

Groton Daily Independent

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

The cardboard/paper
recycling trailer at the school is

Closed

Today's Events 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.

Saturday, Feb. 10

Basketball Doubleheader with Mobridge-Pollock in Groton.

Girls JV at 2 p.m., Boys JV at 3 p.m., Girls Varsity at 4:30 p.m., Boys Varsity at 6 p.m. Also a fundraiser for Ava Tunheim.

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The Moscow Times

Editor's Note: I get an email from the Moscow Times. I find it interesting what they write over in Russia, so I thought I would share it with you as well.

After an unforgivingly cold and gray December, Moscow has been hit by the snowstorm of the century. The record snowfall threw parts of the capital into a frenzy of gridlock and congestion. Some residents were so exasperated by the snowplows and shovels that they pelted municipal workers with food. Not smart when you're facing a long winter.

Meanwhile, Moscow has been named the second worst city for traffic jams in the world. At least drivers in Los Angeles — which topped the list — get to open their sunroofs.

Russia's outlook is not much better at higher altitudes. Elon Musk successfully launched his SpaceX Falcon Heavy, reminding Moscow who is in the lead in the battle for space supremacy.

While ordinary Russians mourned the defeat online, Russia's space agency Roscosmos appeared unimpressed, dismissing the launch as a PR-stunt.

Maybe Russian cosmonauts should stop playing badminton with their Japanese colleagues and get to work.

The Russian military branded the St. Petersburg-based Fontanka.ru news site "traitors" after reporters there leaked the salary of a Russian pilot killed in Syria.

And Alexei Navalny claims to have linked Donald Trump's former campaign manager Paul Manafort to a group of scantily-clad women who barged into the opposition leader's headquarters last year. His evidence might not stand up in court, but it is certainly entertaining.

Editor's Picks

In the first installment of our Generation P project, we follow Nina, a student from Surgut, known by her friends as "techno cobra."

The Kremlin is taking measures to stop Russian hooligans from ruining its World Cup, writes Marc Bennetts.

We've lined up some of the trends of 2018: think foreign agents, Russian hip hop and downshifting. Russian media bigwigs chip in and tell us who and what to watch.

Here's an unusual peek inside Glazok, a Russian village with its very own website.

To infinity and beyond!

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Providing Obamacare Relief for South Dakotans

Obamacare premiums rose 20 percent for South Dakotans this year, and I continue to hear stories of fewer health care options and out-of-control health care costs as a result of the ill-advised Affordable Care Act. While repealing Obamacare and replacing it with a consumer-driven, truly affordable system remains a top priority for me, we continue to take meaningful steps to provide Americans relief from this law.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act helped relieve Americans from Obamacare, by including provisions to delay the Medical Device Tax and the Cadillac Tax for two years and by delaying the excise tax on health insurance plans for one year. Importantly, this legislation also repealed Obamacare's individual mandate, so that nobody will be forced to pay a tax penalty if they don't want to purchase health care coverage that they don't want or need. The individual mandate was an unpopular tax in an unpopular law that disproportionately hurt low-income families. We're glad to see it go away. We were also able to successfully repeal Obamacare's Independent Payment Advisory Board, which is a special panel of unelected bureaucrats tasked with finding savings in Medicare by rationing health services for seniors.

The Trump administration has also taken steps to give states more flexibility in administering federal mandatory spending programs. Most recently, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced it will give states more flexibility regarding work requirements for certain Medicaid beneficiaries. This will allow governors and state government leaders to shape state Medicaid policies that work best for their state rather than following rules issued by Washington bureaucrats. Already, nine states have applied for work requirement waivers to implement these new flexibilities and two waivers have been approved, including South Dakota's.

President Lyndon B. Johnson created Medicaid in 1965 as part of his War on Poverty. The intent of the program was to provide health services for low-income children, seniors in need, individuals with disabilities and pregnant mothers. It was designed to be a pathway out of poverty.

As Americans, we take care of the most vulnerable in our society—the very young, the very old and those who cannot take care of themselves. The Affordable Care Act opened up Medicaid to include healthy, able-bodied, working-age men and women, which has added to the high cost of the program. In 2015, an estimated 70 million people were enrolled in Medicaid. That is 21 percent of our entire population!

Medicaid and other mandatory spending programs like Medicare and Social Security are on an unsustainable path. In the long-term, Congress needs to reform the federal budget process so that it can exercise greater control over the sustainability of mandatory spending. In the short-term, giving states the flexibility to manage Medicaid in new, innovative ways will help make Medicaid more manageable.

These are important steps toward our goal of eliminating the unpopular aspects of Obamacare, but the fact remains that premiums are still too high, insurance companies are leaving the marketplace and millions of Americans have been forced off plans they liked. I will continue to work with my colleagues to relieve hardworking families from Obamacare's perils as we seek to make health care truly affordable and accessible for all Americans.

Business Owner Says 4-H Developed Confidence in Abilities

By Lura Roti for SDSU Extension

When Kelly (Wilkerson) Bail sold Waves of the West, her rodeo sponsor flags business, in 2016, it was with a grateful heart.

"The business supplemented our family's income and allowed me to work from home while my kids were growing up," explains Bail, 57. "I sold it because I was ready to have more time for my grandkids."

When she sold, Waves of the West, the business was more than three decades old. And, the sponsor flags Bail and a small team of seamstresses handmade, were flown in rodeo arenas across the nation and at the National Finals Rodeo.

Looking back on how her business got its start, Bail attributes her sewing skills and confidence to her years in 4-H.

She got her start sewing as a 5-year-old, making clothes for her Barbie dolls. When she was old enough to join 4-H, her mom signed her up for Mrs. Mary Ellen Murphy's 4-H sewing club, Buttons and Bows.

Murphy was an accomplished seamstress who Bail looked up to. "She was always dressed to the nines for a ranch woman - wearing wool suits with a hat and purse to match," Bail recalls.

Under the watchful eye of Murphy, as an elementary student, Bail was soon making her own clothes.

"I liked making clothes that didn't look homemade," Bail says.

When her clothing was judged, the judges would often challenge her to try a new or more difficult skill for her next project. "I learned more from the white and red ribbons than I did from the blues and purples," she says.

Later on in her 4-H career, when Mrs. Murphy was ready to retire as 4-H leader, Bail's mom, Arlene Wilkerson took over. "She spent many late night's before Dress Reviews supporting me," says Bail.

In addition to sewing skills, Bail says outside of school, 4-H was one of the few social opportunities she had. Her dad worked for Custer State Park, so the family lived in the park, nearly 20 miles from town.

"4-H got me out among people. I still have friends today that I met through 4-H," she says.

Positive feedback from judges and accumulation of blue and purple ribbons gave her confidence in her abilities. So, when the opportunity came for her to turn her hobby into a business, she was ready.

At the time, Bail was in her early 20s and working for a restaurant in Hermosa that had been asked to be a sponsor of Hart Ranch RV & Camping Resort evening rodeos.

"My boss said he needed a sponsor flag, so I said, 'why don't you let me try to make one for you.' Others saw my flag and started hiring me. Pretty soon, I was hired by the Hart Ranch to make all their sponsor flags. Then Sutton Rodeo got my name and my business snowballed from there," Bail says.

Although she sold her business, Bail continues to sew. Only, today, when Bail sits down to her machine, it's to make blankets for her 12 grandchildren or for those in need.

Bail is among a group of seamstresses from the tri-state area who make reusable feminine products for women in Ethiopia.

More about South Dakota 4-H

SDSU Extension's 4-H Youth Development Program is a partnership of federal (USDA), state (Land Grant University), and county resources through youth outreach activities of SDSU Extension. Youth learn and experience Leadership, Health and Wellness, Science and Ag-Vocacy through a network of professional staff and volunteers reaching more than 9,000 enrolled members with yearly programming efforts to an additional 35,000 youth participants.

To learn more, contact your local SDSU Extension 4-H Youth Program Advisor. A complete listing can be found at www.iGrow.org under Field Staff icon.

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Groton Kiwanis Club

Lee Schinkel introduced his guest, Pastor Young, of the Emmanuel Lutheran Church, at the beginning of last week's Kiwanis Club dinner meeting.

Tom Mahan then introduced his guest, Josh Bowen, Aberdeen. Josh spoke on the various financial planning, offered at Ameri-prise Financial.

Reports were given on the very successful pancake brunch. GHS robotics team was a great asset, again.

Thanks much, Jim Lane and your team.

Rip 'n Ravel

The Rip 'n Ravel CFEL Extension Club met on February 5th at Marie Sternhagens'. Eight members were present. Vice President Carol Osterman presided. Pledges and the Creed were recited. Members were encouraged to attend the legislative Cracker Barrel Sessions on February 10th and February 24th at Northern State University at 10 am. March 6th the Club will tour the new K.O. Lee Aberdeen public Library at 2pm and then be hosted by Merry Jo Ball. Easter Baskets and stuff to fill them are to be assembled that day also. Upcoming Events: April Area III Meeting at Zion Lutheran -Aberdeen; April 24th Spring Council Meeting and Recognition Tea at Brown County Courthouse basement. May 1st reading reports due. Maralyn Hoops gave a report on February 3rd Cracker Barrel Session and then gave Us the Bill O'Reilly U.S. Citizenship Quiz.



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

***Farmers Union's**

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

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Week 5 Legislative Report by Jason Frerichs

Increased use of homegrown ethanol throughout our state and nation highlights the recent resolutions approved by the South Dakota Legislature. I am proud to have been the prime sponsor on two resolutions that have been successful in the South Dakota Legislature to put the state fleet of vehicles on premium 30% ethanol fuel and challenging the Clean Air Act to include mid-range ethanol blends. HCR 1004, which received solid support in the House and unanimous support in the Senate, asks the Governor to put the State Fleet on premium E30 fuel. Recently, municipalities and counties in northeast South Dakota have put their Public Safety and Road Departments' fleets on premium E30, realizing a savings of at least \$10,000 in each local government. Saving precious taxpayer dollars, along with the use of our homegrown fuel in our state, are two awesome rewards to putting government vehicle fleets on premium E30. SCR 12 is the resolution I brought forward to challenge the Environmental Protection Agency to update the Clean Air Act to allow for mid-range ethanol fuel in standard automobiles. When we increase the level of ethanol in gasoline, it creates more power for our vehicles and has cleaner emissions. I am proud to share that my fellow Senators gave unanimous approval to SCR 12.

I brought SB 138 on behalf of local economic development leaders to try to retain 50% of the new wind energy development taxes for school districts. The bill was heard in the Senate Commerce and Energy Committee where schools, wind energy association, and fellow legislators joined with me to try to correct this problem of tax distribution. Under the current law, after 10 years the local school districts must forfeit their new wind energy development taxes. After worthwhile questions and fruitful discussion, SB 138 was defeated by one vote in the committee.

