill

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota lawmakers have killed a bill aimed at preventing school administrators from censoring news reported by student journalists.

The House Education Committee voted 11-3 on Wednesday to table the measure for this session.

The Argus Leader reports supporters, including the South Dakota Newspaper Association, argued the bill would allow student journalists to operate without fear of being censored. Opponents said the bill could allow students to publish irresponsible content.

Gage Gramlick is a junior at Lincoln High School in Sioux Falls and editor of the school's newspaper. Gramlick says student journalists fear censorship when reporting on controversial subjects.

Executive director Wade Pogany of Associated School Boards of South Dakota contended the bill would make students' authority to publish too great with little chance of administrators providing guidance.

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

## SD panel moves to curb out-of-state money for initiatives

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Republican lawmakers fighting out-of-state influence in ballot question campaigns are pushing to restrict the flow of money from outside South Dakota for the second straight legislative session.

The House State Affairs Committee voted 7-6 Wednesday to move the bill to the full chamber. It hasn't yet gone through the Senate, where the push died last session.

It would restrict out-of-state donors to \$100,000 in contributions to a South Dakota ballot question campaign per general election cycle. Republican Rep. Spencer Gosch, the sponsor, said out-of-state money drowns out the voices of people in South Dakota.

"We have the right to govern our own state," Gosch said. "I think this is a huge concern of South Dakotans. They're tired of getting pushed around by big money that doesn't belong here."

The measure comes after out-of-state donors pumped more than \$10 million into campaigns for or against South Dakota questions during the 2016 election cycle. Republican lawmakers in several states have complained about outside interests meddling with local laws.

But Republican Rep. David Lust, who opposed it, called the bill "big government," saying that it will be found to be unconstitutional. Experts have said such proposals are unlikely to survive a legal challenge.

A more restrictive ballot question sponsored by Republican House Speaker Mark Mickelson that would ban out-of-state fundraising for citizens' initiatives will go before voters in November.

## South Dakota lawmakers advance bill ending university union

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota lawmakers have advanced a bill that would end collective bargaining at the state's public universities.

The House State Affairs Committee voted Wednesday to send the bill to the chamber's floor. It hasn't yet passed through the Senate.

House Speaker Mark Mickelson says his goal is to promote the flexibility and nimbleness of the institutions.

Alan Aldrich, state president of the Council of Higher Education, the faculty labor union, says the bill poses a real threat to recruiting new faculty.

Union contracts cover more than 1,300 staff members at the state's six public universities and at schools for the blind and deaf.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard supports the legislation. The Republican last year signed a bill banning collective bargaining at the four technical institutes in right-to-work South Dakota.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 20 of 52

## **Kyle man who held knife against infant son's neck sentenced**

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A Kyle man who authorities say held a knife to the neck and stomach of his 2-month-old son during an argument with his girlfriend has been sentenced to a year and a month in prison.

Thirty-three-year-old Matthew Iron Sr. was convicted of felony child abuse and neglect in the November 2016 incident on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in which authorities say he threatened to kill the child. He surrendered after a 45-minute standoff with police.

Iron was sentenced Monday. U.S. Attorney Ron Parsons says he'll be on supervised release for three years following his time behind bars.

## **Mitchell City Council opens door for ride-hailing service**

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — The Mitchell City Council has opened the door for the ride-hailing service Lyft. The Daily Republic reports that the council voted 7-1 on Monday to approve a taxicab license for a Lyft driver, over the objection of local taxi service owner Art Streetman.

Streetman said his company and two other businesses likely will fold if Lyft comes to town.

City officials in Sioux Falls this week announced that at least five taxi companies there plan to call it quits a year after Lyft arrived.

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

## **Plea deal reached in deadly convenience store robbery**

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The second of two men facing charges in connection with a robbery that turned deadly at a Rapid City convenience store last year has reached a plea agreement.

Twenty-year-old Cody Grady pleaded guilty to second-degree robbery in court Tuesday afternoon. KOTA-TV says Grady was originally charged with first-degree murder in the stabbing death of Loaf 'n' Jug clerk Kasie Lord following an attempt to steal beer in January 2017.

Another defendant Carlos pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in the case in November. He's set to be sentenced to a mandatory life term next week.

Grady says he fought with Lord after he and Quevedo tried to steal the beer. Grady says he left the store before Lord was stabbed. Both sides have agreed to 7½ years in prison for Grady. That sentencing has been set for March 21.

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

## **Yankton man shot by state trooper set for trial in April**

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — A Yankton man who was shot by a state trooper following a December 2016 chase has been scheduled for trial in the spring.

Fifty-nine-year-old Curt Adams Sr. faces charges including attempted murder, aggravated assault of a police officer and aggravated eluding. He's pleaded not guilty and remains jailed.

Adams is accused of shooting at the trooper, who returned fire. An investigation concluded the trooper was justified in shooting Adams, who recovered.

The Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan reports Adams is scheduled for trial April 16-20 in Yankton.

## **S. Korea gets flexible with N. Korea sanctions for Olympics**

**By KIM TONG-HYUNG and YOUKYUNG LEE, Associated Press**

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — From smartphones to ship fuel, South Korea is wrestling how to balance international sanctions on North Korea with its desire to show the Olympic spirit as it welcomes hundreds of North Koreans for the Winter Games.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 21 of 52

Spearheaded by the U.S., the international community has been imposing tougher sanctions designed to punish North Korea's economy in an effort to rein in its nuclear program. But South Korea has been flexible with these rules as it accommodates the North Koreans to the Pyeongchang Games.

South Korea sent a chartered plane to bring North Korean skiers. It allowed North Korea to use a 9,700-ton ferry to transport more than 100 artists to perform at the Olympics and says it's considering whether to accept the North's request to supply fuel for the ship.

South Korea says the decisions were inevitable for the success of the games, which it sees as an opportunity to revive meaningful communication with the North after an extended period of animosity and diplomatic stalemate. But critics say South Korea is playing into the hands of North Korea as it tries to use the Olympics to poke holes in sanctions.

A look at some of the concessions South Korea has made as it greets the North for the Olympics:

## THE PLANE

The Koreas agreed to open their conciliatory gestures over the Pyeongchang Games with joint practices and friendly competitions between their skiers at North Korea's Masik winter resort.

But the Jan. 31 trip wasn't official until less than two hours before the chartered Asiana Airlines flight carrying the South Korean skiers took off for the North's Kalma Airport.

Seoul needed until the last minute to persuade Washington to consider the flight an exception to sanctions announced by President Donald Trump's administration in September that include banning vessels and aircraft that have visited North Korea from traveling to the United States within 180 days.

The South Koreans were accompanied by a 32-member North Korean delegation, including 10 athletes invited to participate for the Olympics, on their return flight the next day.

It was the first direct South Korean flight to North Korea since 2015, when South Korean labor unionists flew to Pyongyang for a goodwill soccer match.

## THE FERRY

South Korea accepting North Korea's offer to send its artists to the games by sea has triggered debate in the South, where conservatives saw the move as a sure-fire sign that the North is trying to use the Olympics to ease pressure against the country. The Mangyongbong-92 arrived at an eastern South Korean port Tuesday afternoon with 114 members of an art troupe that will perform in Gangneung on Thursday and Seoul on Feb. 11.

To allow the ship to travel to the South, Seoul treated it as an exception to sanctions. Critics say Seoul is sending the wrong message to North Korea and also the international community.

South Korea's Unification Ministry said Wednesday that the government is reviewing whether to meet North Korea's request to provide fuel to the ferry.

## THE PHONES

The Pyeongchang Organizing Committee is refraining for now from giving out a premium smartphone to athletes from North Korea and Iran, not to step over the global sanctions designed to pressure their governments from developing nuclear weapons.

Olympic sponsor Samsung Electronics donated 4,000 Galaxy Note 8 to all athletes and International Olympic Committee officials. The limited edition is not for sale but the Galaxy Note 8 phones are among the most expensive mobile devices in the market. Its price starts at about \$1,000.

But North Korean athletes won't have the fun of taking selfies and filming their time in the South with the Samsung phone. The United Nations bans sending luxury items to North Korea or to North Korean nationals.

The IOC advised the Organizing Committee that North Koreans can use the Samsung phone during the games that start Friday and return them before their departure. But the organizer decided not to give out the devices, rather than risking violating sanctions.

Iran's foreign ministry summoned South Korea's envoy on Thursday to denounce the decision to deny

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 22 of 52

its athletes cellphones, and warned that if Samsung did not apologize, "This will heavily affect relations with Samsung," Iran state TV reported.

## THE SISTER

North Korea informed the South on Wednesday that leader Kim Jong Un's sister, an increasingly prominent figure in the country's leadership, will be part of a high-level government delegation traveling for the Olympics. Kim Yo Jong, believed to be around 30, will be the first member of North Korea's ruling family to visit South Korea since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War.

South Korea expressed delight that she's coming, saying it shows North Korea's sincerity for improving relations. The North Korean delegation will also include Kim Yong Nam, the country's nominal head of state, and Choe Hwi, chairman of the country's National Sports Guidance Committee.

South Korean media had speculated North Korea would create another sanctions-related headache by insisting on sending its senior officials via the U.S.-boycotted Air Koryo. However, North Korea informed the South on Thursday that the delegation including Kim Yo Jong will arrive on a private jet on Friday hours ahead of the Olympics' opening ceremony.

Neither Kim Yo Jong nor Kim Yong Nam are among the North Korean officials blacklisted under U.N. sanctions. However, the U.S. Treasury Department last year included Kim Yo Jong on its list of blacklisted officials over her position as vice director of the ruling Workers' Party's Propaganda and Agitation Department.

The U.N. committee monitoring sanctions against North Korea has proposed granting an exemption for Choe, who has been on the U.N. sanctions blacklist since June last year.

## Putin, 7 rivals register for Russia's presidential race

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV, Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia's election officials have registered eight candidates for the March 18 presidential election, including President Vladimir Putin.

With his approval ratings topping 80 percent and rivals trailing far behind, Putin is set to easily win a fourth term. Putin's most vocal critic, the 41-year-old opposition leader Alexei Navalny, has been barred from the race due to a criminal conviction that he calls politically motivated.

Here is a quick look at the Russian presidential candidates.

### VLADIMIR PUTIN

The 65-year-old Russian leader served two four-year presidential terms in 2000-2008 before shifting into the prime minister's seat due to term limits. Putin continued calling the shots during the next four years as his longtime associate Dmitry Medvedev served as Russia's president. Before stepping down to let Putin reclaim the top job in 2012, Medvedev initiated constitutional changes that extended the presidential term to six years.

A Putin victory in March would put him on track to become Russia's longest-serving leader since Josef Stalin. The legal limit of two consecutive presidential terms means that Putin won't be able to run again in 2024, but many observers expect him to continue playing the top role in Russian politics even after that.

### KSENIA SOBCHAK

The 36-year-old star TV host casts herself as a choice for those who have grown tired of Putin and his familiar challengers and want liberal changes. The daughter of Putin's one-time patron, the late reformist mayor of St. Petersburg, she has assailed the Kremlin's policies but largely avoided personal criticism of Putin.

Observers believe that Sobchak's involvement in the race will help combat voter apathy and boost turnout to make Putin's victory look more impressive. Some think she also could help the Kremlin counter Navalny's calls to boycott the presidential vote and could split the ranks of the liberal opposition. Sobchak has denied being in collusion with the Kremlin.

### PAVEL GRUDININ

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 23 of 52

The 57-year-old millionaire strawberry farm director has been nominated by the Communist Party, but he's openly proud of his wealth and rejects basic Communist dogmas.

Until 2010, Grudinin was a member of the main Kremlin party, United Russia. He has been openly critical of Russia's current political and economic system, but avoided criticizing Putin. His nomination has been seen as an attempt by the Communists to broaden the party's appeal beyond aging voters nostalgic for the Soviet Union.

VLADIMIR ZHIRINOVSKY

The 71-year-old leader of the ultranationalist Liberal Democratic Party has won notoriety for his xenophobic statements. This will be the sixth time he has run for president. While Zhirinovskiy has catered to nationalist voters with his fiery populist rhetoric, he has steadfastly supported Putin and his party in parliament has invariably voted in line with the Kremlin's wishes. He won 6 percent of the presidential vote in 2012.

GRIGORY YAVLINSKY

The 65-year-old liberal economic expert ran against Putin in the 2000 election, garnering about 6 percent of the vote. Yavlinsky has denounced the Kremlin's policies and frequently criticized Putin, calling for more political freedoms and a more liberal economic course. His support base is a relatively small number of middle-aged and elderly liberal-minded voters in big Russian cities.

BORIS TITOV

Putin's 57-year-old business ombudsman is running for president for the first time, nominated by a pro-business party. Before becoming an advocate for business, Titov had a successful career dealing in chemicals and fertilizers. His platform has focused on creating a more favorable business environment.

SERGEI BABURIN

The 59-year-old legal expert played a prominent role in Russian politics in the 1990s, opposing the 1991 breakup of the Soviet Union and becoming one of the leaders of a parliament rebellion against President Boris Yeltsin in 1993. He spent several stints in parliament and served as a deputy speaker of the lower house in the 1990s and the 2000s. After failing to make it to parliament in 2007, he left politics and served as the rector of a Moscow university. He has been nominated for the presidential race by a fringe nationalist party.

MAXIM SURAIKIN

The 39-year-old has been nominated by the Communists of Russia, a fringe group that casts itself as an alternative to the main Communist Party. He was trained as an engineer and ran a small computer business. In 2014, Suraikin ran for governor of the Nizhny Novgorod region, getting about 2 percent of the vote.

## Philly feting 1st Super Bowl title with parade

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — The championship parade Philadelphia has dreamed about and agonized over — year after year, decade after decade, across generations of faithful but frustrated fans — well, it's here, Philly. It's finally here. Your beloved Eagles are heading up Broad Street.

The city's first Super Bowl parade steps off Thursday, capping a glorious week for jubilant fans celebrating an NFL title that had eluded them for nearly 60 years. Led by backup quarterback Nick Foles and second-year coach Doug Pederson, the Eagles beat the New England Patriots 41-33.

Schools, museums, courts, government offices and even the Philadelphia Zoo will be shut down as the city fetes an underdog Eagles team that few outside Philadelphia thought had a prayer of beating the mighty Patriots. The parade starts near the team's stadium and, fittingly, ends its 5-mile (8-kilometer) trek at the art museum steps that Sylvester Stallone climbed in the "Rocky" movies.

Organizers said they're preparing for as many as 2 million people to jam the parade route. No official estimate was released for the parade after the Phillies won the World Series in 2008, but experts have said that crowd likely didn't exceed 750,000.

Fans made their way to the parade route and art museum through the overnight and early morning hours, braving frigid wind chills in the low 20s, for a prime viewing spot.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 24 of 52

Other fans lined up for mass transit just to get to the parade. The city's two subways will be free all day, but fans coming in from the Pennsylvania suburbs might have a trickier time getting into the city. All 50,000 special parade day tickets for the SEPTA regional railroad lines are sold out, though weekly and monthly passes remain valid. The rapid transit system connecting Philadelphia and southern New Jersey also sold parade tickets, but warned having one wouldn't necessarily guarantee a ride. PATCO suggested an alternative: Walking across the nearly 2-mile-long (3-kilometer-long) Benjamin Franklin Bridge.

Democratic Mayor Jim Kenney asked fans to celebrate with passion and pride after Sunday's wild post-game celebration was marred by "knuckleheads" who resorted to violence and vandalism.

"Now remember — act responsibly, don't ruin this for the fans who have waited decades for what will be a historic day as the Eagles finally parade up Broad Street," he said. "We are, after all, the city of brotherly love and sisterly affection."

The parade has touched off a bit of a beer war.

Bud Light will offer free beer to revelers at two dozen bars along the parade route, thanks to a promise its brewer made to Eagles offensive tackle Lane Johnson before the season.

Not wanting to be upstaged by an out-of-towner, Philadelphia-based Yards Brewing said it will offer fans a free Philly Pale Ale on parade day in the brewery's taproom.

"We might not be able to get everyone a beer but we can try," the brewer tweeted.

## With military parade, Kim Jong Un thumbs nose at US

By ERIC TALMADGE, Associated Press

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un presided over an extravagant military parade in Pyongyang's Kim Il Sung Square on Thursday, grabbing the spotlight on the eve of the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics in South Korea to thumb his nose at Washington while making a point of showing off his new-found restraint toward Seoul.

The parade itself had been anticipated for weeks.

North Korea announced last month that it would hold a big event to mark the 70th anniversary of the founding of its military.

But instead of broadcasting the morning event live, North Korean television aired an edited version later in the day, giving it a somewhat lower profile than expected. The parade was also shorter and featured fewer missiles than the previous one, which was held in April last year and unveiled five new kinds of missiles — surprising analysts and generating headlines worldwide.

This time, Kim fine-tuned his more fiery rhetoric toward Washington.

Addressing tens of thousands of troops and civilians assembled on the square below him, Kim said the parade marks North Korea's emergence as a "global military power" despite facing the "worst sanctions." He called for his military to maintain a high level of combat readiness against the United States and its followers to keep them from infringing upon "the republic's sacred dignity and autonomy even by 0.001 millimeters."

He made no mention of the Olympics in the parts of his speech that were broadcast. It was unclear whether the North showed the entirety of his speech during the recorded coverage of the parade.

The tone was in line with Kim's bigger strategy of late.

He has been making a major diplomatic push toward South Korea since he announced a last-minute proposal to send a delegation of athletes, officials and entertainers to the Pyeongchang games during his annual New Year's address.

The moves have been generally welcomed in the South.

Even as the missiles were rolling by his viewing stand, South Korean officials announced that Kim's younger sister, due to attend Friday's opening ceremony, will have a luncheon with South Korean President Moon Jae-in. That in itself is a major breakthrough for the Koreas. Kim Yo Jong is one of Kim Jong Un's closest confidants and she will be the first member of the Kim family to visit the South.



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 25 of 52

Overshadowing most of the unease over the parade, South Korean television networks have focused on groups of North Korean musicians practicing for congratulatory concerts during the games, and a welcoming ceremony for the North's competitors at the athletes' village. With cameras filming it all, young South Korean men did a breakdance and an all-female North Korean band played songs recognizable on either side of the Demilitarized Zone.

Kim's two-pronged strategy has put the United States in an odd position.

Vice President Mike Pence arrived in South Korea on Thursday vowing to send a strong message to the North that it must abandon its nuclear weapons. But that message may seem a bit off key to many South Koreans who are more open to see the North's recent moves as a positive step, though by no means a final solution, and are at times vociferously wary of American meddling.

Though possibly best known for their legions of goose-stepping troops, North Korean military parades are the country's primary means of showing off its most recent advances in military technology — sometimes with aspirational mock-ups.

Kim, dressed in a long black winter coat, was shown walking on a red carpet with his wife at the beginning of the event, which began with thousands of goose-stepping troops lined up in Kim Il Sung Square to form giant slogans. Virtually all foreign media were excluded from the event.

Though fewer in number, all of the basic components were brought out again on Thursday.

One of the North's ICBMs — the Hwasong-15 — was wheeled out along with a variety of other missiles, including a Hwasong-12 midrange missile, which the North flew over Japan twice last year.

AP writer Kim Tong-hyung in Seoul contributed to this report. Talmadge is the AP's Pyongyang bureau chief. Follow him on Twitter and Instagram: @erictalmadge.

## George W. Bush says Russia meddled in 2016 US election

By JON GAMBRELL, Associated Press

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Former President George W. Bush said on Thursday that "there's pretty clear evidence that the Russians meddled" in the 2016 American presidential election, forcefully rebutting fellow Republican Donald Trump's denials of Moscow trying to affect the vote.

While never mentioning President Trump by name, Bush appeared to be pushing back on Trump's attempts to have warmer relations with Russia, as well as his comments on immigration.

The White House did not immediately comment on Bush's remarks.

"There's pretty clear evidence that the Russians meddled," Bush said at a talk in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates. "Whether they affected the outcome is another question."

Bush also said that "it's problematic that a foreign nation is involved in our election system. Our democracy is only as good as people trust the results."

U.S. intelligence agencies have concluded Russia meddled in the 2016 election to help Trump win. Numerous investigations are under way to determine whether Trump's campaign aided the Kremlin in its efforts.

Trump has repeatedly denied any "collusion" with Russia.

Speaking of Russian President Vladimir Putin, Bush called him "zero-sum."

"He's got a chip on his shoulder," Bush said of Putin. "The reason he does is because of the demise of the Soviet Union troubles him. Therefore, much of his moves (are) to regain Soviet hegemony."

Bush also stressed the need to back NATO and other alliances the U.S. has with the world.

Putin "is pushing, constantly pushing, probing weaknesses," the former president said. "That's why NATO is very important."

Bush also criticized Trump's decision to scrap a program implemented by former President Barack Obama's administration that allows young immigrants living in the U.S. illegally who were brought here as children to remain in America.

"America's their home," the 43rd American president said. "They've got to get it fixed."

Bush acknowledged that he tried to overhaul America's "broken" immigration system, but failed.

"There are people willing to do jobs that Americans won't do," he said. "Americans don't want to pick cotton at 105 degrees (Fahrenheit), but there are people who want put food on their family's tables and are willing to do that. We ought to say thank you and welcome them."

Bush in 2008 became the first sitting U.S. president to visit the UAE. He spoke Thursday at a summit in Abu Dhabi put on by the Milken Institute, an economic think tank based in California.

He made his comments while in a conversation with Michael Milken, known as the king of high-risk "junk" bonds in the 1980s. Milken pleaded guilty to securities-law violations in 1990 and served 22 months in prison. He agreed in a settlement with the SEC to a lifetime ban from the securities industry and paid a \$200 million fine.

Milken, who is a prostate cancer survivor, and his family have given hundreds of millions of dollars away in recent decades. Forbes magazine estimates Milken, 71, is now worth some \$3.6 billion.

Follow Jon Gambrell on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/jongambrellap](http://www.twitter.com/jongambrellap) . His work can be found at <http://apne.ws/2galNpz> .

## Syria confirms rare US strike on pro-government forces

By SARAH EL DEEB, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Syrian state-run media on Thursday confirmed a rare U.S. strike on government-backed troops in eastern Syria, citing reports of dozens killed and wounded from the attack.

The overnight attack, which a U.S. military official earlier said killed about 100, adds another layer to a conflict in Syria that is once again plunging into a new unpredictable spiral of violence.

The U.S. official said the U.S. launched the airstrikes after as many as 500 attackers began what appeared to be a coordinated assault on U.S.-backed forces known as the Syrian Democratic Forces who were accompanied by U.S. advisers in Deir el-Zour province.

The official said the strikes were in self-defense after the pro-government forces began firing artillery and tank rounds at the SDF. About 100 of the attackers were killed, the official said.

It was a rare U.S. strike against forces that support Syrian President Bashar Assad's regime.

Syria's state media said the U.S.-led coalition bombed government-backed troops in Khusham, a town in the oil-rich Deir el-Zour province, describing them as tribal fighters. The media cited reports of dozens killed and wounded.

The official state news agency SANA said the local fighters were battling Islamic State militants and the U.S.-backed SDF in the area.

SANA labeled it an "aggression" and a "new massacre."

The U.S.-led coalition said in a statement said the attack took place 8 kilometers (5 miles) east of the Euphrates River de-confliction line. The United States and Russia, which back rival forces in the oil-rich Deir el-Zour province, have kept close contacts to avoid friction.

The statement suggested the coalition was calling out Russia on the assault, but it stopped short of actually laying the blame.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which monitors the war in Syria, said Deir el-Zour province continues to witness tensions following the foiled attack and the U.S. response, and said there were reports of new mobilization to the area.

The Observatory, which relies on a network of activists on the ground, said the Khusham area, near one of the province's largest oil fields, saw intense clashes with heavy weaponry late Wednesday between pro-government forces and the SDF. The Observatory said the clashes prompted the coalition response with land-to-land missiles and airstrikes. It said at least 45 pro-government fighters, which included Arab and Asian fighters, were killed.

Last summer, the U.S.-led coalition shot down Iranian-made armed drones and aircraft affiliated with the Syrian government in southern Syria, after they came dangerously close to U.S.-backed forces and advisers.

The U.S. airstrike coincides with escalating violence in Syria, where Turkey has been carrying out a

military offensive to clear a U.S.-backed Kurdish militia from in a northwestern border town, increasing tensions between the U.S. and its NATO ally Turkey.

Meanwhile, Turkish officials said the leaders of Turkey, Russia and Iran will meet in Istanbul to discuss peace efforts for Syria.

The officials said that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin agreed to the summit during a telephone call on Thursday. It was not immediately clear when the Istanbul meeting would take place.

The Turkish officials said two leaders also agreed that efforts to create "observation posts" in Syria's Idlib province as part of a "de-escalation" agreement between Turkey, Russia and Iran should gain momentum.

They discussed the humanitarian situation in the Ghouta region just east of Damascus, where dozens have been killed in aerial strikes in the past few days.

The officials provided the information on condition of anonymity in line with government rules.

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Associated Press writers Suzan Fraser in Ankara, Turkey, and Lolita C. Baldor in Washington contributed to this report.

## **Pentagon misconduct complaints increase; fewer found guilty**

**By LOLITA C. BALDOR, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of complaints filed against senior military and defense officials has increased over the past several years, but more cases are being rejected as not credible and fewer officers are being found guilty of misconduct, according to data from Defense Department investigators.

Overall, there were 803 complaints filed in the fiscal year that ended last Sept. 30, compared to 787 the previous year. But just 144 were deemed credible and investigated by the IG, and 49 senior officials were eventually found guilty of misconduct. Allegations against the officials often involve ethical misconduct — such as having an inappropriate relationship — but they also include violating travel rules, wrongly accepting gifts, sending subordinates on personal errands or treating workers badly.

The data was released Wednesday during a House Armed Services personnel subcommittee hearing. Glenn Fine, who is serving as the Pentagon's inspector general, said the decline in the number of cases being investigated is due to a more thorough screening process of the complaints that come in. As a result, he said, about one-third of the cases that are investigated are ultimately substantiated. That rate is a bit lower than last year, but much higher than previous years. The rate in 2008 was just 14 percent.

Senior military leaders also told the panel that they are seeing far more so-called whistleblower complaints that can trigger investigations and stall careers, but only a tiny fraction of the alleged offenders are found guilty.

Fine told the House panel that just two whistleblower cases charging a senior official with retribution were substantiated in the 2017 fiscal year, compared to three in each of the two previous years. Whistleblower cases usually allege that an officer or superior has retaliated against a lower ranking service member or worker for making some type of complaint.

According to Fine, the number of retribution complaints filed against senior officials increased from 145 to 165 over the past five years. But, more broadly, complaints against all department individuals jumped by nearly 80 percent over that same time period.