SB 158 is a bill I was proud to bring forward with bipartisan support to transfer \$6 million each year from the State Highway Fund to the Local Government Bridge Improvement Grant Program. There are over \$240 million worth of bridge projects that must be addressed at the local level and this increase in funding was an attempt to assist counties with replacing these dilapidated bridges more quickly. I was disappointed in the Senate Local Government Committee because industry groups complained that this would hurt state projects, and they don't think any more funding should transfer to this state-administered program. Currently \$9-11 million of extra revenues are flowing into our State Highway Fund and SB 158 would have shared a portion of that windfall. Majority party members on the committee chose to protect state roads over county bridges and the bill went down.

I am pleased to work with the conservation districts to bring HB 1119 which will allow county governments to declare more agriculture land areas available for the buffer strip tax reduction program. This voluntary program has been successful by giving a property tax reduction to the 120 feet area around lakes and streams. HB 1119 received unanimous support in the House and now I will carry the legislation forward in the Senate.

Nonmeandered water legislation and the SDSU Precision Agriculture building are two areas of state policy that affect agriculture and will be decided this legislative session. SB 199 was heard in our Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee for a three-hour hearing. Both sides were given the opportunity to explain their wishes dealing with the public access to non-meandered lakes. SB 199 is a bill brought forward by legislators who feel the pendulum should swing in the favor of sportsmen and women. I don't support the plan in SB 199 because I feel we have addressed many of those issues with our current law that was approved during the special session in June of 2017. If the proponents of SB 199 would bring forward one or two areas that could be updated with the current law, I feel their mission would be easier, but I don't think there will be adequate support in the full Senate to debate SB 199. I still remain open to ideas from both landowners and outdoors enthusiasts on how we can improve the current law. The Precision Agriculture building proposed for South Dakota State University continues to gain more support in private donations along with possible state funding sources. I whole-heartedly support the project of combining agriculture engineering and plant science together for the first-in-the-nation program focused on precision agriculture. The state funding for the Precision Agriculture project will not come from the general fund, so I want to reassure everyone that this will not compete with K-12 education or Medicaid funding. I am proud to work with fellow legislators, agriculture organizations, and SDSU to finalize a bonding plan to build this facility.

Please keep in touch on the issues, and feel free to contact me at Jason.Frerichs@sdlegislature.gov or 949-2204. We will have a cracker barrel session in Wilmot at The Cafe on February 17th at 10am. All are welcome to join in the discussion on current legislation. Thank you.

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GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

School Board Meeting February 12, 2018 – 7:00 PM – GHS Conference Room

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of minutes of January 8, 2018 school board meeting as drafted or amended.

2. Approval of January 2018 Financial Report, Agency Accounts, and Investments

3. Approval of January 2018 School Transportation Report

4. Approval of January 2018 School Lunch Report

5. Approval of North Central Special Education Co-Op (NCSEC) agenda items...as fiscal agent.

6. Approval of January District bills for payment.

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.

2. Consideration of district sponsorship of SD High School Clay Target League as a club sport for the spring of 2018.

3. Program Overview Presentations

a. Mathematics.....D. Johnson, J. Kjellsen

b. Social Sciences...S. Wanner, S. Thorson, M. Johnson

4. School Board Committee Reports:

a. Building, Grounds, & Transportation: Clint Fjelstad, Merle Harder

b. Personnel, Policy, & Curriculum: Deb Gengerke, Kara Pharis

c. Negotiations: Steve Smith, Grant Rix, Marty Weismantel

5. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Present Certificates of Appreciation in honor of South Dakota School Board Recognition Week.

2. Review and approve FY2017 School District Audit.

3. Approve proposal from Digi Security for installation of facility access controls and security cameras at Groton Area Elementary.

4. Approve Request for Proposal for Copiers and Managed Print Services.

5. Set fee for summer 2018 driver's education.

6. Discussion and possible adoption of 2018-2019 school calendar.

7. Approve resignation/early retirement of Meri Erickson, Special Education Teacher, effective at the conclusion of the 2017-18 contract with request for summer checks to be paid in June.

8. Approve resignation/early retirement of Cara Dennert, Computer Technology Teacher, at the conclusion of the 2017-18 contract with request for summer checks to be paid in June.

9. Approve resignation of Tara Arntsen, Math Teacher, effective at conclusion of 2017-18 contract.

10. Approve resignation of Brian Schuring, Athletic Director, effective at the conclusion of the 2017-2018 contract.

11. Approve Open Enrollment #18-19 (grade 9) from the Aberdeen School District.

12. Executive Session pursuant SDCL 1-25-2(1) for personnel issues including Superintendent Evaluation.

13. Issue administrative contracts for 2018-2019 school year with terms to be negotiated at a later date.

ADJOURN

Air Force Colonel Says 4-H Livestock Taught Her Valuable Leadership and Life Lessons

By Lura Roti for SDSU Extension

Traversing the globe on deployments for the U.S. Air Force, Ericka (Meligan) Flanigan's thoughts often reflect on moments spent in the Stanley County 4-H Achievement Days showing.

"Showmanship taught me to give my best - even when I was tired. Showmanship was always the last event of the day, so I would have already shown 20-head of sheep and then, I had to do my best. That mentality has gotten me through several deployments," explains the Vice Wing Commander of the 70th Intelligence Surveillance Reconnaissance Wing.

With 6000 service men and women answering to her, lives depend upon Flanigan's ability to be at her best and confidently make tough decisions - whether she is stationed in a combat zone or in her office at Fort George Meade, Maryland.

"I think about 4-H judging almost every day - honestly, whether making million-dollar decisions or mission critical choices. I need to think about what makes one decision better than the next," Flanigan says. "Whether it was livestock, horticulture or arts and crafts, 4-H judging contests gave me the ability to look at options and make a good decision."

Oral reasons have also come in handy, she adds. "I need to be able to back up my decisions."

Flanigan became a member of the Country Coyotes 4-H Club when she was just 8. Even before she was old enough to join, her mom and dad, Ray and Iris, served as the club's leaders. They were both 4-H alumni and eager share the benefits of involvement in the project-based organization with Stanley County youth. It didn't take long for Flanigan to become involved in every aspect of 4-H - showing horses, sheep, cattle, giving illustrated talks, serving as a club officer and competing in 4-H Rodeo.

"I did everything," she recalls. "I still have all my ribbons and buckles."

She says that the journey to those awards taught her valuable lessons and developed her into the leader she is today. "In 4-H, no matter what project you do, you have to drive yourself. I loved showing, but every year, I began at zero, with a wild heifer and I had to work to train her to lead. It was not easy, but my end goal was to be in that show ring and absolutely be able to show her. 4-H taught me the value of meaningful labor," says Flanigan, who draws several other parallels between her Air Force career and 4-H.

She lists leadership, competition and recognition for good work as some of the similarities that converted a college elective into a 23-year career.

"ROTC was a hybrid of things I had done in 4-H," says the Speech Communications graduate of South Dakota State University. "Being involved in ROTC really gave my college life a lot of meaning."

Following graduation, Flanigan's first Air Force assignment was teaching ROTC classes and developing programming on the campus of SDSU. From there, Lieutenant Flanigan entered the intelligence career field.

Today, Colonel Flanigan credits hard work, dedication and the selfless service of her parents and many other 4-H volunteer mentors with providing her with the strong foundation necessary to climb military ranks.

"Every rank takes a lot of work - there is a lot of blood and sweat behind every rank. 4-H made me tough. It also fostered teamwork," Flanigan says. "In 4-H there were so many times when I had more than one animal in the same class and I would need another 4-H member to help me show. They would help me because they knew that I would help them when they needed it. It's the same way here (in the Air Force.)"

More about South Dakota 4-H

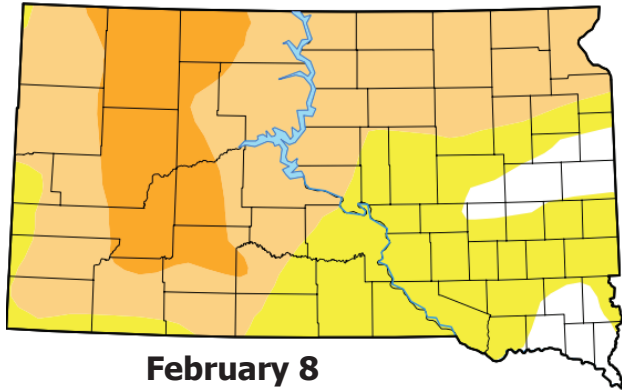
SDSU Extension's 4-H Youth Development Program is a partnership of federal (USDA), state (Land Grant University), and county resources through youth outreach activities of SDSU Extension. Youth learn and experience Leadership, Health and Wellness, Science and Ag-Vocacy through a network of professional staff and volunteers reaching more than 9,000 enrolled members with yearly programming efforts to an additional 35,000 youth participants.

To learn more, contact your local SDSU Extension 4-H Youth Program Advisor. A complete listing can be found at www.iGrow.org under Field Staff icon.

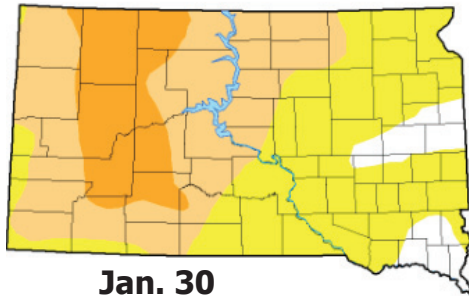
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Drought Monitor









February 8

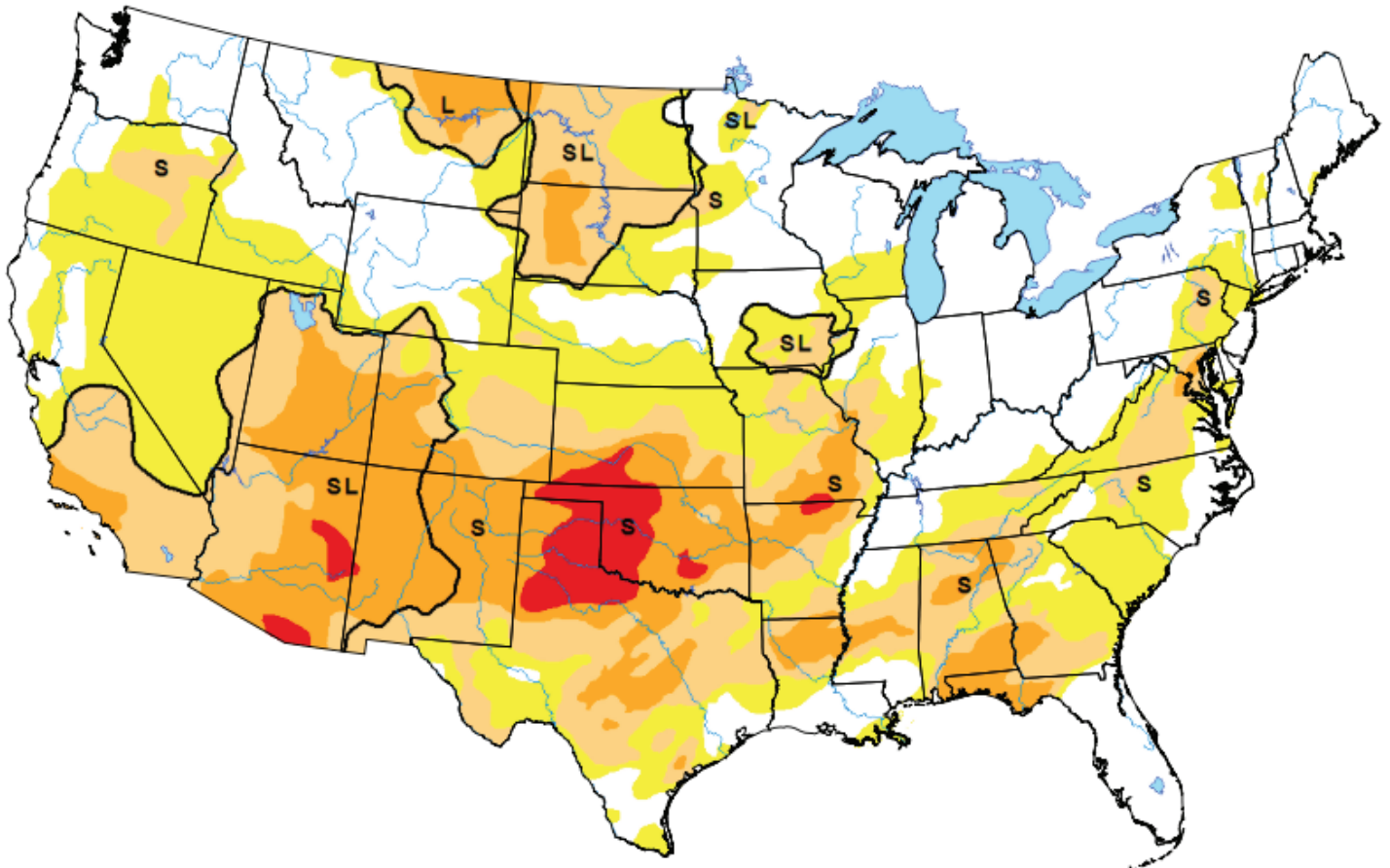


Jan. 30

Additional snow in the north and west contrasted with increasingly dry conditions in southern and eastern portions of the region. A continuation of the recent unsettled weather pattern in northeastern Colorado (30-day surplus of 1-2 inches, liquid equivalent) supported the reduction of Moderate Drought (D1). Conversely, a lack of precipitation over the past 90 days coupled with input from experts in the field led to an expansion of D1 in northeastern South Dakota and southeastern North Dakota. Of particular concern is this winter's subpar snowfall to date; winter snowfall is important for agriculture (providing runoff to refill stock ponds, protects winter wheat from temperature extremes, provides topsoil moisture) and serves as early spring water supply for ecosystems as the snowmelt season approaches.

Intensity:

-  None
-  D0 (Abnormally Dry)
-  D1 (Moderate Drought)
-  D2 (Severe Drought)
-  D3 (Extreme Drought)
-  D4 (Exceptional Drought)



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Today in Weather History

February 9, 1899: Extreme cold blanketed most locations east of the Rocky Mountains during the first half of February. For South Dakota, the minimum temperature was the lowest that has been experienced for many years, at least, and probably since its settlement. The week ending the 13th of February, the Weather Bureau stated: "With respect to temperature, this week is probably the most remarkable in the history of the Weather Bureau, over the greater part of the country east of the Rocky Mountains a large number of stations reporting the lowest temperatures recorded since their establishment. Over the whole region, extending from the eastern Rocky Mountain slope to the Atlantic coast and from the Gulf to the Great Lakes, the average daily deficiency exceeded 20 degrees and ranged from 30 degrees to 35 degrees over an extensive area embracing the central valleys and portions of the Lake Region." The cold weather that culminated in the extremes, in South Dakota, began on January 26th and continued with little abatement over most of the state, until February 12th. During the first twelve days of February the daily average temperatures, at the Weather Bureau stations ranged from zero to 27 degrees below zero.

Some low-temperature readings from February 8th through the 12th include:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| -29 in Spearfish on the 11th | -30 in Yankton on the 11th |
| -34 in Milbank on the 9th | -34 in Rapid City on the 11th |
| -35 in Aberdeen on the 8th and 12th | -36 in Chamberlain on the 9th |
| -36 in Waubay on the 8th | -37 in Ipswich on the 8th |
| -38 in Watertown on the 11th | -39 in Mellette on the 11th |
| -39 in Mitchell on the 11th | -39 in Pierre on the 12th |
| -39 in Wessington Springs on the 9th | -40 in DeSmet on the 10th |
| -40 in Highmore on the 12th | -42 in Gann Valley on the 8th |
| -40 in Redfield on the 9th | -42 Sioux Falls on the 9th |

February 9, 1994: Widespread record cold occurred across central, north central, and northeast South Dakota as well as west central Minnesota. Record lows were set at Aberdeen, Mobridge, Pierre, Sisseton, Timber Lake, and Wheaton. Overnight lows were in the 30s to 40s below zero across the entire area. Aberdeen fell to 45 degrees below zero or one degree off the all-time record low of 46 degrees below zero. Mobridge dropped to 38 degrees below zero and Pierre fell to 35 degrees below zero. Watertown came just one degree short of their daytime record with 35 degrees below zero.

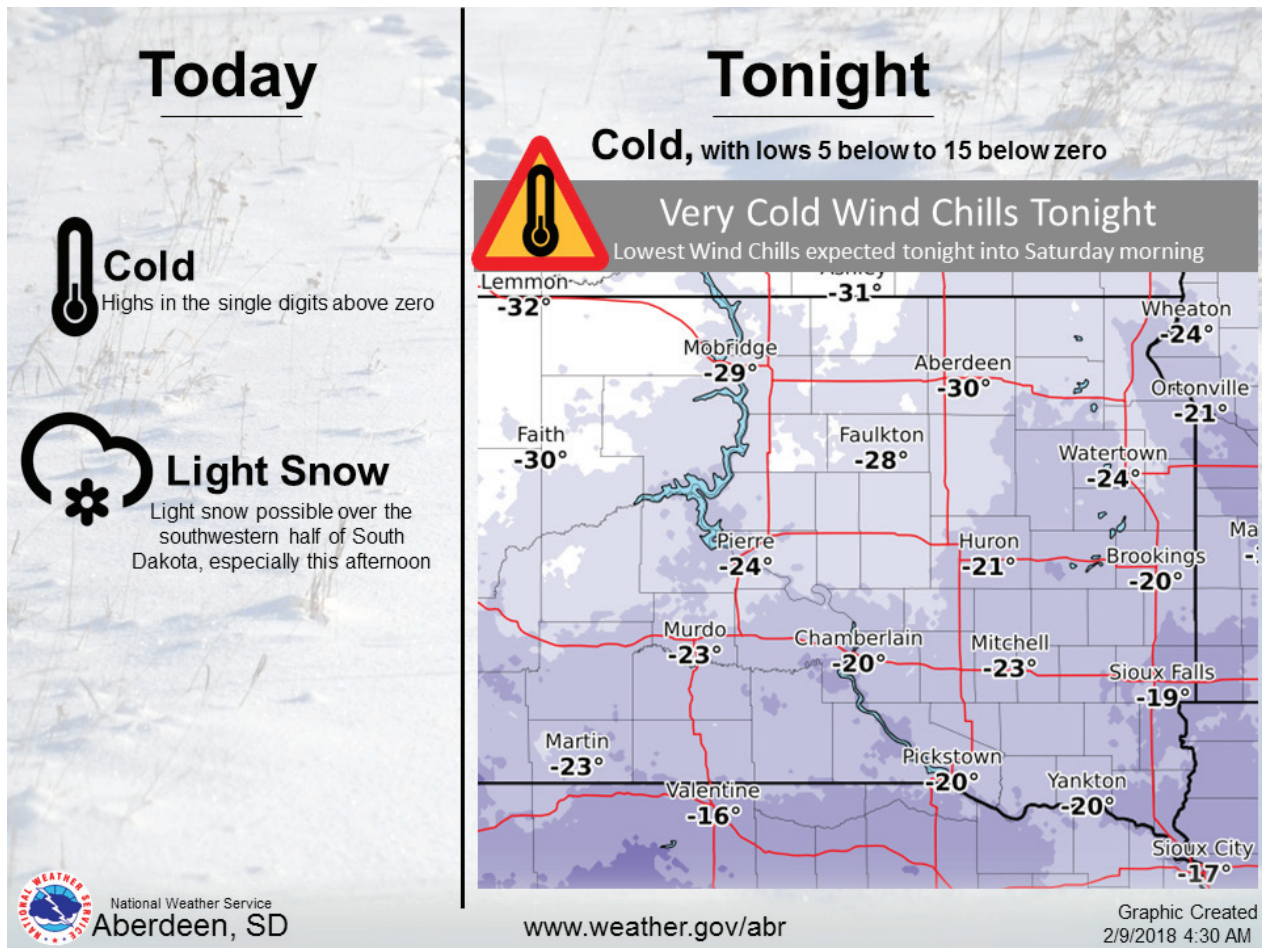
1870: The U.S. Congress authorized the War Department to take weather observations at key marine ports, assigning this function to the Army Signal Service. The intention was to provide advanced warning of storm systems that could adversely affect marine interests. This service was the forerunner to the current National Weather Service.

1899: One of the most significant cold outbreaks to ever impact the United States occurred in early to mid-February. From the 8th-11th the statewide average temperature across Iowa was 14.6 degrees below zero making it the coldest four-day stretch on record in the state. On the 8th Sioux City experienced their coldest day on record with a daily average temperature of 24 degrees below zero, then on the 11th, they reached their second-coldest temperature on record with a low of minus 31. Overall the coldest readings were obtained on the morning of the 9th when reported low temperatures included -21 at Keokuk, -23 at Des Moines, -33 at New Hampton, -35 at Le Mars, -38 at Estherville, and -40 at Sibley. The cold across the middle of the country was so extreme and persistent that ice floes down the Mississippi River all the way into the deep south, emerging into the Gulf of Mexico near New Orleans on February 17th. This has happened only one other time: February 13, 1784. The temperature dropped to 63 degrees below zero at Norway House, Manitoba Canada setting the province's low-temperature record.

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| Fri Feb 9 | Sat Feb 10 | Sun Feb 11 | Mon Feb 12 | Tue Feb 13 | Wed Feb 14 | Thu Feb 15 |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | | | | | | |
| 8°F | 14°F | 20°F | 17°F | 22°F | 30°F | 23°F |
| -13°F | -2°F | -2°F | 1°F | 8°F | 8°F | 3°F |
| N 8 MPH | WSW 10 MPH | WSW 10 MPH | E 11 MPH Precip 30% | SW 10 MPH | NW 10 MPH | NNW 10 MPH |



Published on: 02/09/2018 at 4:35AM

Highs will only be in the single digits above zero today, with light snow falling off and on over the southwest half of South Dakota. Cold high pressure continues to sink into the region from the northwest, with very cold wind chills returning overnight through late Saturday morning.