"Whistleblower reprisal has skyrocketed because of the misuse and misapplication of whistleblower reprisal against senior officials. It is off the charts," Lt. Gen. David Quantock, the Army's inspector general, told the committee, noting that just 4 percent of the Army cases are substantiated. He said the complaints are often made by a soldier or civilian after they have been held accountable for misconduct or poor performance.

"The resulting claim of reprisal creates challenges for senior commanders who hold people accountable, and then are faced with an inspector general whistleblower reprisal investigation," he said.

Fine said that he is hiring a fulltime whistleblower ombudsman to help make sure troops and workers understand their rights and responsibilities and to help prevent reprisals.

Lawmakers raised concerns about whether military investigators can effectively cast judgment on officers in their own service, and they questioned whether civilians should do those jobs. They also asked if offenders are treated equally across the services -- or if officers might be disciplined differently for the same offense depending on what service they belong to.

Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif., said she's concerned that lower-ranking service members are treated more harshly for violations than senior officers are.

"There is a phrase in the military that goes like this, 'Different spanks for different ranks,'" she said. "Many senior leaders who should be the essential core of the chain of command are not being held to the same standard as the rank and file. This corrupts fairness, justice and morale."

Fine said only a small minority of senior leaders are guilty of misconduct. He added that the IG's office is looking into ways to help standardize investigations and also track and record cases in similar ways.

The inspectors general also told the committee that they are understaffed, have large backlogs, and it can often 200-400 days to investigate and complete a case.

## Senate leaders' budget deal faces opposition in both parties

By **ANDREW TAYLOR, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate leaders brokered a long-sought budget agreement Wednesday that would shower the Pentagon and domestic programs with an extra \$300 billion over the next two years. But both Democratic liberals and GOP tea party forces swung against the plan, raising questions about its chances just a day before the latest government shutdown deadline.

The measure was a win for Republican allies of the Pentagon and for Democrats seeking more for infrastructure projects and combatting opioid abuse. But it represented a bitter defeat for many liberal Democrats who sought to use the party's leverage on the budget to resolve the plight of immigrant "Dreamers" who face deportation after being brought to the U.S. illegally as children. The deal does not address immigration.

Beyond the \$300 billion figure, the agreement adds almost \$90 billion in overdue disaster aid for hurricane-slammed Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico.

Senate leaders hope to approve the measure Thursday and send it to the House for a confirming vote before the government begins to shut down Thursday at midnight. But hurdles remain to avert the second shutdown in a month.

While Senate Democrats celebrated the moment of rare bipartisanship — Minority Leader Chuck Schumer called it a "genuine breakthrough" — progressives and activists blasted them for leaving immigrants in legislative limbo. Top House Democrat Nancy Pelosi of California, herself a key architect of the budget plan, announced her opposition Wednesday morning and mounted a remarkable daylong speech on the House floor, trying to force GOP leaders in the House to promise a later vote on legislation to protect the younger immigrants.

"Let Congress work its will," Pelosi said, before holding the floor for more than eight hours without a break. "What are you afraid of?"

The White House backed the deal — despite President Donald Trump's outburst a day earlier that he'd welcome a government shutdown if Democrats didn't accept his immigration-limiting proposals.

Trump himself tweeted that the agreement "is so important for our great Military," and he urged both Republicans and Democrats to support it.

But the plan faced criticism from deficit hawks in his own party.

Some tea party Republicans shredded the measure as a budget-buster. Combined with the party's December tax cut bill, the burst in military and other spending would put the GOP-controlled government on track for the first \$1 trillion-plus deficits since President Barack Obama's first term. That's when Congress passed massive stimulus legislation to try to stabilize a down-spiraling economy.

"It's too much," said Rep. Scott Perry, R-Pa., a fiscal hawk.

House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., however, backed the agreement and was hoping to cobble together

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 29 of 52

a coalition of moderate Democrats and Republicans to push it through.

Despite the 77-year-old Pelosi's public talkathon, she was not pressuring the party's rank-and-file to oppose the measure, Democrats said. The deal contains far more money demanded by Democrats than had seemed possible only weeks ago, including \$90 billion in disaster aid for Florida and Texas. Some other veteran Democrats — some of whom said holding the budget deal hostage to action on Dreamer immigrants had already proven to be a failed strategy — appeared more likely to support the agreement than junior progressives elected in recent years.

The budget agreement would give both the Pentagon and domestic agencies relief from a budget freeze that lawmakers say threatens military readiness and training as well as domestic priorities such as combating opioid abuse and repairing the troubled health care system for veterans.

The core of the agreement would shatter tight "caps" on defense and domestic programs funded by Congress each year. They are a hangover from a failed 2011 budget agreement and have led to military readiness problems and caused hardship at domestic agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency and the IRS.

The agreement would give the Pentagon an \$80 billion increase for the current budget year for core defense programs, a 14 percent increase over current limits and \$26 billion more than Trump's budget request. Nondefense programs would receive about \$60 billion over current levels. Those figures would be slightly increased for the 2019 budget year beginning Oct. 1.

"For the first time in years, our armed forces will have more of the resources they need to keep America safe," said Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky. "It will help us serve the veterans who have bravely served us. And it will ensure funding for important efforts such as disaster relief, infrastructure and building on our work to fight opioid abuse and drug addiction."

The \$90 billion in disaster aid would bring the total appropriated in the wake of last year's hurricane season to almost \$140 billion.

The agreement would increase the government's borrowing cap to prevent a first-ever default on U.S. obligations that looms in just a few weeks. The debt limit would be suspended through March of 2019, Sanders said, putting the next vote on it safely past this year's midterm elections.

McConnell officially unveiled the 652-page measure late Wednesday. It contained previously unmentioned extensions of tax provisions, an array of fee renewals to partly defray the measure's cost, and almost 400 pages worth of health provisions.

The House on Tuesday passed legislation to keep the government running through March 23, marrying the stopgap spending measure with a \$659 billion Pentagon spending plan, but the Senate plan would rewrite that measure.

Pelosi said the House should push into immigration legislation and noted that Senate Republicans have slated a debate on the politically freighted subject starting next week. At issue is legislation to address the dilemma of immigrants left vulnerable by Trump's move to end Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA.

Rep. Nanette Barragan, D-Calif., a member of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, said the Latino community thinks Senate Democratic leaders have "turned their back."

And a frustrated Angel Padilla, policy director for the liberal group Indivisible, said of the Democratic leaders: "What are they thinking? They're giving up their leverage. ... All of these votes will matter come November."

Dreamers and supporters mounted a peaceful protest in a Senate office building.

Schumer said the plan would contain \$20 billion dedicated to infrastructure such as highways and bridge construction and repair, water and wastewater projects, and rural broadband.

There's also \$4 billion for construction for veterans hospitals and clinics, \$6 billion to fight the opioid crisis and fund mental health programs and \$4 billion for college aid.

\_\_\_ Associated Press writers Alan Fram, Kevin Freking, Luis Alonso Lugo and Jill Colvin in Washington and Steve Peoples in New York contributed to this report.

## South Korean president to meet North Korean leader's sister

By KIM TONG-HYUNG, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea's president plans to meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's sister and other senior North Korean officials when they visit the South this week for the Winter Olympics, his spokesman said Thursday.

Kim Yo Jong, believed to be around 30, would be the first member of North Korea's ruling family to visit the South since the 1950-53 Korean War.

She is to arrive Friday on a private jet to attend the opening ceremony of the Pyeongchang Games later that day, and will join South Korean President Moon Jae-in for lunch on Saturday, presidential spokesman Kim Eui-kyeom said.

It's highly unlikely that the luncheon will lead to an immediate breakthrough in international tensions over North Korea's nuclear weapons development, but just holding such a meeting seemed unimaginable only a few months ago.

Moon is looking to the Olympics as an opportunity to pursue a diplomatic opening with North Korea after a year of heightened tensions over its nuclear and missile programs.

Analysts say Kim Yo Jong's inclusion in the Olympic delegation shows North Korea's ambition to use the Olympics to break out from diplomatic isolation by improving relations with the South, which it could use as a bridge for approaching the United States.

A North Korean foreign ministry official, however, ruled out a meeting with U.S. Vice President Mike Pence, who will be representing the U.S. at the opening ceremony. The North also held a military parade with tanks and tens of thousands of troops in its capital Thursday to mark the 70th anniversary of the founding of its military. Kim Jong Un told the crowd that the parade displayed North Korea's might as a "global military power."

Pence, who arrived in South Korea on Thursday, will meet separately with Moon. He is pushing South Korea to adopt a more hawkish stance toward the North and is warning against North Korean "propaganda" efforts at the games.

Kim Yo Jong has been an increasingly prominent figure in North Korea's leadership and is considered one of the few people who has earned Kim Jong Un's absolute trust. She was promoted by her brother last year to be an alternate member of the decision-making political bureau of the ruling party's central committee, which analysts said showed that her activities are more substantive than previously thought.

South Korean media have been speculating about whether Kim Jong Un will send a personal message to Moon through his sister and, if so, whether it would include a proposal for a summit between the two leaders.

The North Korean delegation will also include Kim Yong Nam, the country's 90-year-old nominal head of state, Choe Hwi, chairman of the country's National Sports Guidance Committee, and Ri Son Gwon, chairman of the North's agency that deals with inter-Korean affairs.

Neither Kim Yo Jong nor Kim Yong Nam are among the North Korean officials blacklisted under U.N. sanctions over the North's weapons programs. However, the U.S. Treasury Department last year included Kim Yo Jong on its list of blacklisted officials over her position as vice director of the ruling Workers' Party's Propaganda and Agitation Department.

The U.N. committee monitoring sanctions against North Korea has proposed granting an exemption for Choe, who has been on the U.N. sanctions blacklist since last June.

North Korea has sent hundreds of people to the Olympics in the South, including officials, athletes, artists, journalists and a 230-member cheering group. Skeptics say the North's outreach to the South over the Olympics is an attempt at weakening U.S.-led sanctions and pressure against the country and at buying more time to advance its nuclear weapons and missiles development.

## Wynn case raises question: When do investors need to know?

By ALEXANDRA OLSON and MARLEY JAY, AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — When should a company have to tell investors that a top executive is facing sexual misconduct allegations?

The question comes as Wynn Resorts is being rocked by the resignation of Steve Wynn, its chairman and CEO, following allegations that first surfaced in a newspaper report that sent the casino and resorts company's stock tumbling.

The issue is further complicated by the web of workplace and legal practices that companies have used to keep such situations under wraps.

The billionaire casino mogul's resignation Tuesday came less than two weeks after the Wall Street Journal reported that a number of women said Wynn harassed or assaulted them and that one case led to a \$7.5 million settlement.

Wynn now faces investigations by gambling regulators in Nevada and Massachusetts, where the company is building a roughly \$2.4 billion casino just outside Boston. Regulators in Macau, the Chinese enclave where the company operates two casinos, are also inquiring about the allegations.

Wynn has vehemently denied the report's allegations, denouncing in his resignation statement an environment "in which a rush to judgment takes precedence over everything else, including the facts." In accepting Wynn's resignation, the company's board of directors made clear it had done so "reluctantly."

The scandal has cost shareholders money, leaving the company exposed to complaints that investors should have been informed about the allegations against a leader whose image and reputation were tightly tied to the brand. The company's stock rallied Wednesday after Wynn resigned but has fallen almost 12 percent since the Journal's Jan. 26 report.

Wynn remains the largest shareholder of his company and his signature is its logo. Additionally, in its annual filings with the Securities Exchange Commission, Wynn Resorts said the mogul's "efforts, skills and reputation" are a large factor in the company's ability to compete, and its business could suffer if he were to leave or lose his ability to focus on the company.

At least one shareholder raised those factors in a lawsuit filed Wednesday in a Nevada district court. The shareholder, Norfolk County Retirement, accused the company's board of directors of breaching its fiduciary duties by "turning a blind eye and disregarding a sustained pattern of sexual harassment and egregious misconduct by Mr. Wynn."

Joe Schmitt, an employment attorney with Minneapolis firm Nilan Johnson Lewis, said he would not be surprised if Wynn Resorts were to face more lawsuits from shareholders claiming the allegations against Wynn should have been disclosed.

"More importantly, in this case, the lawsuit is likely to result in a disclosure of the very facts that the company sought to keep confidential," Schmitt said.

There is no law obligating companies to disclose internal allegations of sexual harassment or any settlements involvement employment-related complaints. The Securities and Exchange Commission, however, does have the power to require publicly traded companies to disclose litigation that could have a material effect on their financial results.

But so far, Wynn Resorts hasn't been linked to any payments to Wynn's accusers. According to the Journal report, Wynn did not use company funds to pay the \$7.5 million settlement to a manicurist who alleged that he pressured her into having sex during an appointment. The newspaper reported that Wynn and his legal representatives set up a separate company to handle the settlement, which helped hide the payment.

However, under securities law, a company is obligated to disclose developments that might be important to investors considering buying its stock.

"It should have been disclosed," said Jeffrey Sonnenfeld, a professor at the Yale School of Management and an expert on corporate governance. "It's not just his choice, his decision, but also his name and even his signature, so it's hard to disentangle the value of his personal conduct and image with the brand value."

A wave of sexual misconduct claims against prominent figures in entertainment, media and politics

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 32 of 52

gained momentum last fall in the aftermath of articles detailing movie industry mogul Harvey Weinstein's decades of alleged rape and harassment. But Wynn is the first CEO and founder of a major publicly held company to come under scrutiny since the Weinstein allegations surfaced.