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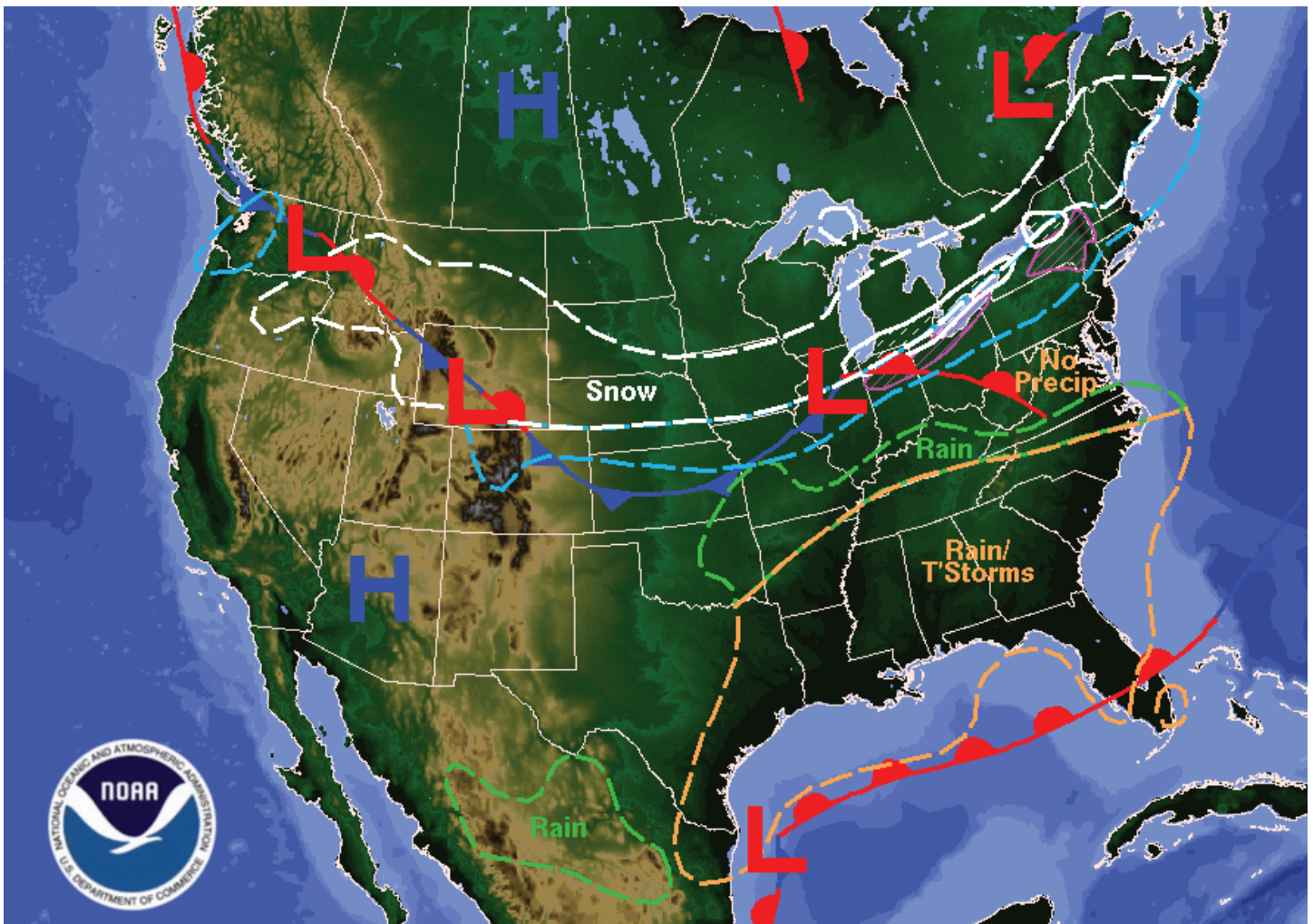
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 9.2 F at 3:21 PM
Low Outside Temp: -2.8 F at 4:52 AM
Wind Chill:
High Gust: 18.0 Mph at 6:17 PM
Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 53° in 1977
Record Low: -45° in 1994
Average High: 26°F
Average Low: 5°F
Average Precip in Feb: 0.14
Precip to date in Feb: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.61
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:52 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:42 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Fri, Feb 09, 2018, issued 8:05 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Mcreynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

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

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"NOT HERE FOR VERY LONG"

A soldier wrote his dad from a combat zone in a war-torn country. In the upper left hand corner under his name he wrote, "Not Here for Very Long."

True of the soldier – true of each of us. Life at its longest is very short in light of eternity. Wisely Moses advised us to go to God and ask Him to: "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."

Time has no favorites. We are each given twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week and fifty-two weeks a year. It does not matter who we are or what God has called us to do, none of us can add one second of time to our lives once God has called us home. We must guard our time and use it wisely to honor and glorify Him.

Time can be used to influence others – one way or another. It would be interesting to keep a record of our time as an accountant does money – what we spent and how we invested it. We could see what we did with our time and discover whether or not we helped or hindered others, led them closer to God or drove them from Him.

Time gives us opportunities to serve the Lord. Jesus said, "All of us must quickly carry out the tasks assigned by the One who sent Me and there is little time left before night falls and all our works come to an end."

Our time on earth begins with an interview with God. Each of us will stand before God one day and have an opportunity to review our record with Him. What will matter most is whether or not there will be a day when we surrendered our life to Him.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to make the most of each moment. May we use this priceless gift to do Your work. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 90:12 So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.

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2018 Groton SD Community Events

- Groton Lion's Club Bingo- Wednesday Nights 6:30pm at the Groton Legion (Year Round)
- 11/18/2017-3/31/2018 Groton Lion's Club Wheel of Meat- Saturday Nights 7pm at the Groton Legion (Fall/Winter Months)
- 1/28/2018 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm
- 3/24/2018 Easter Egg Hunt (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 4/13/2018 Elementary School Carnival, 5 p.m.
- 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

Man found dead in Box Elder highway median

BOX ELDER, S.D. (AP) — Sheriff's officials think a man found dead in a highway median in Box Elder is the victim of a hit-and-run accident.

The Pennington County Sheriff's Office says the man was found in the median on Highway 14-16 on Thursday. They believe the man was in his early 20s or late teens and possibly of Native American descent. Investigators are trying to track down the driver and vehicle involved.

Audit may shed light on murder-suicide motive

LENNOX, S.D. (AP) — A workplace audit may shed light on the motive behind a murder-suicide in southeastern South Dakota that resulted in the deaths of a man, woman and young boy.

Lincoln County officials say the shooting last September in Lennox remains under investigation. Authorities are waiting for a months-long audit of Stephanie Hoover's employer before releasing more information.

Investigators believe she fatally shot her husband, Rob Hoover, and an 8-year-old child before turning the gun on herself. Relatives tell the Argus Leader the 8-year-old boy who was killed was the Hoovers' son. Authorities say the results of the audit should be completed by the end of this month or early next month.

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

South Dakota, Sisseton-Wahpeton tribe team up on drug fight

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The state of South Dakota and the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate are teaming up to fight illegal drugs.

Attorney General Marty Jackley says the state and tribe have signed a joint powers agreement that paves the way for coordinated drug enforcement efforts on the reservation.

Jackley and tribal Chairman Dave Flute say the goal is to significantly diminish the manufacture, distribution and use of illegal drugs.

Large agriculture conference switching Dakotas next year

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — The Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society is moving its winter conference from South Dakota to North Dakota next year.

The American News reports the annual event has been held in Aberdeen since 2013, but it's outgrown the hotel where it's been held. Next year it's being moved to Fargo.

This year's late-January conference drew 580 people, 55 vendors and a number of speakers. Society officials say there were issues with dining areas, vendor space and workshop space.

Aberdeen Convention and Visitors Bureau Executive Director Casey Weismantel says the group unsuccessfully tried to keep the conference in the city. He says its loss will mean a significant economic hit for Aberdeen.

The nonprofit society promotes sustainable food systems. People from as far as Minnesota, Wisconsin and Canada attend the winter conference.

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

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Obama-backed committee targeting races in 11 states

By JULIE CARR SMYTH, Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — A Democratic group backed by former President Barack Obama said this week it plans to invest millions of dollars in state-level elections in 11 states this year, with its heaviest focus on Ohio.

The National Democratic Redistricting Committee, led by former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, said this year's election cycle is critical to affecting the congressional redistricting process. It is the first cycle whose winners will participate in drawing congressional maps for the decade starting in 2021.

The push comes amid bipartisan national concern that political gerrymandering, the process of drawing maps that benefit one party over another, has led to partisanship, gridlock and incivility in Washington.

"In 2011, Republicans created gerrymandered districts that locked themselves into power and shut out voters from the electoral process," Holder said in announcing the group's electoral targets on Wednesday. "By focusing on these state and local races, we can ensure Democrats who will fight for fairness have a seat at the table when new maps are drawn in 2021."

The group is targeting races in 11 states, including nine gubernatorial races, 18 legislative chambers, two ballot initiatives and two down-ballot races. Eight more states are on the committee's watch list.

In Ohio, a perennial political battleground, the committee plans to support Democrats for five offices — governor, auditor, secretary of state, Ohio Senate and Ohio House — as well as pushing a redistricting ballot measure.

Other target races include:

- Colorado: Governor, state Senate
- Florida: Governor, state Senate
- Georgia: Governor, state Senate
- Michigan: Governor, state Senate, state House, ballot initiative
- Minnesota: Governor, state Senate, state House
- Nevada: Governor, state Senate, state House
- North Carolina: State Senate, state House
- Pennsylvania: Governor, state Senate, state House
- Texas: State Senate, state House
- Wisconsin: Governor, state Senate

The group also participated in the Virginia House last year, and has targeted both its House and Senate in 2019.

On its watch list are ballot initiatives in Arizona, Missouri, South Dakota and Utah; the governor's and state Senate races in Maine; and the governor's, state Senate and state House races in New Hampshire.

Ohio Gov. John Kasich, a Republican, also has been championing redistricting reforms, including working with fellow Republican, movie star and ex-California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's Terminate Gerrymandering Crowdpc.

Ohio lawmakers sent a bipartisan redistricting compromise to the statewide May ballot in a vote this week.

Thursday's Scores

By The Associated Press

BOYS BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Christian 72, Eureka/Bowdle 41
Beresford 61, Garretson 54
Brandon Valley 64, Brookings 50
Clark/Willow Lake 62, Aberdeen Roncalli 61
Dell Rapids St. Mary 64, Elkton-Lake Benton 54
DeSmet 52, Deubrook 42
Freeman Academy/Marion 72, Centerville 49

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Hanson 56, Mitchell Christian 42
Hitchcock-Tulare 38, Iroquois 31
Ipswich 74, Edmunds Central 45
Leola/Frederick 78, Oakes, N.D. 61
Miller 83, Wessington Springs 51
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 53, Ethan 45
Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 58, Lake Preston 56
Potter County 56, Faulkton 43
Red Cloud 70, Hot Springs 55
Sioux Falls Christian 70, Western Christian, Hull, Iowa 67
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 65, Bishop Heelan Catholic, Sioux City, Iowa 62
Spearfish 73, Custer 58
Waubay/Summit 46, Waverly-South Shore 42
White River 75, Stanley County 40
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS
Bison vs. Harding County, ccd.
Canistota vs. Menno, ppd. to Feb 19.
Corsica/Stickney vs. Freeman, ppd. to Feb 12.
Kimball/White Lake vs. Burke/South Central, ppd.
Lemmon vs. Flasher, N.D., ppd.
West Central vs. Bon Homme, ppd. to Feb 12.

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Christian 50, Eureka/Bowdle 42
Aberdeen Roncalli 69, Clark/Willow Lake 50
Beresford 58, Garretson 39
Brookings 53, Brandon Valley 50
Colman-Egan 40, Arlington 30
Florence/Henry 61, Great Plains Lutheran 30
Freeman 48, Parkston 47
Hamlin 45, Redfield/Doland 23
Hitchcock-Tulare 65, Iroquois 15
Lennox 63, Pipestone, Minn. 36
Milbank 69, Britton-Hecla 34
Miller 52, Wessington Springs 24
Pierre 56, Huron 42
Pine Ridge 91, Little Wound 61
Scotland 59, Bridgewater-Emery 56
Spearfish 59, Custer 46
Tiospa Zina Tribal 58, Deuel 41
Tri-Valley 54, Baltic 27
Waubay/Summit 50, Waverly-South Shore 34
White River 62, Stanley County 27
Dakota Plains Invitational
Oelrichs 51, Freeman Academy/Marion 50
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS
Mitchell Christian vs. Gayville-Volin, ppd.
Platte-Geddes vs. Winner, ppd. to Feb 12.
West Central vs. Bon Homme, ppd. to Feb 12.

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Jenkins' 31 points helps S. Dakota St. hold off Denver 81-77

DENVER (AP) — David Jenkins Jr., tied a career-high with 31 points, Mike Daum had a double-double and South Dakota State beat Denver 83-75 on Thursday night.

Daum finished with 13 points and 13 rebounds. Jenkins also scored 31 points in a 112-103 double overtime loss to Colorado in Boulder on Dec. 15. The Jackrabbits (21-6, 9-1 Summit League) have won four straight and 12 of their last 13.

Jenkins' 3-pointer made it 17-9 early and South Dakota State went to intermission up 45-31.

The Jackrabbits pushed the lead to 53-33 before Denver (10-14, 4-6) started whittling away. Jake Pemberton's 3 made it 69-61 with 2:35 left, and Daniel Amigo made 1 of 2 foul shots to make it a four-point game with 14 seconds left but the Pioneers couldn't get closer.

Reed Tellinghausen added 16 for South Dakota State.

Amigo, Jake Krafka and Ade Murkey each scored 14 points for Denver.

South Dakota dominates Fort Wayne in 86-69 victory

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — Triston Simpson and Matt Mooney each scored 17 points and South Dakota defeated Fort Wayne 86-69 on Thursday night in a game in which the Coyotes never trailed.

South Dakota (21-6, 9-2 Summit League) built an 11-0 lead in the first three minutes and cruised from there. Bryson Scott put Fort Wayne on the board with a free throw and a layup before South Dakota went on a 10-0 run, including a pair of 3-pointers by Brandon Armstrong, to make it 21-3.

The Coyotes led 45-23 at intermission and maintained a double-digit lead the entire second half. Nick Fuller scored 14 and Tyler Peterson and Tyler Hagedorn each scored 10 for the Coyotes. South Dakota shot 61 percent (36 of 59) and had 18 assists.

Scott paced Fort Wayne (16-11, 5-5) with 23 points and John Konchar scored 18 with 12 rebounds, including seven on the offensive end.

Aberdeen man sentenced for threatening woman with ax

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — An Aberdeen man who threatened a woman with an ax has been sentenced to serve 20 years in prison.

The American News reports that 39-year-old Timothy Johnson pleaded guilty to charges in multiple cases including felony domestic abuse aggravated assault, violations of a no contact order and misdemeanor simple assault.

One of the assault charges stemmed from a July 1, 2017, incident in which Johnson was accused of throwing a woman on a bed, picking up an ax and swinging it at the bed frame.

He was arrested in August following a foot pursuit with law officers through a mall.

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

South Dakota bison herds injured after winter wildfires

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — None of the bison in Custer State Park and Bear Butte State Park were killed outright by winter wildfires, but some may have to be euthanized because of burns or other injuries.

Custer State Park's Herd Manager Chad Kremer told the Rapid City Journal that no bison herd deaths were reported from the direct flames of the Legion Lake wildfire that burned almost 85 square miles. But he said one cow was euthanized after smoke damage left the animal blind.

"We had quite a few with the smoke and heat affecting their eyes, they weren't completely blind, couldn't see definition, just light and dark," he said.

Kremer said other bison had injuries from their outer, thicker coat being burned off and burns on their backside, underbelly, eyelids, muzzle and lips.

He estimated between five and 10 bison may need to be euthanized because of injuries.

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Kremer's personal herd near the park wasn't able to escape the flames as easily. He said he has lost seven bison to the blaze and he'll know within weeks if up to 10 others have to be euthanized because of their injuries.

The Bear Butte State Park herd was spared from a fire last weekend.

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

Daugaard: 8-year term limits for legislators too short

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard says if it were up to him, state legislators would be able to serve longer before term limits kick in.

The state constitution restricts legislators to four consecutive terms in the House or Senate, but lawmakers can switch chambers when they hit term limits. Daugaard says 8-year limits are too short.

The Republican said Thursday that if he were writing brand new rules, he'd give lawmakers 12 years total without the ability to switch chambers. He says it would give lawmakers a chance to develop relationships and institutional knowledge.

A legislative panel recently rejected a plan to extend legislators' terms to four years.

Daugaard says he wouldn't run this year for a third term as governor even if term limits allowed. He says it's time for people with new ideas.

Governors say Interior Department shift didn't include them

By DAN ELLIOTT, Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — A bipartisan group of 19 Western governors said Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke did not consult with them about major plans for reorganizing the agency, and have asked him to delay implementing the proposal until he speaks with them.

The Feb. 1 letter from the Western Governors Association said the group had asked Zinke in April 2017 to be consulted on any reshuffling of the department, which wields considerable authority over public lands in the West.

They said last week that Zinke has still not sought the views of its members, who represent every state in the western half of the nation, from Texas to Hawaii.

Zinke, who was a Republican congressman from Montana, said last month he wants to reorganize the department's regions along river basins and other natural boundaries instead of state lines. The plan also calls for all of the department's component agencies, such as the National Park Service and Fish and Wildlife Service, to use the same set of regional boundaries.

Association spokesman Joe Rassenfoss said Thursday the group had not received a response from Zinke.

Interior Department spokeswoman Heather Swift said the governors "are welcome to share their ideas and opinions with the secretary or their staff are also encouraged to reach out to the secretary's staff."

That did not satisfy the association.

"Western governors expect to be treated as the chief executives of a sovereign level of government, not as stakeholders," Jim Ogsbury, executive director of the group, said Thursday in an email to The Associated Press. He said the governors want to be "authentic partners" in the process.

Zinke told the Washington Post last month that many issues the Interior Department deals with, such as a single species of fish, follow natural boundaries, not political ones.

The Interior Department oversees nearly 700,000 square miles (more than 1.8 million square kilometers) through four of its major component agencies: the Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service and Bureau of Reclamation.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs, which is also part of the Interior Department, has some responsibilities for another 103,000 square miles (about 265,000 square kilometers) of Native American land.

The Western Governors Association sent Zinke 10 questions about the reorganization plan, including why the changes were even necessary, and why all the department's units couldn't have the same regions

based on state boundaries.

The governors pointed out that under Zinke's plan, some states would be divided among two or three of the new regions. They asked how that would affect the department's ability to coordinate with states.

The association's letter was signed by its chairman, South Dakota Republican Gov. Dennis Daugaard, and its vice chairman, Hawaii Democrat David Ige. The association includes 12 GOP governors, six Democrats and one independent.

Follow Dan Elliott at <http://twitter.com/DanElliottAP>. His work can be found at <https://apnews.com/search/dan%20elliott>.

South Dakota prepares security for world archery tournament

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota police chief says security will be handled differently for the 2018 World Archery Indoor Championships than a world youth championship held about three years ago.

The NFAA Easton Yankton Archery Center is preparing to host this year's World Archery Indoor Championships next week in Yankton, where the 2015 World Archery Youth Championships were also held. The Yankton Police Department will manage security for the event.

Police Chief Brian Paulsen told the Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan that the championships will require less oversight than the youth event. He said the department is scaling back on the number of officers stationed throughout the tournament.

"With the kids, we were doing random checks at night of the hotels and being on the lookout for anything occurring out of the ordinary," said Paulsen. "We'll do some of the same things, but not with near the regularity we did with the youth tournament a couple of years ago. With adults, we'll let them experience more of the Yankton community as they want to within reason."

He said the department also received cultural diversity training for the 2015 youth championships that they hope to apply to this year's event.

"We want these visitors coming into our community to enjoy themselves and feel safe and secure at the same time," Paulsen said.

The global tournament will be held Feb. 12-20.

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

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

South Dakota barn kit maker moving to Nebraska

FREMONT, Neb. (AP) — A barn kit manufacturing company in South Dakota plans to move to eastern Nebraska, bringing at least a dozen jobs with it.

Legacy Post & Beam, of Elk Point, announced the move on Monday, The Fremont Tribune reported. The company makes kits for barns, houses, pavilions, sheds and other structures.

The company's new 13,000-square-foot facility is under construction and located in Fremont, which is about 30 miles northwest of Omaha.

"The move to Fremont will provide synergies in adding talented staff to our team, as well as within our supply chain to help us deliver the level of satisfaction our customers have come to expect," said Legacy Chief Operating Officer Tim Norris.

The facility includes covered wood storage space for increased inventory, which will allow for faster production time. Norris said the company also is planning to carry more specialty items such as mantels, live edge beams, and custom furniture pieces.

Legacy General Manager Brian Wiese said the move was necessary because of the company's growth over the last few years.

"As our reputation for excellence has spread and demand for post and beam construction has risen, we have been fortunate to experience significant growth," Wiese said. "Our new office and manufacturing space offers a more efficient layout for post and beam construction. We also have ample room for continued growth, which was important to us as we poised ourselves for the future."

The company said construction on the facility is expected to be completed by the spring.