In some ways, corporations may be facing new territory when it comes to their legal obligations to disclose sexual misconduct allegations against their star executives. Sexual harassment allegations are proving more damaging to reputations than even just a few years ago because public perception over the gravity of such conduct has changed, Schmitt said.

"#MeToo has changed the landscape dramatically," he said. "Things that were not a big deal 10 years ago are a big deal now."

When it comes to corporate responsibility, companies have traditionally perceived a need to protect their reputations by keeping sexual misconduct allegations private. For that reason, "companies as a general matter, almost as a matter of course, structure non-disclosure agreements into their settlements to prevent people from talking about it," Schmitt said.

"From the company's perspective, if it were shared, it would be damage the company's brand and the bottom line," he said.

There are some efforts in the works that would make it more difficult for companies to hide sexual misconduct allegations.

In December, Senators Lindsay Graham, R-S.C., and Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., introduced bipartisan legislation that would ban companies from forcing employees into arbitration proceedings if they bring sexual harassment claims. Currently, it is common practice for companies to require employees to settle misconduct lawsuits through arbitration, which is handled by private companies instead of courts and typically leaves no public record.

"The company would rather be in arbitration because that is a much more favorable venue for them than a court. This is why arbitration agreements are popular with employers but also very controversial," Schmitt said.

Wynn is a titan in Sin City and played a major role in the revitalization of the Las Vegas Strip in the 1990s. He built the Bellagio, Treasure Island and Mirage before he sold his Mirage Resorts company in 2000. Two years later, he founded Wynn Resorts, which now operates two luxurious casino-resorts in the city and is in the process of building a lake and hotel development called Paradise Park on the site of a former golf course.

He resigned as finance chairman of the Republican National Committee a day after the allegations were published.

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Associated Press writer Regina Garcia Cano in Las Vegas contributed to this report.

## **Pelosi speaks for record 8 hours in favor of 'Dreamers'**

**By STEVE PEOPLES and ALAN FRAM, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi staged a record-breaking, eight-hour speech in hopes of pressuring Republicans to allow a vote on protecting "Dreamer" immigrants — and to demonstrate to increasingly angry progressives and Democratic activists that she has done all she could.

Wearing four-inch heels and forgoing any breaks, Pelosi, 77, spent much of the rare talkathon Wednesday reading personal letters from the young immigrants whose temporary protection from deportation is set to expire next month. The California Democrat quoted from the Bible and Pope Francis, as Democrats took turns sitting behind her in support. The Office of the House Historian said it was the longest continuous speech in the chamber on record.

"You see, these people are being deported," Pelosi said around hour six. "We can do something today to at least make whole the children."

Her remarks seemed partly aimed at the liberal wing of Pelosi's own party, who seethed as Senate Democrats cut a budget deal with Republicans that could quickly steal the momentum behind the effort



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 33 of 52

to resolve the Dreamers' plight.

The wide-ranging budget accord says nothing about renewing the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, called DACA, which temporarily shields Dreamers — hundreds of thousands of immigrants brought to the country as children and living here illegally — from deportation. President Donald Trump has moved to annul DACA.

Pelosi said she'd oppose the budget deal unless GOP leaders agreed to hold a House vote on helping the Dreamers. But top Democrats said they weren't corraling rank-and-file lawmakers to oppose the budget pact, leading some of the party's immigration advocates to question the forcefulness of her opposition.

"I'm going to take everything she says at face value," said Rep. Luis Gutierrez, D-Ill. "And then hopefully tomorrow she will validate that trust by stopping us from voting for it. If she doesn't, then it was a nice speech."

Pelosi's performance had no immediate impact on Republican leaders, who have not scheduled a vote on the issue. AshLee Strong, spokeswoman for House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., said Ryan "has already repeatedly stated we intend to do a DACA and immigration reform bill — one that the president supports."

While Pelosi spoke, immigration activists rallied in Washington and threatened retribution against the congressional Democrats who abandoned the strategy of demanding that a budget accord be paired with an immigration deal. The fresh threats exposed deepening divisions within a Democratic Party struggling to address a liberal priority in Republican-controlled Washington.

"I'm not a loyal Democrat," Linda Sarsour, a political activist who co-chaired the 2017 Women's March, declared during a fiery rally near Capitol Hill. "We will be joining primaries this year and we will primary Democrats who did not have the spine or the courage to stand up for our undocumented family."

The activists who filled a Washington church Wednesday, like liberal leaders nationwide, called out Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer for failing to attach immigration legislation to a must-pass bill like the budget deal.

"What are they thinking? They're giving up their leverage," said a frustrated Angel Padilla, policy director for the liberal group Indivisible.

Pelosi started speaking around 10 a.m. and yielded the floor at 6:11 p.m. By the end, there was a quiver in her voice, a stumble over some words and a case of sniffles.

At one point she interrupted herself to read a note from the House historian alerting her that she had delivered the chamber's longest continuous speech, besting Rep. Champ Clark's five-hour, 15-minute stem-winder about tariff reform in 1909. In the Senate, where unthinkably long orations are more common, South Carolina Sen. Strom Thurmond spoke against the Civil Rights Act of 1957 for a record 24 hours and 18 minutes.

When Pelosi finished, around 50 Democrats responded with a standing ovation, high-fives, hugs and kisses. The Republican side of the chamber was virtually empty.

"We achieved the recognition of what the Dreamers mean to America," she told reporters afterward. "They are a reflection of all the immigrants that have come before."

The federal government will shutter non-essential operations Thursday at midnight unless Congress passes a spending plan.

It's unclear whether the liberal outrage will sink the two-year, nearly \$400 billion budget deal unveiled Wednesday that would provide Pentagon and domestic programs with huge spending increases. Schumer, D-N.Y., praised the agreement for providing needed funding for health, drug abuse and social service programs, having dropped his push to use the budget talks to extract concessions on immigration.

Rep. Nanette Barragan, D-Calif., a member of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, said the Latino community thinks Senate Democratic leadership "has turned their back on them."

Hispanic caucus members and other Democrats made clear to Pelosi earlier Wednesday that "we would not support a budget caps deal unless we had some clarity about what would happen to Dreamers," said Rep. Ruben Gallego, D-Ariz. They insisted, he added, on DACA language in the budget deal or some guarantee the issue would be addressed.

Yet numerous House Democrats said they weren't being pushed by Pelosi's leadership team to oppose

the Senate deal without a DACA fix, and some of Pelosi's top lieutenants said no such effort was underway. Asked if she was "whipping" Democrats to oppose the budget measure, Pelosi told reporters, "I've just been on the floor all day."

The lack of a unified Democratic strategy infuriated liberal leaders.

"This is a moral fight that Democratic leadership is failing on. That's something that's going to have long-term implications," said Murshed Zaheed, political director for the progressive group CREDO.

Should Pelosi fail to unify House Democrats against the deal, he added, "it's going to be another strike against her effectiveness as leader of the caucus."

"There will be a reckoning," said Ben Wikler, Washington director for the liberal group MoveOn.

Peoples reported from New York. Associated Press writers Luis Alonso Lugo and Kevin Freking contributed to this report.

## The doctor's in, but jury is out on new LA Times owner

By **BRIAN MELLE**, Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The struggling Los Angeles Times found a local savior in a biotech billionaire willing to buy the storied newspaper from a corporation half a continent away, but the change of ownership brings its own set of questions and uncertainty.

Dr. Patrick Soon-Shiong agreed to pay \$500 million and assume \$90 million in pension liabilities for the Times and San Diego Union-Tribune, Tronc Inc. announced Wednesday.

The news was met with a mix of optimism and skepticism by those who have seen the fourth-largest circulation newspaper in the country plagued by cutbacks and circulation declines and roiled by leadership changes in the two decades since it was sold to Tribune Co. by the Chandler family.

"Some people might think this could be the white knight, the savior, but nobody knows that," said Steve Davis, a journalism professor at Syracuse University. "All they know is that it's a change, that it's somebody new who says the right things."

The sale reflects a trend of billionaires buying up newspapers, most notably when Amazon founder Jeff Bezos bought The Washington Post in 2013 for \$250 million, in a move that has reinvigorated that newspaper and raised its profile.

"In general this is just another example of sort of boutique buying of newspapers," said Jack Kranefuss, a media analyst at Fitch Ratings. "It's sort of going back to the day when captains of industry owned newspapers to get their own voice out."

One of the big questions is whether Soon-Shiong will distance himself from the Times or will use it for influence or to advance an agenda.

While Bezos has been applauded for allowing independence at the Post, that hasn't been the case with other rich owners.

Sheldon Adelson's acquisition of The Las Vegas Review-Journal was followed by resignations from a top editor, a handful of reporters, and a columnist who said he couldn't do his job after the new editor told him he couldn't write about Adelson.

Doug Manchester, a previous owner of the Union-Tribune, used the newspaper to tout a conservative political agenda and views on local issues, like his proposal for a new downtown convention center and stadium for the NFL's Chargers.

Soon-Shiong said in a letter sent late Wednesday to employees of the two newspapers that local ownership will give them a chance to preserve their mission and independence.

"This decision is deeply personal for me," Soon-Shiong wrote. "As someone who grew up in apartheid South Africa, I understand the role that journalism needs to play in a free society. As residents of Southern California, my family and I have seen the vital role that these publications play in binding our communities together."

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 35 of 52

Soon Shiong, 65, has been the subject of several unflattering reports, including in the Times, which have raised concerns about his business practices and charitable giving.

Among other things, an audit found that the University of Utah had accepted over \$12 million from a Soon-Shiong foundation and then inappropriately awarded one of his company's, NantHealth, \$10 million for gene sequencing, the Salt Lake Tribune reported last year.

Gabriel Kahn, a journalism professor at the University of Southern California, said Soon-Shiong has "kind of a cloudy business career" that has been dogged by "very real questions about the appearance of improprieties." Soon-Shiong has been in a legal fight with siblings, and sued by investors, including singer and activist Cher.

Soon-Shiong has denied allegations in the suits and referred to a news story about his foundation benefiting his business as "maliciously false," the Times said.

Kahn, who wrote about Soon-Shiong's charitable giving for Los Angeles Magazine, said it would be great if Soon-Shiong sees his investment in the newspapers as a way to boost civic culture and standing in Southern California — as long as there's a clear separation from his other companies. Still, it could be a challenge for reporters at the Times who have to cover him.

"He's incredibly wealthy, very smart and, as tends to be the case with billionaires, he has a big ego and he has thin skin," Kahn said.

If nothing else, the break from corporate owners in Chicago represents a return to local control, which was applauded in the Times newsroom Tuesday when news of the pending sale broke.

Maya Lau, a Times law enforcement reporter, tweeted: "Congratulations to Patrick Soon-Shiong and hooray for a return to local ownership of the Los Angeles Times & San Diego Union Tribune."

Problems at the paper have persisted since Times Mirror, its parent, was sold to Chicago-based Tribune in 2000 as the newspaper industry was contracting amid the rise of the internet.

Tribune looked at the Times, which had about 1,000 journalists and saw fat that could be trimmed, said Kevin Roderick, the editor of LA Observed, a blog that has spent much of its 15 years chronicling shake-ups at the newspaper.

The Times chafed under Chicago control and layoffs that have trimmed the editorial staff to about 400 today, said Roderick, a former editor who worked for 25 years at the Times. The Times saw itself as the flagship paper of the chain while the corporate suits saw the West Coast employees as a force that needed to be reined in and schooled on doing things the Chicago way.

"There was just an immediate culture clash," Roderick said.

Tribune eventually declared bankruptcy and the company spun off its publishing arm as Tribune Publishing in 2014, which was later renamed Tronc, for Tribune Online Content.

Tronc said the sale will allow the company that owns the Chicago Tribune, The Baltimore Sun, New York Daily News and five other papers to follow a more aggressive growth strategy focused on news and digital media. It said it is buying a majority stake in online product review company BestReviews for an undisclosed amount.

In the past few months, tensions were high at the Times, with journalists voting for the first time in the paper's 136-year history to form a union and several changes in top management.

The Times just replaced its top editor last week, the third such switch in six months, and publisher Ross Levinsohn had been on unpaid leave after it was learned he was a defendant in two sexual harassment lawsuits elsewhere.

Tronc said Wednesday Levinsohn was cleared of any wrongdoing and would be reinstated as CEO of its newly reorganized Tribune Interactive division.

Tronc stock jumped 19 percent to close at \$21.55 a share Wednesday on the Nasdaq market.

Christopher Weber and John Rogers in Los Angeles and Elliot Spagat in San Diego contributed to this report.

## **FBI: Probe shows no evidence of attack in border agent death**

**By CLAUDIA LAUER, Associated Press**

DALLAS (AP) — FBI officials said the investigation into the November death of a U.S. Border Patrol agent has yielded no evidence that there was a “scuffle, altercation or attack” more than two months after President Donald Trump and others used the suggestion of an attack to promote the building of a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Investigators have conducted more than 650 interviews and involved 37 field offices in their probe, but have not found definitive evidence of an attack, the FBI said in a statement Wednesday. The investigation will continue and the reward of up to \$50,000 for information that closes the case will remain.

“To date none of the more than 650 interviews completed, locations searched, or evidence collected and analyzed have produced evidence that would support the existence of a scuffle, altercation, or attack on November 18, 2017,” said the release from the El Paso office of Emmerson Buie, a special agent in charge.