Information from: Fremont Tribune, <http://www.fremontneb.com>

Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press

Argus Leader, Sioux Falls, Feb. 2

Forward-moving Washington Pavilion has value

In hindsight, the evolution of Sioux Falls over the past quarter-century appears to have been inevitable: Our economic engine shifting from meatpacking to banking to health care. Population numbers swelling. The city core rejuvenated. A new events center finally emerging. Numerous accolades as a "best place to live."

Also inevitable were questions about whether South Dakota's largest city could embrace the arts enough to justify a publicly supported cultural center. The Washington Pavilion provides an answer.

The massive pink quartzite gem sparkles in the setting of a downtown to be proud of. It's been 25 years since Sioux Falls voters chose — narrowly — to transform the aged former Washington High School into something remarkable. It was anything but a sure bet, tagged as elitist and unnecessary by critics.

Budget-busting construction costs nearly stalled the Pavilion project at the starting line. A succession of directors over its first decade struggled to keep all four wheels down as the cultural center hemorrhaged funds. Pitchforks and torches seemed just over the horizon.

The smart double-team stewardship of interim director Larry Toll and (a few years later) Scott Peterson

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steered things back to the center and into the black. In its second decade, the Pavilion has been coming into its own.

And it's worth Sioux Falls' continued public investment. We don't need it to pay for itself wholly through ticket sales and private donations, although it does need to continue to hold up its end of the budgetary bargain. It also needs to reflect our diverse community with an array of open-door offerings.

The Pavilion has become an integral part of the fabric of our growing city, a fusion of culture, entertainment and education that continues to broaden its appeal to the many tastes of the people who help pay for it.

It is a valuable city asset akin to our parks system, one that enriches those of us who already call Sioux Falls home. It's also part of the entire package with which we hope to entice new neighbors, including those who may be accustomed to the wide array of arts amenities available in larger metro areas.

Nearly two years into his directorship, former Sioux Falls city councilor and community development director Darrin Smith is taking care not to simply coast on the momentum of his predecessors' turnaround.

The Husby Performing Arts Center continues to be the Pavilion workhorse, raking in ticket sales for Performance Series winners such as "The Book of Mormon." The number of season subscribers has tripled since 2009. Demand for the Performance Series has led to this season's expanded three-show night minimum.

The South Dakota Symphony Orchestra under Delta David Gier weaves traditional classical fare throughout its season with pop-culture delights like the recent sold-out "Video Games Live" and next month's superhero-themed "Guardians of the Symphony."

It will be important for Smith to listen closely to Pavilion members and other citizens to best determine what people want from this institution and increase its accessibility.

Daily scheduled programming with themes that change from week to week. Cooperative relationships with corporate sponsors Avera and Sanford Health to help revamp the science center. More interactive elements and family appeal to boost attendance at the Visual Arts Center.

Future progress of the Washington Pavilion — and of Sioux Falls — is anything but inevitable. But by blending "high-brow" cultural offerings with mainstream fare and keeping its offerings fresh, the symbol of our city's cultural core is worthy of our pride and support.

Capital Journal, Pierre, Feb. 2

Pierre's new City Hall may turn out great, but city leaders need to make up for the loss to downtown

Pierre's new City Hall may turn out great, but city leaders need to make up for the loss to downtown. In about six months, the new Pierre City Hall will be open for business.

This is a pretty big deal. The bids for renovation of the first floor of the building, originally built for Eagle Creek Software Services, came in even lower than originally expected. Also, we're pretty sure that city employees will appreciate the new space and the city will benefit at least for a little while from Eagle Creek's lease payments.

Pierre certainly needed a new city hall. Still, while we aren't questioning the need for a new city hall, we have some concerns about where it is located and how it came to be.

Readers may remember when, early last year, in the span of about three weeks Mayor Steve Harding broached the subject of a new city hall, proposed buying the Eagle Creek building and the city commission approved the purchase. That all happened just way too fast.

The process was flawed, to be sure, but there's also the philosophic question about moving city government out of the heart of the city. A vibrant downtown area is a hallmark of any strong community. One of the keys to a vibrant downtown is the support of city government. It's hard for city leaders to say they fully support downtown if they jump at the first chance to take all of the city's employees out of the area.

Hopefully, our city's leadership will launch a new effort or two aimed at drawing more people downtown and encouraging new development in the area to make up for the loss of city hall.

Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, Yankton, Feb. 6

South Dakota should toughen its texting law

South Dakota's motor safety laws are some of the worst in the country, according to a recent report from the Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (AHAS). In fact, they're THE worst in the country. This conclusion is based on where each state stands according to 16 optimal laws. South Dakota has only two of those 16 on the books.

But our lawmakers can do something this winter to begin addressing the matter, at least a little bit: They should make texting while driving a primary traffic offense, rather than a secondary offense.

The state's texting law, passed in 2014, currently declares that a motorist can be ticketed for texting while driving — which falls under the broader plague of distracted driving — only if the motorist is pulled over for another offense, such as speeding. The fine for a texting offense is \$100.

Thus, it's possible that motorists might ignore the law simply because they don't see it as a threat to be taken seriously.

By making the texting law a primary offense, motorists can be ticketed for texting while driving, without other circumstances needing to invite it.

Currently, South Dakota is one of just six states in the country that doesn't have a texting law as a primary offense.

We refer to distracted driving as a plague because that's exactly what it is. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, distracted driving accounted for 9 percent of all highway fatalities in 2016. More specifically, nine people are killed nationwide each day in an accident involving distracted driving.

South Dakota is not immune from this effect, even though, ironically, it had one of the lowest rates of highway fatalities in the country in 2016. In this state, the number of accidents involving distracted drivers rose 9 percent between 2014 and 2015. Also, a report issued last year indicated that South Dakota ranked No. 2 in the country in distracted driving accidents for motorists ages 19 and under.

Most of us know people or have seen people who engage in this behavior. Perhaps some of you do it, too. And perhaps you even know someone who has been injured — or killed — in an accident involving distracted driving.

The fatality statistic in the preceding paragraph could make changing the status of the texting law a tough sell in Pierre. But that would be a shortsighted argument.

Smartphones are becoming far more sophisticated and essential to communication in our digitized society. As such, their use is only going to expand. This will further tempt drivers to turn their attentions away from operating their vehicles.

Changing the law now would put South Dakota in step with confronting this reckless trend. It might also start reversing the state's overall low rating with its traffic laws.

Upgrading the texting law would send a clear message: that this is something that needs to be taken seriously by everyone.

Dusty Johnson outraises Shantel Krebs in GOP House primary

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Republican Dusty Johnson's campaign for U.S. House outraised GOP opponent Shantel Krebs in the fourth quarter of 2017.

Johnson recently reported raising more than \$116,000, while Krebs took in over \$77,000. Johnson also has a cash advantage, with about \$424,000 in the bank compared to Krebs' nearly \$362,000 cash on hand.

Johnson previously served as Gov. Dennis Daugaard's chief of staff and on the Public Utilities Commission, and Krebs now serves as South Dakota's secretary of state. Republican State Sen. Neal Tapio of Watertown announced his bid after the fourth-quarter campaign finance reporting period.

Democratic candidate Tim Bjorkman raised roughly \$56,000 for the quarter and ended it with about \$116,000 in the bank. He is a former circuit court judge.

Tribe says it's being left out of Dakota Access study

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON**, Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — One of the four American Indian tribes still fighting the Dakota Access oil pipeline in court says it's being left out of the process as federal officials work to comply with a judge's order to determine the pipeline's impact on tribal interests.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers "has been almost completely non-responsive to requests from the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe" for more information and for direct consultation, according to tribal attorney Nicole Ducheneaux.

"The tribe has been excluded from the (process) and has been denied the opportunity to provide meaningful information," she wrote in court documents this week asking U.S. District Judge James Boasberg to force the Corps "to engage in meaningful consultation" with the tribe.

Boasberg ruled last June that the Corps largely complied with federal environmental law in permitting the \$3.8 billion pipeline to move North Dakota oil through South Dakota and Iowa to Illinois. However, he ordered the Corps to do more study on some issues, including how an oil spill under Lake Oahe might impact tribal interests since the Missouri River reservoir provides water for the Dakotas tribes.

The Corps in a Feb. 1 status report filed with the court details difficulties in obtaining the "substantive information" it needs from the tribes. Letters from the tribes "generally concern the scope, timing and format of the Corps' prior information requests instead of responding with the actual information requested," Justice Department attorney Matthew Marinelli wrote.

Ducheneaux took issue with that and called the Corps' interactions with the tribe "unprofessional" and "disrespectful."

The Cheyenne River Sioux isn't the only tribe to complain about its dealings with the Corps. The Yankton Sioux Tribe in court documents filed in December said it twice received letters from the Corps requesting information from the Oglala Sioux Tribe. The Corps responded that the letters were correctly addressed to the Yankton Sioux but that the body of each letter mistakenly referenced the Oglala Sioux, "a typographical error."

Despite the issues, the Corps still expects to finish its work by early April, a timeline it first established last fall, according to Marinelli.

The pipeline built by Texas-based Energy Transfer Partners began operating last June. Boasberg is allowing oil to continue flowing while the Corps completes the additional study, though he did order the company and agency to complete an oil spill response plan for Lake Oahe.

Follow Blake Nicholson on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/NicholsonBlake>

Sheriff that led pipeline protest response to run again

MANDAN, N.D. (AP) — The county sheriff who led the law enforcement response to the Dakota Access oil pipeline protest in North Dakota says he'll seek a second term in office.

The Bismarck Tribune reports that Morton County Sheriff Kyle Kirchmeier made his announcement Thursday.

Kirchmeier first sought the sheriff's position in 2014 after 29 years with the state Highway Patrol. In 2016 and 2017 he led the response to the pipeline protests that drew thousands of people and resulted in 761 arrests over a six-month span.

Kirchmeier says some of his plans for the sheriff's office were delayed by the prolonged protest, and he wants to continue serving.

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

Native church's lawsuit spurs training for airport screeners

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, according to Sandor Iron Rope, former president of the Native American Church of North America.

His lawsuit against the Transportation Security Administration was settled last month, 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 federal law and another that allows Native Americans to possess migratory birds.

One of Iron Rope's attorneys, Forrest Tahdooahnippah, 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 who 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

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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," Tahdooahnippah said.

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

South Dakota considers ban on teaching about gender identity

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota lawmakers will consider banning public school teaching on gender identity in elementary and middle schools, a push that critics say targets transgender students in the same way some states limit the positive portrayal of homosexuality in the classroom.

The state would be the first in the nation to block instruction on gender identity or gender expression, said Nathan Smith, public policy director at GLSEN, a national group focused on safe schools for LGBTQ students. But the organization recently counted seven states with restrictions on positively portraying homosexuality in health classes, sometimes called "no-promo-homo" laws. The states are Alabama, Arizona, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Texas.

"It's maybe a little different in the way that it's crafted and maybe a little different in the way, sort of the population that it targets, but the underlying concerns are the same for us as they would be in ... a traditional 'no-promo-homo' law," Smith said. "We think that it's bad broadly for LGBTQ students in South Dakota."

LGBTQ students in states with such laws are more likely to face assault and harassment at school, and get less support from teachers and administrators, according to a GLSEN research brief.

South Dakota's bill would cover public school students from kindergarten through seventh grade. Education Department spokeswoman Mary Stadick Smith said in an email that she's not aware of gender identity being taught in schools.

Republican Sen. Phil Jensen, the sponsor, said he has constituents concerned it might become an issue in schools. Jensen said he's worried about teaching children topics that aren't age-appropriate and that students are failing to master the basics.

"I think we need to be focusing on reading, writing and arithmetic," Jensen said.

GLSEN isn't aware of any other states considering a bill like South Dakota's, Smith said. States including California, Massachusetts and Washington have moved in the opposite direction.

Washington included gender identity as an optional topic for districts to teach in recently revised health learning standards. For example, it suggests kindergarten students understand there are many ways to express gender and third graders recognize the importance of treating others with respect regarding gender identity, which is defined as someone's inner sense of their gender.

Officials had heard from teachers, parents and national health experts interested in students understanding and being aware of gender identity, said Nathan Olson, spokesman for Washington's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The Washington state office doesn't track how many districts are teaching the new "self-identity" topic, which took effect for the current school year. In California, a 2011 law mandates including disabled and LGBTQ people in history and social science lessons.

Massachusetts lawmakers in 2011 barred discrimination against public school students based on gender identity. Jeff Perrotti, director of the Massachusetts Safe Schools Program for LGBTQ Students, said some schools in the state are teaching gender identity and expression in the classroom.

Massachusetts' program, which is part of the state's education department, conducts training for school personnel about how to talk about gender identity with students, faculty and community members. Perrotti said the state's health curriculum framework will likely be updated to include the concept of gender identity.

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Mimi Lemay said the Massachusetts district where her 7-year-old transgender son, Jacob, goes to school is improving at including others as parents have pushed the issue. Lemay said a mother last year organized parents to get a basket of books about diversity in local elementary school classrooms, including "I Am Jazz," a picture book about a transgender child co-written by Jazz Jennings, a transgender YouTube personality who has a TLC show.

Teaching about gender identity is critical for transgender children, and it's important for their classmates, who will grow up accepting their peers, said Lemay, who speaks to schools and companies about making them safer spaces for LGBT people.

"Being transgender is innate. It is who you are, and learning about it in school will only make your child more compassionate and empathetic and tolerant," she said. "It's not going to make them transgender, and I think every parent wants a child who is capable of compassion and open-mindedness."

The South Dakota bill could face an obstacle in Gov. Dennis Daugaard. The Republican recently said that he doesn't "know that our standards of education are properly the subject of legislative enactments."

Daugaard in 2016 rejected a bill that would have required transgender students to use bathrooms corresponding with their sex at birth. Supporters scuttled a similar proposal last year after he threatened to do it again.

Terri Bruce, a transgender man who fought against the past bills, said the new proposal would have unintended consequences and send a message to transgender children that "they are somehow not human."

Conviction in 2014 Sioux Falls murder upheld

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Supreme Court has upheld the conviction of man found guilty of murder, rape and burglary.

Attorney General Marty Jackley said Thursday the high court rejected all of Dean Kryger's claims, finding the defendant's admission that he had a criminal mind was admissible and that evidence was sufficient.

Kryger was convicted by a Minnehaha County jury in February 2016 and was sentenced to life in prison for first-degree murder, second-degree rape and first-degree burglary.

Fifty-six-year-old Kari Anne Kirkegaard was found strangled in her Sioux Falls home in 2014.

Bill to bar people in US illegally from SD colleges rejected

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A legislative committee has rejected a bill aiming to ban people who are living in the U.S. illegally from enrolling at South Dakota's public colleges.

The Senate Education Committee voted 5-2 Thursday against the bill. Republican Sen. Stace Nelson's bill would have declared such people ineligible for resident tuition, scholarships or other financial aid.

He says the bill would "uphold the rule of law." It would have also required the Board of Regents to develop a method for each school to verify with the federal government an "alien's lawful presence" in the U.S.

Mike Rush, the regents' executive director and CEO, says the board doesn't believe it's an issue at South Dakota public universities.

Van crashes into Sioux Falls bank; no serious injuries

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — No serious injuries were reported when a van crashed into a Sioux Falls bank. Police say a car failed to stop at a flashing red light about 12:40 a.m. Thursday and hit the van, sending it through the doors of U.S. Bank.

Authorities say vehicle occupants suffered minor injuries. There was no one inside the bank at the time.

Rapid City police chief, homeless advocates at odds

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Several people in Rapid City who help temporary shelters are criticizing Police Chief Karl Jegeris for blaming a shelter in the recent death of a homeless woman.

Jegeris wrote to Mayor Steve Allender and the Rapid City Council on Monday, saying the temporary

shelters unintentionally encourage drinking among people with substance abuse problems.

The comment came after the deaths of two homeless people near an Interstate 190 bridge.

Five women who have been active in trying to find a housing solution for the homeless in the city sent a statement to the Rapid City Journal, saying that blaming temporary shelters "is heartless and inaccurate."

The mayor said he supports the police chief's position.

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

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>

Congress votes to reopen government, passes budget deal

By ANDREW TAYLOR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress ended an hourslong federal government shutdown early Friday, sending President Donald Trump a \$400 billion budget deal that sharply boosts spending and swells the federal deficit. The White House said Trump would sign the measure Friday morning.

The 240-186 vote came in the pre-dawn hours, putting to bed a five-and-a-half hour federal freeze that relatively few would notice. Many who did quickly labeled it a pointless, head-scratching episode. The shutdown was the second in three weeks.

The breakdown came largely in the Senate, when after a day of inaction, Republican Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky went rogue and stalled a vote in protest over his party's willingness to bust the budget. But Democrats also had their divisions and wrangling, largely with liberal upset the measure was not tied to any plans to assist the "Dreamer" immigrants.

Most Democrats opposed the measure, following the lead of Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., who tried but failed to use the moment to secure a promise for a separate vote on immigration. Until the final minutes, it was not clear the bill would pass and many Democrats held their votes, making the tally creep slowly and giving no indication which way it might go.

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House Speaker Paul Ryan urged Congress to avoid a "second needless shutdown in a matter of weeks — entirely needless."

There was far less drama in the Senate, where the measure sailed through on a 71-28 vote. President Donald Trump has promised to sign the bill into law.

The White House was forced to order the government shutdown shortly after midnight, but leaders quickly hustled to move before federal employees were due back at work, hoping to minimize the disruption. A shutdown essentially cuts the federal workforce in half, with those dubbed non-essential not allowed to work, while military and essential workers remain on the job.

The House vote ensured most employees would report for work as usual. Under federal law, passage of the measure is enough to call off the shutdown; Trump is expected to sign the measure as soon as he receives it.

The White House kept its distance from the quarreling on Capitol Hill. Trump did not tweet and aides did not try to assign blame.

Senate GOP leaders, however, were clearly irked by the debacle. In his attempt to sway Paul to relent, Sen. John Cornyn of Texas declared his fellow Republican was "wasting everyone's time" and prompting a shutdown for "no good reason." But Paul, the resident contrarian, repelled suggestions to stand aside.

"I didn't come up here to be part of somebody's club. I didn't come up here to be liked," Paul said.

The budget agreement is married to a six-week temporary funding bill needed to keep the government operating and to provide time to implement the budget pact.

The bill includes huge spending increases sought by Republicans for the Pentagon along with a big boost demanded by Democrats for domestic agencies. Both sides pressed for \$89 billion for disaster relief, extending a host of health care provisions, and extending a slew of smaller tax breaks.

It also would increase the government's debt cap, preventing a first-ever default on U.S. obligations that looms in just a few weeks. Such debt limit votes are usually enormous headaches for GOP leaders, but the increase means another vote won't occur before March 2019.

Senate leaders had celebrated the budget deal as a sign they had left behind some of their chronic dysfunction. Just three weeks ago, Senate Democrats sparked a three-day partial government shutdown by filibustering a spending bill, seeking relief for "Dreamer" immigrants who've lived in the country illegally since they were children.

Senate Democrats had no appetite for another shutdown.

House GOP leaders shored up support among conservatives for the measure, which would shower the Pentagon with money but add hundreds of billions of dollars to the nation's \$20 trillion-plus debt.

House Democratic leaders opposed the measure — arguing it should resolve the plight of Dreamers — but not with all their might. Pelosi made it plain she wasn't pressuring her colleagues to kill the bill, which is packed with money for party priorities like infrastructure, combating opioid abuse and helping college students.

"She negotiated the deal. Her team was in on it," said top GOP vote counter Patrick McHenry, R-N.C. "And they were a 'no.' And at the end her team broke."

Pelosi continued to press Ryan for a promise to bring an immigration measure sponsored by Reps. Will Hurd, R-Texas, and Pete Aguilar, D-Calif., up for a vote. But many Democrats backed the measure without that assurance.

Ryan said again Thursday he was determined to bring an immigration bill to the floor this year — albeit only one that has Trump's blessing.

"We will solve this DACA problem," Ryan said just before the vote. "Once we get this budget agreement done — and we will get this done for no matter how long it takes for us to stay here — we will focus on bringing that debate to this floor and finding a solution."

The episode was a clear defeat for those who had followed a risky strategy to use the party's leverage on the budget to address immigration. Protection for the Dreamers under former President Barack Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA, formally expires next month and there's no sign

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that lawmakers are making progress on an agreement to extend the program.

Republicans, too, had their disappointments. Many were sheepish about the bushels of dollars for Democratic priorities and the return next year of \$1 trillion-plus deficits. But they pointed to money they have long sought for the Pentagon, which they say needs huge sums for readiness, training and weapons modernization.

"It provides what the Pentagon needs to restore our military's edge for years to come," said Ryan.

Beyond \$300 billion worth of increases for the military and domestic programs, the agreement adds \$89 billion in overdue disaster aid for hurricane-slammed Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico, a politically charged increase in the government's borrowing cap and a grab bag of health and tax provisions. There's also \$16 billion to renew a slew of expired tax breaks that Congress seems unable to kill.

"I love bipartisanship, as you know," said Sen. Jeff Flake, R-Ariz. "But the problem is the only time we discover bipartisanship is when we spend more money."

Associated Press writers Matthew Daly, Alan Fram, Jill Colvin and Richard Lardner in Washington and Zeke Miller at Osan Air Base, South Korea, contributed to this report.

Koreas share historic handshake at Olympic opening ceremony

By ERIC TALMADGE, Associated Press Writer

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea (AP) — It was a historic moment, and it happened even before the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics had officially begun.

As South Korean President Moon Jae-in and his wife greeted VIPs in their dignitary box to watch the opening ceremony, they turned to shake hands with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's younger sister, who arrived earlier in the day on an unprecedented visit to the South by a member of the North's ruling Kim family.

All broke out in broad smiles.