Rogelio Martinez died from injuries he sustained while he and his partner were responding to reports of unknown activity the night of Nov. 18 near Van Horn, a Texas town near the Mexico border about 110 miles (175 kilometers) southeast of El Paso.

Martinez’s partner radioed for help before both agents were airlifted to the hospital, where 36-year-old Martinez died a few hours later. The partner— who suffered from head injuries— was released from the hospital after several days, but told investigators he could not remember the incident.

The FBI release Wednesday noted that a dispatcher, who was among the people interviewed by investigators, took the call from the surviving agent. According to the release, the dispatcher wrote in his log that, “(He) thinks they (both agents) ran into a culvert.”

An autopsy report from the El Paso County medical examiner’s office released Tuesday night shed little light on what caused the serious injuries that Martinez suffered. The report listed “blunt force trauma” as the cause of death, but said the manner of his death was undetermined.

Dr. Janice Diaz-Cavallieri, assistant medical examiner, found that Martinez had a skull fracture, a fractured eye socket, multiple rib fractures and a broken collarbone, according to the 11-page report. She found brain hemorrhaging but no other internal injuries.

A Border Patrol union, the National Border Patrol Council, has previously said the pair was attacked and struck with a rock or rocks. Messages left with representatives of the group were not immediately returned Wednesday.

Trump, Sen. Ted Cruz and Texas Gov. Greg Abbott also have said the two were attacked, with Trump using the incident to renew his call for a border wall between the U.S. and Mexico.

Trump has repeatedly linked immigration to criminality in making his case for tighter border security. Earlier this week, Trump called on Democrats to “get tough” on immigration, citing the death of Indianapolis Colts linebacker Edwin Jackson, who was killed in a suspected drunken-driving crash involving a Guatemalan citizen living illegally in the U.S. Manuel Orrego-Savala was charged Wednesday with two counts each of causing death while driving intoxicated and leaving the scene of an accident.

Investigators had looked into tips about several persons of interest including two in New Mexico. While other charges were filed against several individuals, none of those charges are related to Martinez’s death, the FBI release said, adding that they are not “currently a subject in the investigation.”

## **Trump aide to leave White House after abuse allegations**

**By DARLENE SUPERVILLE, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — One of President Donald Trump’s top White House aides resigned Wednesday following allegations of domestic abuse leveled against him by his two ex-wives.

Staff secretary Rob Porter said in a written statement that allegations that became public this week are “outrageous” and “simply false.” Porter said photos published of his former spouses — in which one appears to have a black eye — were “given to the media nearly 15 years ago and the reality behind them is nowhere close to what is being described.”

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 37 of 52

Porter added in a written statement. "I have been transparent and truthful about these vile claims, but I will not further engage publicly with a coordinated smear campaign." Porter said he will leave the White House after a transition period.

Porter's former wives recounted physical, verbal and emotional abuse they say he subjected them to during their marriages.

Porter's first wife, Colbie Holderness, told the DailyMail.com that Porter choked and punched her during the five years they were husband and wife.

Porter's second wife, Jennifer Willoughby, also described for the DailyMail.com how Porter once dragged her naked and wet from the shower to yell at her. She filed a protective order against him. Stories published online by the DailyMail.com included photos of Holderness with a bruised eye socket that she said she suffered after Porter punched her in the face while on vacation in Italy.

Neither Holderness nor Willoughby could be reached for comment Wednesday. Telephone messages left by The Associated Press were not returned.

Porter, 40, has been credited with working with White House chief of staff John Kelly to control the flow of information to the president. His influence growing in recent months, Porter was often seen with Trump when the president traveled and as he signed legislation or proclamations. He helped craft Trump's well-received State of the Union address and was credited internally for helping bridge divides in a White House riven by rivalries and for helping more effectively roll out new policy.

The DailyMail.com published a statement from Kelly referring to Porter as a "man of true integrity and honor," adding, "I can't say enough good things about him."

"He is a friend, a confidante and a trusted professional. I am proud to serve alongside him," Kelly added.

Porter, well-liked throughout the White House, lost internal support once the photos came out. But even then, Kelly was urging him to stay, according to a White House official who spoke on condition of anonymity to convey internal discussions.

Late Wednesday, Kelly released a statement claiming "new allegations" had swayed him.

"I was shocked by the new allegations released today against Rob Porter. There is no place for domestic violence in our society," Kelly said. "I stand by my previous comments of the Rob Porter that I have come to know since becoming Chief of Staff, and believe every individual deserves the right to defend their reputation." It's unclear what new allegations Kelly was referring to.

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said she had not discussed the allegations against Porter with Trump. She said Porter was not pressured to resign.

"Rob Porter has been effective in his role as staff secretary," Sanders said. "The president and chief of staff have full confidence in his abilities and his performance."

Vice President Mike Pence, asked about the resignation while traveling in Japan, told reporters he learned of it from news reports. "We'll comment on any issues affecting White House staff when we get back to Washington," he said.

Before joining the administration, Porter, a Harvard Law School graduate, spent nearly three years as chief of staff to longtime Utah Republican Sen. Orrin Hatch. Porter also worked for Republican Sens. Rob Portman of Ohio and Mike Lee of Utah.

Hatch released a statement that said he was "heartbroken" over the allegations and denounced domestic violence.

"In every interaction I've had with Rob, he has been courteous, professional, and respectful. My staff loved him and he was a trusted advisor," Hatch said. "I do not know the details of Rob's personal life. Domestic violence in any form is abhorrent and unacceptable."

Porter, who joined the administration at its start in January 2017, said in his statement: "My commitment to public service speaks for itself. I have always put duty to country first and treated others with respect. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to have served in the Trump Administration and will seek to ensure a smooth transition when I leave the White House."

Associated Press writer Jonathan Lemire contributed to this report.

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## North Korea says it's not interested in meeting US VP Pence

By ERIC TALMADGE, Associated Press

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea (AP) — North Korea says it is not interested in meeting U.S. Vice President Mike Pence while he is in South Korea for the Pyeongchang Olympics.

With Pyongyang sending a senior delegation — including Kim Jong Un's younger sister — rumors had circulated such a meeting could be in the works. A top Foreign Ministry official seemed to rule that out in comments carried by the North's state-run media on Thursday.

"We have no intention to meet with the U.S. side during the stay in South Korea," the official was quoted as saying. "We are not going to use such a sports festival as the Winter Olympics as a political lever. There is no need to do so."

Pence was to arrive in South Korea from Japan on Thursday and move to Pyeongchang on Friday.

Kim's sister, the first member of the North's ruling family to ever visit South Korea, is expected to come on Friday just ahead of the opening ceremony. North Korea's nominal head of state and senior statesman, 90-year-old Kim Yong Nam, is expected to join her.

The mood has hardly been conducive to any U.S.-North Korea meeting despite the proximity in Pyeongchang.

Washington has been stepping up its anti-Pyongyang rhetoric while North Korea has been trying to use the Olympics as an opportunity to ease tensions with South Korea. Some see Pyongyang's conciliatory gestures toward Seoul as a calculated move to drive a wedge between the U.S. and its ally.

If that's the case, it may already be paying off for Kim Jong Un.

In response to a North Korean request, Seoul has agreed to postpone annual military maneuvers with the U.S. until after the games are over and has asked for some sanctions to be waived so that more contacts and exchanges with the North can be made.

Pence, meanwhile, is taking a decidedly hard-line approach.

Before departing for South Korea, he announced the U.S. would unveil in the coming days "the toughest and most aggressive round of economic sanctions on North Korea ever." Pyongyang is already the subject of wide-ranging sanctions and details of what the U.S. might target next have yet to be announced.

He is also bringing as his personal guest Fred Warmbier, the father of Otto Warmbier, an American who died last year days after his release from captivity in North Korea.

The North has denied mistreating Otto Warmbier, although what caused his death remains a mystery, and Pence's decision to bring his father to the games is sure to be seen in Pyongyang as a very provocative move.

Even so, Pence and other U.S. officials seemed to be open to the possibility of a meeting, even if they were not actively seeking one.

When asked by reporters if he would be willing to have some sort of interaction, Pence had said "we'll see what happens." Defense Secretary Jim Mattis told reporters Wednesday that Pence is "quite capable of making the call" on whether to meet with North Korean officials at the Olympics.

With the North's position now official, he probably won't have to.

## Senate celebrates budget deal \_ but shutdown still possible

By ANDREW TAYLOR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate leaders brokered a long-sought budget agreement Wednesday that would shower the Pentagon and domestic programs with an extra \$300 billion over the next two years. But both Democratic liberals and GOP tea party forces swung against the plan, raising questions about its chances

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 39 of 52

just a day before the latest government shutdown deadline.

The measure was a win for Republican allies of the Pentagon and for Democrats seeking more for infrastructure projects and combatting opioid abuse. But it represented a bitter defeat for many liberal Democrats who sought to use the party's leverage on the budget to resolve the plight of immigrant "Dreamers" who face deportation after being brought to the U.S. illegally as children. The deal does not address immigration.

Beyond the \$300 billion figure, the agreement adds almost \$90 billion in overdue disaster aid for hurricane-slammed Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico.

Senate leaders hope to approve the measure Thursday and send it to the House for a confirming vote before the government begins to shut down Thursday at midnight. But hurdles remain to avert the second shutdown in a month.

While Senate Democrats celebrated the moment of rare bipartisanship — Minority Leader Chuck Schumer called it a "genuine breakthrough" — progressives and activists blasted them for leaving immigrants in legislative limbo. Top House Democrat Nancy Pelosi of California, herself a key architect of the budget plan, announced her opposition Wednesday morning and mounted a remarkable daylong speech on the House floor, trying to force GOP leaders in the House to promise a later vote on legislation to protect the younger immigrants.

"Let Congress work its will," Pelosi said, before holding the floor for more than eight hours without a break. "What are you afraid of?"

The White House backed the deal — despite President Donald Trump's outburst a day earlier that he'd welcome a government shutdown if Democrats didn't accept his immigration-limiting proposals.

Trump himself tweeted that the agreement "is so important for our great Military," and he urged both Republicans and Democrats to support it.

But the plan faced criticism from deficit hawks in his own party.

Some tea party Republicans shredded the measure as a budget-buster. Combined with the party's December tax cut bill, the burst in military and other spending would put the GOP-controlled government on track for the first \$1 trillion-plus deficits since President Barack Obama's first term. That's when Congress passed massive stimulus legislation to try to stabilize a down-spiraling economy.

"It's too much," said Rep. Scott Perry, R-Pa., a fiscal hawk.

House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., however, backed the agreement and was hoping to cobble together a coalition of moderate Democrats and Republicans to push it through.

Despite the 77-year-old Pelosi's public talkathon, she was not pressuring the party's rank-and-file to oppose the measure, Democrats said. The deal contains far more money demanded by Democrats than had seemed possible only weeks ago, including \$90 billion in disaster aid for Florida and Texas. Some other veteran Democrats — some of whom said holding the budget deal hostage to action on Dreamer immigrants had already proven to be a failed strategy — appeared more likely to support the agreement than junior progressives elected in recent years.

The budget agreement would give both the Pentagon and domestic agencies relief from a budget freeze that lawmakers say threatens military readiness and training as well as domestic priorities such as combatting opioid abuse and repairing the troubled health care system for veterans.

The core of the agreement would shatter tight "caps" on defense and domestic programs funded by Congress each year. They are a hangover from a failed 2011 budget agreement and have led to military readiness problems and caused hardship at domestic agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency and the IRS.

The agreement would give the Pentagon an \$80 billion increase for the current budget year for core defense programs, a 14 percent increase over current limits and \$26 billion more than Trump's budget request. Nondefense programs would receive about \$60 billion over current levels. Those figures would be slightly increased for the 2019 budget year beginning Oct. 1.

"For the first time in years, our armed forces will have more of the resources they need to keep America safe," said Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky. "It will help us serve the veterans who have bravely

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 40 of 52

served us. And it will ensure funding for important efforts such as disaster relief, infrastructure and building on our work to fight opioid abuse and drug addiction.”

The \$90 billion in disaster aid would bring the total appropriated in the wake of last year’s hurricane season to almost \$140 billion.

The agreement would increase the government’s borrowing cap to prevent a first-ever default on U.S. obligations that looms in just a few weeks. The debt limit would be suspended through March 2019, Sanders said, putting the next vote on it safely past this year’s midterm elections.

McConnell officially unveiled the 652-page measure late Wednesday. It contained previously unmentioned extensions of tax provisions, an array of fee renewals to partly defray the measure’s cost, and almost 400 pages worth of health provisions.

The House on Tuesday passed legislation to keep the government running through March 23, marrying the stopgap spending measure with a \$659 billion Pentagon spending plan, but the Senate plan would rewrite that measure.

Pelosi said the House should push into immigration legislation and noted that Senate Republicans have slated a debate on the politically freighted subject starting next week. At issue is legislation to address the dilemma of immigrants left vulnerable by Trump’s move to end Obama’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA.

Rep. Nanette Barragan, D-Calif., a member of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, said the Latino community thinks Senate Democratic leaders have “turned their back.”

And a frustrated Angel Padilla, policy director for the liberal group Indivisible, said of the Democratic leaders: “What are they thinking? They’re giving up their leverage. ... All of these votes will matter come November.”

Dreamers and supporters mounted a peaceful protest in a Senate office building.

Schumer said the plan would contain \$20 billion dedicated to infrastructure such as highways and bridge construction and repair, water and wastewater projects, and rural broadband.

There’s also \$4 billion for construction for veterans hospitals and clinics, \$6 billion to fight the opioid crisis and fund mental health programs and \$4 billion for college aid.

Associated Press reporters Alan Fram, Kevin Freking, Luis Alonso Lugo and Jill Colvin in Washington and Steve Peoples in New York contributed to this report.

This story corrects ‘filibuster’ to ‘speech’ in the 5th paragraph. Pelosi’s speech did not fit the technical definition of a filibuster.

## US launches rare strike on Syrian government-backed troops

By LOLITA C. BALDOR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. military launched airstrikes on Syrian government-backed troops Wednesday after as many as 500 attackers began what a U.S. military official said appeared to be a coordinated assault on Syrian opposition forces accompanied by U.S. advisers in Deir el-Zour Province.

The official said the strikes were in self-defense after the pro-government forces began firing artillery and tank rounds at the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces. About 100 of the attackers were killed, the official said.

It was a rare U.S. strike against forces that support Syrian President Bashar Assad’s regime.

The official said the pro-regime troops were in a large formation supported by artillery, tanks, multiple-launch rocket systems and mortars, and that 20 to 30 artillery and tank rounds landed within some 550 yards (500 meters) of the SDF headquarters.

Several U.S. officials said no Americans were injured or killed in the attack by the pro-regime forces, but one SDF member was wounded. All officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss preliminary details of the attack.



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 41 of 52

In response to the attack, officials said the Syrian Democratic Forces supported by the coalition targeted the pro-government troops with a combination of airstrikes and artillery rounds. Any of the attacking vehicles and personnel who turned around and headed back west were not targeted, the military official said.

The SDF, aided by coalition support, are battling Islamic State militants east of the Euphrates River. Syrian government forces are active on the other side of the river around the city of Deir el-Zour.

The military official said the coalition had been observing a slow buildup of pro-government forces over the past week, and alerted Russian officials of the SDF presence in Khusham. Coalition officials were in regular communication with Russian counterparts before, during and after the attack, the official said, and Russian officials assured coalition officials they would not strike coalition forces in the vicinity.

Officials said it appeared that the pro-regime forces were trying to take back land that the SDF had liberated from IS fighters last September, including oil fields in Khusham.

## Pence pouring cold water on warming ties between 2 Koreas

By ZEKE MILLER, Associated Press

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan (AP) — U.S. Vice President Mike Pence is pouring cold water on the warming ties between North and South Korea just as the two still-warring countries are joining up to compete together in the Winter Olympics.

Making his way to Pyeongchang to lead the U.S. delegation to Friday's opening ceremonies, Pence has embarked on a set of symbolic visits designed to draw attention to the North's terrible human rights record and nuclear aggression. With determined rhetoric — and the promise of more "aggressive" economic sanctions against the North — Pence is looking to refocus American allies on the North Korean threat.

"We will not allow North Korea to hide behind the Olympic banner the reality that they enslave their people and threaten the wider region," Pence said Wednesday after meetings with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Tokyo.

Pence arrives in Seoul on Thursday for meetings with President Moon Jae-in just as South Korea seizes on the games for a diplomatic opening with the North, including the first visit of North Korea's ruling family since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War. Aides say the vice president is advancing a counter message, using the games as an opportunity for the South and the broader international community to exert what President Donald Trump has termed "maximum pressure" against the North.

Before departing for Korea, Pence announced that the U.S. would unveil in coming days "the toughest and most aggressive round of economic sanctions on North Korea ever."

He also ratcheted up his rhetoric on the North's human rights abuses in a speech to U.S. service members at Yokota Air Base in Japan.

"As we speak, an estimated 100,000 North Korean citizens labor in modern-day gulags," Pence said Thursday before departing Japan. "Those who dare raise their voices in dissent are imprisoned, tortured and even murdered, and their children and grandchildren are routinely punished for their family's sins against the state."

Pence toured joint U.S. and Japanese operations centers at the U.S. base that monitor and react to crises on the peninsula and the region at large. He told troops to "be vigilant," warning against falling for the North's diplomatic overtures. "We are ready for every eventuality," he added.

Pence's strenuous efforts to highlight the threat from the North and its treatment of its people present a dilemma for Moon. The South Korean leader has long advocated engagement with Pyongyang and sees the Olympics as an opportunity to quell tensions that have escalated over its nuclear program. He has limited room to maneuver as his guest from Washington strongly criticizes the North and emphasizes the need to crank up the pressure campaign.

U.S. officials declined to offer details on the expected new sanctions beyond Pence's comments, citing concerns that any additional information could be used by those trying to skirt the new measures. They are expected to be implemented before the conclusion of the games.

North Korea already is facing unprecedented sanctions after three U.N. Security Council restrictions in

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 42 of 52

the past year that have slashed the pariah nation's export revenue and capped fuel imports. Unilaterally, the U.S. has also targeted North Korean shipping companies and Chinese trading networks. A potential escalation of sanctions could be the U.S. blacklisting Chinese banks accused of providing North Korea access to the international financial system and facilitating sanctions evasion.

Administration officials said they had long expected the North would seek to use the Olympics, taking place just 50 miles from the heavily-mined demilitarized zone, as an opportunity to put a softer face on the regime, and painted Pence's visit as a counterbalance to those efforts. At the same time, the vice president has deliberately left the door open to a possible encounter with North Korean officials expected to be in attendance.

On Wednesday, the North announced that Kim Yo Jong, the sister of dictator Kim Jong-un, would attend the games, joining the country's nominal head of state, Kim Yong Nam.

Pence pledged that his message in any potential interaction would include the same point he has been making publicly: that the North must renounce its nuclear weapon and missile programs.

In Washington, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis told reporters Wednesday that Pence is "quite capable of making the call" on whether to meet with North Korean officials at the Olympics. Asked if war with North Korea is closer than when Trump took office a year ago, Mattis said U.S. policy is "firmly in the diplomatic lane," as shown by agreement among world powers to increase sanctions. He added that the policy is backed by "viable military options."

Pence began his trip with a visit to Alaska, where he received a briefing on the U.S. missile defense system with U.S. Northern Command and highlighted the upcoming deployment of an additional 20 ground-based interceptors that will be ready to respond to a North Korean launch. In Japan, Pence watched Japanese troops demonstrate the simulated deployment of Japan's surface-to-air missile defense system, which would attempt to intercept a North Korean missile. He also participated in a briefing at Japan's Ministry of Defense on the threat.

Abe echoed Pence's comments through a translator, urging countries "not to be lured by the charm offensive of North Korea." Abe added that the U.S. and Japan are "100 percent on the same page" on North Korean policy. The U.S., Japan, and South Korea are set to hold trilateral talks later this week.

In South Korea, Pence will meet Friday morning with North Korean defectors as he pays respects at the Cheonan Memorial in Seoul, which honors the 46 South Korean sailors killed in a 2010 torpedo attack attributed to the North.

Pence's personal guest at the games will be Fred Warmbier, the father of Otto Warmbier, an American who died last year days after his release from captivity in North Korea.

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Associated Press writer Matthew Pennington in Washington contributed to this report.

## **AP Exclusive: AP finds food used as weapon against Rohingya**

**By FOSTER KLUG, Associated Press**

NAYAPARA REFUGEE CAMP, Bangladesh (AP) — Abdul Goni says the Myanmar government was starving his family one stage at a time.

First, soldiers stopped the Rohingya Muslim from walking three hours to the forest for the firewood he sold to feed his family. Then Buddhist neighbors and seven soldiers took his only cow, which he rented out to fertilize rice fields. Next, he says, they killed his uncle and strung him up on a wire for trying to stop the theft of his buffalos.

By the time Goni saw bodies floating down the local river, of fellow Rohingya killed for illegal fishing, he knew his family would die if they didn't leave. On bad days, they carved the flesh out of banana plant stalks for food. On the worst days, his children ate nothing.

"I felt so sorry that I couldn't give them enough food," the 25-year-old says, tears running down his face, in a refugee camp in Bangladesh, just across the border from Myanmar. "Everything just got worse and worse. ... Day by day, the pressure was increasing all around us. They used to tell us, 'This isn't your

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 43 of 52

land. ... We'll starve you out."

First, massacres, rapes and the wholesale destruction of villages by the Myanmar military in western Rakhine state forced nearly 700,000 Rohingya Muslims to flee to Bangladesh, in reprisal for Rohingya militant attacks on Aug. 25. Now, the food supply appears to be another weapon that's being used against the dwindling numbers of Rohingya in Myanmar.

The accounts of hunger could not be independently confirmed, as Myanmar's government does not allow reporters into the northern part of Rakhine state, where most of the Rohingya lived. However, more than a dozen interviews by The Associated Press with the most recent refugees show growing desperation, as the noose tightens around their communities in what U.N. officials have said may be a genocide. The U.N. and human rights groups such as Amnesty International have also warned of increasing hunger among the Rohingya in areas where conflict and displacement have been most rampant.

Repeated calls to Myanmar's military weren't answered, but the Myanmar government denies ethnic cleansing and says it is battling terrorists. Social Welfare Minister Win Myat Aye says the government has been distributing food aid to as many people as possible.

"There are many ways that we have been reaching out to villagers frequently," he says. "And that's why it's not possible that there are people who are completely cut off from food or facing hunger."

The Rohingya Muslims, who have been loathed by Myanmar's Buddhist majority for decades, are locked down in their villages — sometimes even in their homes — and prevented from farming, fishing, foraging, trade and work, the refugees and aid groups say. In other words, they can no longer do what they need to do to eat. While restrictions on freedom of movement and access to food have long been in place, they have tightened dramatically in recent weeks, the AP interviews show.

"It was worse than a jail," says Goni, who finally left Hpa Yon Chaung village in Buthidaung township on Jan. 5. "People at least get food twice a day in jail. ...We were always surrounded, always under stress, always watched."

The hunger the Rohingya faced at home is evident when they come to the Bangladesh camps, where new refugees, especially children and women, suffer from "unbelievable" levels of malnutrition, according to Dr. Ismail Mehr.

"They are definitely coming in starving," says Mehr, who recently returned to the United States from treating refugees in the camps. "We saw the vitamin deficiencies in the children and the adults; we saw ... severely malnourished people who are basically skin and bones. It looked like the pictures from the Nazi camps."

The government's restrictions on access to northern Rakhine make it almost impossible to tell how many people are without food, how widespread the problem is or whether people are dying. The International Committee of the Red Cross, based in Yangon, says that since the end of August it has distributed food to more than 180,000 people in northern Rakhine state. The World Food Program said it was granted access in December and January to field locations including Buthidaung, Maungdaw and Mrauk U townships for the first time since August.

The people AP interviewed were mostly from Buthidaung township, where many day laborers, farmers and foragers were hit hard when the restrictions tightened, and Rathedaung township, where the impoverished Muslim communities are often encircled by Buddhists.

Mohammad Ilyas, 55, fled to Bangladesh with only a shirt and a lungi sarong, along with dozens of others from Rathedaung township. He says the military and his neighbors took Rohingya rice paddies and rice stockpiles.

"Sometimes we stayed hungry for a day, two days, even five days," Ilyas, who is from Ah Nauk Pyin village, says. "The Myanmar government doesn't want a single Muslim to remain there. They want to erase us completely."

Activists, aid groups and researchers say Myanmar squeezed the Rohingya by severely hampering many of the humanitarian operations that were crucial for their survival. Food aid was further disrupted by violence in 2016 and the bloodshed after Rohingya insurgents staged an unprecedented wave of 30 attacks

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 44 of 52

on security posts across Rakhine state in August and killed at least 14 people.

Even before August, aid agencies in 2017 predicted a spike in severe malnutrition in children. In a report released today, Amnesty International details evidence of forced starvation by the military, including stopping the Rohingya from harvesting their rice fields in November and December. The Food and Agriculture Organization has also warned that the lack of access to food and fuel are adding to hunger in Myanmar.

Buddhists in Rakhine state began blocking food aid when they noticed that the Muslims were getting more than they were, according to Thomas MacManus, a specialist in international state crimes at Queen Mary University of London who has researched the Rohingya since 2012. Tightened curfews meant people couldn't harvest shrimp or rice, tend to their cattle, gather firewood or fish. Since August, an almost 24-hour-a-day curfew means no one is leaving their villages, he says.

MacManus says the Myanmar government has regularly employed a scorched-earth strategy that has denied food to other ethnic groups it has battled, including the Shan and the Kachin.

"What they're trying to do is design a situation where life just doesn't become livable anymore," he says. "You just block off an area and they can't get material or food. It is a time-honored way of doing genocide, and one of the easiest ways because you can do it slowly and without too much attention."

In this war on food, rice paddies are a major battlefield.

Last fall the Myanmar military stopped farmer Rashid Ahmed, 60, from harvesting his rice fields, which were about a 15-minute walk outside a village he could no longer leave. He stood by helpless as his Buddhist neighbors, assisted by the military, collected his rice and took his six buffalos. Without food, he says, he could not stay.

"It would have been better if they had just shot us instead of starving us out," says Ahmed, thin but wiry from years of field work, as he sat in a long hut with dozens of other new arrivals to the Bangladesh camps. "What they did was slower; it was crueler. They left us to imagine the worst, to wake up every day and think about what would happen when there was no food at all."

His family ate so many banana stalks that by the time they left, all 20 plants in his compound were gone.

"I always grew my own food, and now suddenly I couldn't feed myself or my family," says Ahmed, who is from Zay Di Taung village.

After Aug. 25, when he was trapped in his village, Mohammad Rafique, 25, a day laborer from Hpa Yon Chaung, survived on rice he'd stockpiled in his home. When that ran out in October, he sold family jewelry to get rice. When the money was gone, he begged from neighbors who still had rice stockpiles, often going without food so his children could eat.

"The market was closed; no one was harvesting," he says. "I was eating only once a day, sometimes not at all. ... I felt shame that I had to beg for food, but I had no other choice."

Without rice, things got very bad for the Rohingya very quickly.

Aid groups couldn't reach them regularly. The Buddhists blockaded their villages and wouldn't hire them; they put an embargo on Rohingya goods and even stopped selling them phone cards so they couldn't communicate with the outside world, according to aid groups. The Muslims ate through their stockpiles; they borrowed from friends and neighbors; then they ran out.

Food became so hard to get for Mohammad Hashim, 25, a wood cutter from Pyin La village, that he and his family sometimes ate broken rice grains normally given to chickens.

"We sometimes went two days without food," Hashim says. "They treated us like animals."

Goni says that of the 500 families who lived near him, around 150 have fled to Bangladesh. Everyone else wants to leave, he said, but they either don't have enough money or are too old.

"Some families have enough food because they stockpiled rice, but that can't last forever," he says. "If they can't get to Bangladesh, and they run out of rice, the only option is death."

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Associated Press video journalist Rishabh Jain contributed to this report.

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Foster Klug has covered Asia for the AP since 2005. Follow at [www.twitter.com/apklug](http://www.twitter.com/apklug)

## **Pyeongchang Olympics begin with mixed doubles curling**

GANGNEUNG, South Korea (AP) — The Pyeongchang Olympics have begun with a curling competition featuring a showdown between a pair of U.S. siblings and a Russian husband-and-wife team competing in neutral uniforms with no national insignia.

The opening ceremony is still a day away, but the games are already underway. Among the athletes are 168 Russians who are being forced to compete under the neutral banner of "Olympic Athletes from Russia" as punishment for doping in Sochi in 2014. Others who were barred altogether have filed appeals to the Court of Arbitration for Sport and are still hoping to be allowed to participate.

The first event is mixed doubles curling, which is making its Olympic debut. The more familiar single-gender version of curling will begin later in the games.

There were four games played simultaneously Thursday morning.

## **Dems head to midterms with energized base, unsettled agenda**

**By CATHERINE LUCEY and MATTHEW DALY, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats are heading into the November elections with an energized party base, an unpopular president to rail against and a growing wave of GOP retirements. Now they just need a clear message.

In recent weeks, lawmakers have zigzagged from digging in against President Donald Trump — even forcing a government shutdown — to trying to cut deals. They've played to their core supporters on immigration, only to shift quickly to the middle on spending. They've amplified news about the Russia investigation and dueling classified memos, at the risk of drowning out their objections to Trump's economic policies.

Democrats had planned to retreat to Maryland's Eastern Shore to discuss 2018 strategy Wednesday, but instead were stuck in Washington locked in an immigration and spending debate that put their divisions on full display.

As Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer called a two-year, bipartisan budget deal the "best thing" lawmakers have done for the middle class, his counterpart in the House was nearly three hours in to a marathon speech protesting the deal. Backed by progressives and immigration activists, House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi held the floor for eight hours as she sought to force a House vote on legislation to protect young immigrants known as "Dreamers," who face deportation after Trump threatened to remove protections established by President Barack Obama.

Senate Democrats tried a similar hard-line strategy, only to back off as Republicans accused them of shutting down the government over immigrants. Pelosi yielded Wednesday night without an agreement from GOP leaders for a vote on immigration, but her talkathon was met with cheers and high-fives from fellow Democrats.

Former Vice President Joe Biden also drew cheers as he told Democrats they have "a real opportunity to take back" the majority in the House and even the Senate. Biden said Democrats must focus on middle-class families while standing up for the nation's core values, which he said are under "direct assault" from Trump and congressional Republicans.

"The president is looking out for himself only, and the Republican Party seems to be only looking out for the president, so it's our job as Democrats to remind the American people somebody's looking out for them," Biden said, drawing applause from Democrats gathered under the theme "United for A Better Tomorrow."

New York Rep. Hakeem Jeffries, who is part of the House Democratic messaging operation, said the goal of the meetings was to "further develop an affirmative vision for how Democrats will improve the lives of the American people."

That vision is now captured in the "A Better Deal" policy statement, which includes traditional causes as a higher minimum wage, paid leave for employees and lower costs for prescription drugs and college.

Still, Democrats end up spending much of their time lambasting Trump — whether it's his policies, special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation or Trump's tweets.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 46 of 52

"It's tough to ignore the elephant in the room. The Bob Mueller investigation goes to the heart of the Trump candidacy and presidency," said Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois, the Senate's No. 2 Democrat.

In many ways, Trump's presidency has been good for Democrats. They've felt growing momentum at the end of last year after winning the Virginia governor's race and a special election for a Senate seat in Alabama, as well some down-ballot contests. They feeling increasingly optimistic about the fall elections, particularly in the House, where they must flip 24 GOP-held seats to gain control.

In the Senate, Democrats are defending 26 seats, including 10 seats in states Trump won. Republicans are defending just eight seats as they try to hold their 51-49 advantage.

But the wounds from the last war remain. A significant wing of the party continues to push for sharpened focus on a more populist economic message.

"We need an agenda that speaks to an angry middle class that wants the government representing them and not just the Koch brothers and other billionaires," said Sen. Bernie Sanders, a Vermont independent who caucuses with Democrats.

"There is an essential agreement on what has to be talked about," he said.

There is no agreement on how to talk about it.

This week Republicans targeted Pelosi's comment that \$1,000 bonuses resulting from the GOP tax bill are "crumbs." They seized on the comment to claim Democrats are out of touch with working-class voters who flocked to Trump in 2016.

Republicans had their own slip-up over the weekend, when House Speaker Paul Ryan of Wisconsin highlighted on Twitter a school secretary benefiting from the Republican tax overhaul, then deleted the tweet after online criticism that he was cheering a paltry pay increase of \$1.50 a week. Democrats rushed to slam Ryan for the move.

Democrats also argue they benefit because Trump is an inconsistent foil. They noted that during his tax speech this week, he accused Democrats of being "un-American" and maybe even treasonous for failing to applaud him during his State of the Union address.

Even as Democrats talk about the need to press an economic message, Russia is never far from mind.

Senate Democrats trooped to the Senate floor this week to attack Trump and other Republicans for what they called a smear of the FBI and other law enforcement agencies. After a Republican memo released last week criticized the FBI's handling of the investigation, Democrats have offered their own memo and pushed for its release.

Some Democrats stressed that anti-Trump was a winning message.

"There is so much antipathy to Trump where I live, that I don't think you can (put) his name up enough," said Democratic Rep. Gerry Connolly, whose Northern Virginia district is just outside Washington.

Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., said she doesn't spend much time worrying about national politics.

"Frankly, I'm not really counting on the Democrats being able to help me," said McCaskill, who is seeking her third term in a state Trump won by 18 points. "I'm counting on me getting out and listening to Missourians and talking about things that matter to them."

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Associated Press writer Kevin Freking contributed to this report.

## **APNewsBreak: Sexual assault reports doubled at West Point**

**By LOLITA C. BALDOR, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of sexual assaults reported at the U.S. Military Academy roughly doubled during the last school year, according to data reviewed by The Associated Press, in the latest example of the armed forces' persistent struggle to root out such misconduct.

It's the fourth year in a row that sexual assault reports increased at the school in West Point, New York. There were 50 cases in the school year that ended last summer, compared with 26 made during the 2015-2016 school year. By comparison, the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, and the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado, saw only slight increases.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 47 of 52

Defense Department and West Point officials said the big jump at the Military Academy resulted from a concerted effort to encourage victims to come forward. But the dramatic and consistent increases may suggest more assaults are happening.

"I'm very encouraged by the reporting," Lt. Gen. Robert Caslen, superintendent at West Point, told the AP in an interview. "I recognize that people are not going to understand" the desire for increased reporting, he said. But, he added, "I've got the steel stomach to take the criticism."

The annual report on sexual assaults at the three military academies is due out this month. The Naval Academy's reports increased to 29 last year from 28. The Air Force Academy's edged up by one, to 33.

About 12,000 students are enrolled across all three institutions. The AP reviewed the data ahead of its public release.

The report highlights persistent problems within the Air Force Academy's sexual assault prevention office that emerged late last year. Staffing and management issues led to sweeping disciplinary actions, the resignation of the director and an office restructuring.

Those problems could cast doubt on a sharp decline in reported sexual assaults at the Air Force Academy for the 2015-16 school year, considering a widespread loss of confidence in the office. Students may have been reluctant to file reports.

There have been worrying trends.

An anonymous survey released last year suggested there were more sexual assaults, unwanted sexual contact and other bad behavior at all three academies. It found 12 percent of women and nearly 2 percent of men said they experienced unwanted sexual contact. The largest increases were at the Army and Navy academies.

In response, West Point leaders took steps to get more victims to come forward. "When we saw that, we did a complete review of our strategy," Caslen said. "We went after increased reporting."

Officials moved the sexual assault reporting center to a more accessible area on campus with a private entrance. It had been in a building where students facing discipline had to go.

"I've been telling them to do that for years," said Nate Galbreath, deputy director of the Pentagon's sexual assault prevention office. "Walking into the building where lots of people who are getting in trouble go, that is a real disincentive for people to come forward and make a report."

West Point also loosened regulations forcing cadets to publicly report sexual assaults. Now they can seek help anonymously without filing a formal report, which many victims are reluctant to do.

Military leaders have said that an increase in sexual assault reports is good because it shows that students are aware of treatment programs and showing confidence in the system. Officials say they want to see the number of reports more closely mirror the higher levels of bad behavior suggested in their annual anonymous surveys.

The overall goal, however, is more prevention, fewer assaults and effective help for victims.

Brig. Gen. Omar Jones, the Army's public affairs chief, said this year's increase resulted from "proactive and deliberate initiatives" to help victims report incidents.

There was an overall decline in reports over the 2015-16 school year at the three academies because Army and Navy increases were offset by a sharp drop at the Air Force Academy. But the Air Force Academy's subsequent controversies raise questions about whether many victims avoided the office and didn't file reports.

Last year, the Air Force Academy released a scathing report saying its Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office suffered from infighting, rumors and shoddy record keeping. It recommended firing the director, Teresa Beasley. She resigned.

"Are there people that are out there that weren't able to make the report that they wanted to? Probably," said Galbreath. "We stopped everything and I wrote a get-well plan." It included returning to the cadets who visited the office in the past year to ensure they got the necessary help.

The Air Force Academy's superintendent, Lt. Gen. Jay Silveria, is increasing staff from five to eight. He added a separate sexual assault response coordinator for the 10th Air Wing, which includes active duty

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 48 of 52

forces nearby who had used the academy's office.

Air Force Capt. Matthew Chism, an academy spokesman, said leaders are confident they have addressed the issues in the office. He said they will "continue to scrutinize our efforts and remain transparent as we strive to develop a culture of dignity and respect at the academy."

Galbreath said he recommended all military service leaders increase oversight of sexual assault prevention offices.

There are five U.S. military academies in all. The U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut, and the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, which is in Kings Point, New York, and run by the Transportation Department, aren't included in this report.

## Trump flirts with flashy military parade long eschewed by US

By JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For generations, as America's authoritarian rivals strutted their tanks, troops and jets through main thoroughfares in dramatic displays of strength, the United States watched from afar, but did not emulate.

Widely accepted as the world's mightiest, the U.S. military has no tradition of putting itself on parade like in Russia, North Korea or China. But President Donald Trump does not often stand on tradition. So Trump's directive to the Pentagon to draft options for a massive march reverberated across Washington on Wednesday like the thud of a discharged cannon, as lawmakers and military leaders mused about the cost, the risk and the purpose.

"People will wonder, 'Well, what are they afraid of now? What are they trying to prove?'" Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton, who represents the District of Columbia in Congress, said in an interview. "We don't have to show off to make a point."

It was a critique voiced by both Democrats and Republicans the day after The Washington Post revealed Trump wants an elaborate parade this year to rival the Bastille Day celebration in Paris that made a distinct impression on him in July. Democratic Sen. Dick Durbin called it a "fantastic waste of money," while Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham told CNN that the parade risked being "kind of cheesy and a sign of weakness" if it's just about showing off military muscle.

The president did not seem deterred, although his aides rushed to downplay the notion that it was anything beyond an idea Trump had floated "in a brainstorming session" to help Americans express gratitude and pride for the military. White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said there had been no final decision. And Trump's legislative director said it was too early to even guess about potential costs, though it's assumed it would cost millions.

"We've been putting together some options. We'll send them up to the White House for a decision," said Defense Secretary Jim Mattis as reporters peppered him with questions at the White House. "The president's respect, his fondness for the military I think is reflected in him asking for these options."

In the nation's capital, officials were scrambling to identify potential implications for such a parade, such as whether D.C. streets could even accommodate heavyweight tanks and other equipment. On its official Twitter account, Washington's city council openly trolled the commander in chief, declaring that despite wintry weather, "DC Public Schools will open on time today. Sadly, the Giant Tank Parade is cancelled. Permanently."

Holmes Norton told The Associated Press that she was already preparing steps to ensure that "if Trump wants a parade, he pays for it." Still, she conceded there was little chance of blocking a parade permit from being issued, given the First Amendment right to free assembly.

Although U.S. troops commonly participate in parades on the Fourth of July and other holidays, especially those honoring veterans, the United States has never embraced raw displays of military power, such as North Korea's parading of ballistic missiles. The idea is that the world's pre-eminent military is strongest when its might is inferred, not shown off in boastful fashion or in an implicit threat to foreign powers.

"We have avoided doing this kind of display, in part to emphasize that contrast because this has been so



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 49 of 52

commonplace in authoritarian countries," said Julian Zelizer, a presidential historian at Princeton University. "For some presidents, it's sometimes a strategic act: Speak quietly while carrying a big stick," as President Theodore Roosevelt famously advised.

The last time Washington saw anything similar to what Trump is considering was in June 1991, after the Gulf War, as Americans gave veterans of Operation Desert Storm a triumphant welcome home. Some 8,000 veterans marched along with tanks that trudded down a flag-festooned Constitution Avenue as fighter planes roared over the National Mall.

Some 800,000 gathered in the crowd, the U.S. Park Police said at the time. President George H.W. Bush declared it a "great day."

Although Trump's critics argued his parade idea was rooted in a need for self-aggrandizement, the White House said it was squarely an attempt to venerate America's military. Jonny Havens, a U.S. army veteran who said he served in Iraq, called that sentiment "right on."

"I trust President Trump, Defense Department, Secretary Mattis to do it in the right way, and do it in a way that makes sense and is cost effective," Havens said.

But Shaun Theriot-Smith, another Army veteran who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, said the idea smacked "of the very things we make fun of North Korea for."

"We had bombings in Kabul just last week," Theriot-Smith said. "We're not even sure what we're intending to celebrate here. We still have wars going on that we need to fight."

Trump first publicly floated his idea last September at a meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron, as he reminisced about watching France's Bastille Day military parade. He said the two-hour parade was a "tremendous thing for France and for the spirit of France," and said he wanted one on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington on July 4 — grander than the one he saw in Paris.

When Trump first suggested the idea to top aides aboard Air Force One after the parade, staff debated the best time of year to have it, and noted the tanks in Paris had chewed up the city's pavement, throwing up chunks of concrete as they moved.

Trump, however, dismissed that concern, according to one person familiar with the conversation who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the president's thinking.

That's ok, Trump told them. We can fix the streets.

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Associated Press writers Elizabeth Kennedy, Robert Burns, Catherine Lucey, Ashraf Khalil and Jill Colvin in Washington and AP videojournalist John Mone in Houston contributed to this report.

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Reach Josh Lederman on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/joshledermanAP>

## AP count: Nearly 11.8M enroll for Obama health law in 2018

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR and KEVIN S. VINEYS, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Call it the political equivalent of a death-defying escape: former President Barack Obama's health care law pulled in nearly 11.8 million customers for 2018, despite the Republican campaign to erase it from the books.

An Associated Press count found that nationwide enrollment was about 3 percent lower than last year. California, with more than 1.5 million sign-ups, was the last state to report, announcing its numbers on Wednesday.

Sixteen states increased their enrollment from last year, according to AP's analysis. Six of those were carried by President Donald Trump in 2016, while 10 went for Democrat Hillary Clinton.

However, of the total number of people signed up this year about 6 in 10 live in states that went for Trump, according to the AP's analysis.

"If you had asked me a year ago whether enrollment for 2018 would be almost equal to 2017, I would have laughed at you," said Larry Levitt, who follows the health law for the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 50 of 52

Total enrollment remained remarkably stable despite Trump's disdain for "Obamacare," and multiple attempts by the Republican-led Congress to repeal it. The Trump administration also cut the sign-up window in half, slashed the ad budget, and suddenly stopped a major subsidy to insurers, which triggered a jump in premiums.

"The Affordable Care Act and the landmark protections and affordable coverage it provides are here to stay," House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi said in a statement.

"These results show that people recognize how important coverage is for their health and financial stability," said Kristine Grow of America's Health Insurance Plans, the industry lobby.

The Trump administration had no immediate reaction. Newly confirmed Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar is a critic of the health law but has avoided directly antagonizing Democrats over it. The White House line remains that "Obamacare" should be repealed and replaced, but Republicans in Congress don't have the votes.

Still, nearly eight years after the ACA passed, the debate isn't likely to go away. The outlook for next year is dicey. Starting in 2019, Congress has repealed the law's unpopular requirement that most people carry health insurance or risk fines from the IRS. That's expected to embolden some healthy people to go without coverage, which would raise premiums for those left behind.

People who are eligible for health law subsidies would be shielded from such increases, but those who don't get financial assistance would face another round of premium hikes.

The Trump administration is trying to address that by promoting lower-cost insurance alternatives that don't offer the comprehensive benefits available through the health law. But that also has drawbacks. If the lower-cost plans catch on with consumers, it could siphon healthy people away from the health law's comprehensive coverage.

Meanwhile, bipartisan legislation to help stabilize insurance markets across the country appears to be struggling in Congress.

Peter Lee, head of California's state-run market, says he believes insurance markets are still in jeopardy despite a good enrollment season. Overall enrollment dipped slightly in California, but the number of new customers increased.

In a recent interview, Lee said he's concerned that the federal government isn't doing enough to advertise that coverage is available at attractive rates for people with modest incomes who qualify for subsidies.

"Not promoting enrollment is a formula for higher premiums for many Americans," said Lee. A drumbeat of advertising is needed, he explained, because the pool of potential customers is constantly changing. For example, people who lose employer coverage may not know the health law offers them an option.

"If you see overall enrollment dropping that is a formula for less healthy people covered and higher premiums," said Lee. Health law enrollment peaked at 12.7 million for 2016 and has declined every year since then.

The dozen or so states running their own insurance marketplaces mostly outperformed the federal HealthCare.gov. Overall, the 39 states that use the federal website saw their enrollment slip by about 5 percent.

Eight of the states that beat last year's number of sign-ups ran their own markets. Most state markets had longer sign-up windows than HealthCare.gov and some states advertised heavily.

In fact, of the 12 jurisdictions running their own exchanges, eight gained enrollees - only California, the District of Columbia, Maryland and Vermont lagged behind 2017 levels.

## From anteaters to zebras: London Zoo counts its creatures

LONDON (AP) — Gibbons Jimmy and Yoda, Max the Eurasian eagle owl and Bhanu the lion have stood up to be counted as London Zoo conducts its annual audit of creatures big and small.

Zookeepers tallied 19,289 animals in the annual count of every mammal, bird, reptile, fish, amphibian and insect at the famous zoo.

The penguins, at least, made it easy Wednesday, lining up flipper to flipper. Some concessions are made. Ants, for example, are counted en masse.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 51 of 52

This year's event was delayed after a fire just before Christmas that killed four meerkats and an armadillo. But Mark Haben of the Zoological Society of London says the count "brought everyone together and really allowed us all to support each other, and really focus on our animal breeding for this year."

This story has been corrected to show that Jimmy and Yoda are gibbons, not Galapagos tortoises. The headline has been corrected to show that there are no armadillos at the zoo.

## Asian shares mixed in skittish trading after Wall St decline

By **YOUKYUNG LEE, AP Business Writer**

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Asian stock markets were mixed Thursday with some benchmarks erasing early morning gains. Investors remained skittish after this week's financial turmoil and overnight losses on Wall Street.

KEEPING SCORE: Tokyo's Nikkei 225 rose 0.3 percent to 21,700.94 while South Korea's Kospi jumped 0.7 percent to 2,414.26. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index rose 0.6 percent to 30,512.92, while the Shanghai Composite index lost 0.6 percent to 3,290.62. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 was flat at 5,876.30. Stocks in Taiwan were almost unchanged and Southeast Asian markets were mixed.

ANALYST'S VIEW: "Risk sentiment continues to be wobbly in markets, with U.S. equities notching a loss at the close, while Brent prices fell sharply to \$65 overnight," Mizuho Bank said in a daily commentary.

U.S. BUDGET BATTLE: Uncertainty overshadowed the fitful market recovery as Senate leaders brokered a long-sought budget agreement Wednesday that would bring the Pentagon and domestic programs an extra \$300 billion over the next two years. But both Democratic liberals and GOP tea party forces were fighting the plan, raising questions about its chances just a day before the latest government shutdown deadline.

WALL STREET: Indexes rallied in the morning, bobbed up and down for much of the day, then sank in the last few minutes of trading. Energy companies dropped along with oil prices and technology companies also declined. The Standard & Poor's 500 index lost 0.5 percent to 2,681.66. The Dow edged 0.1 percent lower to 24,893.35. The tech-heavy Nasdaq composite fell 0.9 percent to 7,051.98.

ENERGY: Oil prices have seen extended losses since the U.S. government said last week that oil production jumped. Benchmark U.S. crude lost 21 cents to \$61.58 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract dropped \$1.60, or 2.5 percent, to finish at \$61.79 a barrel on Wednesday. Brent crude, the international standard for oil prices, dropped 15 cents to \$65.36 per barrel in London. It sank \$1.35, or 2 percent, to finish at \$65.51 a barrel in the previous session.

CURRENCIES: The dollar edged up to 109.38 yen from 109.33 yen. The euro fell to \$1.2280 from \$1.2392.

## Today in History By The Associated Press.

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Feb. 8, the 39th day of 2018. There are 326 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History:

On Feb. 8, 1968, three college students were killed in a confrontation between demonstrators and highway patrolmen at South Carolina State University in Orangeburg in the wake of protests over a whites-only bowling alley. The science-fiction film "Planet of the Apes," starring Charlton Heston, had its world premiere in New York (it went into general release the following April.)

On this date:

In 1587, Mary, Queen of Scots was beheaded at Fotheringhay Castle in England after she was implicated in a plot to murder her cousin, Queen Elizabeth I.

In 1693, a charter was granted for the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg in the Virginia Colony.

In 1862, the Civil War Battle of Roanoke Island, North Carolina, ended in victory for Union forces led by Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 08, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 211 ~ 52 of 52

In 1910, the Boy Scouts of America was incorporated.

In 1922, President Warren G. Harding had a radio installed in the White House.

In 1937, during the Spanish Civil War, Malaga fell to Nationalist and Italian forces.

In 1942, during World War II, Japanese forces began invading Singapore, which fell a week later.

In 1952, Queen Elizabeth II proclaimed her accession to the British throne following the death of her father, King George VI.

In 1978, the deliberations of the Senate were broadcast on radio for the first time as members opened debate on the Panama Canal treaties.

In 1989, 144 people were killed when an American-chartered Boeing 707 filled with Italian tourists slammed into a fog-covered mountain in the Azores.

In 1992, the XVI Olympic Winter Games opened in Albertville, France.

In 1993, General Motors sued NBC, alleging that "Dateline NBC" had rigged two car-truck crashes to show that 1973-to-87 GM pickups were prone to fires in side impact crashes. (NBC settled the lawsuit the following day and apologized for its "unscientific demonstration.")

Ten years ago: Scotland Yard investigators concluded that Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto died on Dec. 27, 2007, as the result of a bomb blast, not a gunshot, a finding disputed by Bhutto supporters. A 23-year-old nursing student at Louisiana Technical College in Baton Rouge, shot and killed two other students and then herself. Novelist Phyllis A. Whitney died in Charlottesville, Virginia, at age 104.

Five years ago: A massive storm packing hurricane-force winds and blizzard conditions began sweeping through the Northeast, dumping nearly 2 feet of snow on New England and knocking out power to more than a half a million customers.

One year ago: The Senate confirmed Sen. Jeff Sessions to be attorney general, 52-47, despite fierce Democratic opposition to the Alabama Republican over his record on civil rights and immigration. Britain's House of Commons gave its final approval to a bill authorizing the government to start exit talks with the European Union, despite fears by opposition lawmakers that the U.K. was setting out on a rocky path to Brexit with a sketchy roadmap.

Today's Birthdays: Composer-conductor John Williams is 86. Newscaster Ted Koppel is 78. Actor Nick Nolte is 77. Comedian Robert Klein is 76. Actor-rock musician Creed Bratton is 75. Singer Ron Tyson is 70. Actress Brooke Adams is 69. Actress Mary Steenburgen is 65. Author John Grisham is 63. Retired NBA All-Star and College Basketball Hall of Famer Marques Johnson is 62. Actor Henry Czerny is 59. The former president of the Philippines, Benigno Aquino III, is 58. Rock singer Vince Neil (Motley Crue) is 57. Rock singer-musician Sammy Llanas (YAH'-nus) (The BoDeans) is 57. Former Environmental Protection Agency administrator Lisa P. Jackson is 56. Movie producer Toby Emmerich is 55. Actress Missy Yager is 50. Actress Mary McCormack is 49. Rock musician Keith Nelson is 49. Basketball Hall of Famer Alonzo Mourning is 48. Dance musician Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo (Daft Punk) is 44. Actor Seth Green is 44. Actor Josh Morrow is 44. Rock musician Phoenix (Linkin Park) is 41. Actor William Jackson Harper is 38. Actor Jim Parrack is 37. Folk singer-musician Joey Ryan (Milk Carton Kids) is 36. Actress-comedian Cecily Strong is 34. Rock musician Jeremy Davis is 33. Hip-hop artist Anderson.Paak is 32. Rock musician Max Grahn (Carolina Liar) is 30. Actor Ryan Pinkston is 30. Professional surfer Bethany Hamilton is 28. Actress Karle Warren is 26.

Thought for Today: "Health is the thing that makes you feel that now is the best time of the year." — Franklin P. Adams, American journalist (1881-1960).

**Riddle Answer: Rain**