Kim's sister, Kim Yo Jong, was at the opening ceremony with North Korea's nominal head of state, 90-year-old Kim Yong Nam. They are part of an extraordinary diplomatic push by the North aimed at using the Olympics to ease tensions with Seoul and bolster unity between the two Koreas after a year that has been marked by escalating fears of war and increasing angry rhetoric between Pyongyang and Washington.

As they shook hands, the North and South Koreans spoke briefly. It was not immediately known what they said, but all of them were smiling.

U.S. Vice President Mike Pence and his wife were seated beside the Moons and next to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his wife. His office said he did not interact with the North Koreans.

The Moons, Nam and Kim all stood again as athletes from both Koreas marched together behind a blue-and-white "unification" flag for the first time since 2007. There was another handshake.

The Pences did not stand for the unified Korean team's entrance. During the parade of nations, they stood only for the U.S. team.

At Olympic Games, Kim Jong Un's sister takes VIP seat

By ERIC TALMADGE, Associated Press

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's younger sister took her place among dignitaries from around the world, including U.S. Vice President Mike Pence, at the opening ceremony of the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics on Friday in an unprecedented visit to South Korea.

The trip by Kim Yo Jong is the latest move in an extraordinary show of Olympic diplomacy with Seoul that could prove to be a major challenge to the Trump administration's hard-line Korea policies.

As the opening ceremony began, she and South Korean President Moon Jae-in exchanged a historic handshake and spoke briefly. They smiled broadly, though it was not immediately known what they said.

She and Kim Yong Nam, the North's 90-year-old nominal head of state, were seated behind Moon and his wife, while Pence and his wife were seated beside the Moons and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

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At the age of 30, Kim Yo Jong is quite possibly the most powerful woman in North Korea. Just a few years younger than her brother, she is believed to be his closest confidant and is a senior cadre in North Korea's ruling party.

Her arrival on Kim Jong Un's private jet with a coterie of 22 officials was broadcast live on South Korean television.

Looking confident and relaxed, she had a brief meeting at the airport with South Korean officials, including Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon, before being whisked away in a black limousine and catching the high-speed train to the mountains of Pyeongchang. As a sign of her status, the elder Kim Yong Nam offered her the seat of honor at the airport meeting, but she politely declined.

The trip comes amid a flurry of activity following Kim Jong Un's surprise proposal on New Year's Day to send a delegation of athletes, officials, entertainers and cheering groups to the Olympics.

His decision to dispatch his sister to the games is all the more significant since Kim Jong Un himself hasn't set foot outside North Korea or met a single head of state since he assumed power upon the death of their father, Kim Jong Il, in late 2011. His single-minded pursuit of a nuclear arsenal to counter what he sees as the threat of invasion by the United States has ratcheted up tensions not only with his rivals but also with primary trading partner China and with Russia, once a key benefactor.

The North's Olympic "detente" is a striking shift in tactics.

This is the first time a member of the Kim dynasty has traveled to South Korea, though their grandfather, Kim Il Sung, went to areas occupied by his troops south of what is now the Demilitarized Zone during the 1950-53 Korean War.

Kim Yo Jong has been rapidly rising within the North's power structure and is believed to be in charge of shaping her brother's public persona. But she has generally remained safely cloaked in her brother's shadow. This is her first high-profile international appearance at center stage, though she is technically just a member of a delegation headed by Kim Yong Nam.

Just before the opening ceremony, Kim Yong Nam attended a dinner for visiting foreign dignitaries hosted by Moon. Pence was also at the dinner and reportedly refused to shake the elderly North Korean's hand.

For security reasons, few details of Kim Yo Jong's three-day itinerary have been made public.

After arriving at the South's ultramodern Incheon International Airport—the North's flagship airline is subject to sanctions — she traveled to Pyeongchang for the opening ceremony, where the North and South Korean athletes marched together behind a blue-and-white "unification" flag for the first time in more than a decade.

It was an emotionally charged moment.

The two Koreas, which remain technically at war, have cycled through countless periods of chill and thaw since their division 70 years ago. North Korea boycotted the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul and blew up a South Korean commercial airliner the year before. The past year has been particularly acrimonious as the North has accelerated its nuclear weapons development and test launches of missiles that are now believed to be able to reach most or all of the United States, South Korea's most important ally.

The delegation's most substantive event may come outside of the Olympic ambit on Saturday.

Along with the rest of the North's senior delegation, Kim Yo Jong was to have lunch with Moon at the presidential Blue House. The meeting could turn out to be just a lunch, a photo op or a nicety. But it is so unprecedented, and its announcement on Thursday was so sudden, that rumors are already swirling it could open the door to much more — perhaps even an offer for Moon to travel to Pyongyang, the North's capital.

The North and South held summits in Pyongyang in 2000 and 2007, both hosted by Kim Jong Il.

Considering the depth and complexity of the problems that keep the Koreas apart, it's highly unlikely a luncheon would lead to an immediate breakthrough on something like the North's nuclear weapons development. Pence, who is using his visit to South Korea to underscore the Trump administration's policy of maximum pressure on the North, has publicly and repeatedly warned Seoul not to let down its guard to a North Korean charm offensive.

But during her stay, Kim Yo Jong will have ample opportunity to play up the feel-good side of her coun-

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try's participation in the games.

The first hockey match featuring the joint North-South women's ice hockey will be held Saturday night — they play Switzerland, where both Kim Jong Un and his sister went to school when they were children — and that would be an event she might want to see. The North has also sent a several hundred women-strong cheering squad, an orchestra with singers and dancers and a demonstration taekwondo team that will perform in Seoul and places near the Olympic venues.

Security for anything involving the North Koreans has been exceptionally tight.

The North's participation has been generally welcomed, but right-wing protesters have shown up at several venues to burn North Korean flags and tear up portraits of Kim's brother. The group is fringe, but their demonstrations have generated irate reactions in North Korea's state-run media and could potentially spin out into a major incident if they ever manage to get closer to the North Koreans themselves — or especially Kim and her entourage.

So far, police have kept the two at a safe distance.

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

With extraordinary political optics, Winter Olympics begin

By FOSTER KLUG, Associated Press

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea (AP) — In an extraordinary show of unexpected unity, North and South Korea sat side by side Friday night under exploding fireworks that represented peace, not destruction, as the 2018 Winter Olympics opened on a Korean Peninsula riven by generations of anger, suspicion and bloodshed.

The sister of North Korea's leader, Kim Jong Un, shook hands with South Korean President Moon Jae-in — and appeared genuinely pleased — while they watched an elaborate show of light, sound and human performance. Minutes later came a moment stunning in its optics and its implications: the United States, represented by Vice President Mike Pence, sitting a row ahead of Kim's sister and the North's nominal head of state, all watching the games begin — officials from two nations that many worry are on the brink of nuclear conflict.

Not long after, North and South Korean athletes entered Olympic Stadium together, waving flags showing a unified Korea — the long-time dream, in theory at least, of many Koreans both North and South. It was the rivals' first joint Olympic march since 2007. International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach then handed the podium to Moon, who declared the Olympics officially open.

"Athletes from the two Koreas will work together for victory, and that will resonate with and be remembered in the hearts of people around the world as a sign of peace," Moon said in a reception ahead of the ceremony, according to his office.

Bach lauded the joint march of the two Koreas as a "powerful message."

"We thank you," he said. "We are all touched by this wonderful gesture. We all join and support you in your message of peace.

After years of frustration, billions of dollars and a nagging national debate about their worth, the opening ceremonies took place before a world watching the moment not only for its athletic significance and global spectacle, but for clues about what the political future of the peninsula could hold. A large delegation from North Korea, dressed in identical garb and cheering in careful coordination, watched from an upper deck of the stadium.

A huge crowd gathered in the freezing Olympics Stadium in this isolated, mountainous corner of South Korea, as performances displayed the sweep of Korean history and culture. The march of athletes from the world's many nations saw them girded against a frigid Korean night with temperatures that dipped below freezing and biting winds.

Members of a delegation from North Korea, part of an extraordinary Olympics partnership between the

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two Korean rivals, watched from high in the stadium a performance called "The Land of Peace" and as past South Korean athletes paraded a large southern flag.

After a chaotic year of nuclear war threats and nuclear and missile tests from the North, it was an evening of striking visual moments.

The significance of Pence and the North Koreans sitting in the same box was not immediately clear. He had been dispatched from Washington for the Olympics in part, he said, to make sure that people didn't lose sight of how the U.S. government perceives the North — as a misbehaving and dangerous neighbor in the community of nations.

What did seem clear was that, deliberately or not, the North Korean government had managed to edge its way onto center stage during the South's biggest global moment in years.

There was a palpable excitement in this isolated, rugged mountain town, as one of the poorest, coldest and most disgruntled parts of an otherwise prosperous South Korea kicked off two weeks of winter sports, Olympic spectacle and, just maybe, a bit of inter-Korean reconciliation.

There will be plenty of sporting drama for both die-hard snow and ice junkies and the once-every-four-years enthusiast.

Will the Russians who aren't Russians — the 168 who have been invited as "Olympic Athletes from Russia," competing in neutral uniforms under the Olympic flag — bring home gold? Will Patrick Chan of Canada hit his quad jumps and claim figure skating glory?

Can reigning men's gold medalist Yuzuru Hanyu of Japan overcome injury and defend his title against Chan? Will the past and present star of American skiing, Lindsey Vonn, be surpassed by the likely future of the sport, Mikaela Shiffrin?

But the athletic aspect of these games has been overshadowed in the buildup to the opening ceremony by a frenzied, increasingly momentous fire-hose spray of political developments. The rival Koreas, flirting with war just weeks ago, are suddenly making overtures toward the no-longer-quite-so-absurd notion of cooperation.

The North has sent nearly 500 people to the Pyeongchang Games including officials, athletes, artists and cheerleaders after the Koreas agreed to a series of conciliatory gestures to mark the games. More than 2,900 athletes from 92 countries will compete here, making it the biggest Winter Olympics to date.

"Everybody make some noise!" two pre-ceremony emcees shouted in English and Korean as spectators streamed into the Olympic Stadium before the ceremony.

North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un's sister, making an unprecedented visit to South Korean soil, will now likely attend the same opening ceremony as U.S. Vice President Mike Pence, who's vowing toughest-ever sanctions on the North. Could they meet? That and other theories have engulfed South Korean media.

Pyeongchang was not supposed to share the spotlight with Pyongyang. This was not supposed to be, as some in Seoul grumble, the "Pyongyang Games," a play on the North Korean capital's phonetic similarity to Pyeongchang.

After two failed Olympic bids that emphasized the high-sounding notion that the games could help make peace with North Korea, Pyeongchang finally sold its successful try in 2011 on the decidedly capitalistic goal of boosting winter sports tourism in Asia.

But North Korea has a habit of not letting itself be ignored when it comes to its southern rival.

Its agents blew up a South Korean airliner ahead of the 1988 Seoul Olympics in an attempt to dissuade visitors; then it boycotted its rival's Olympic debut on the world stage. A few years later, the discovery of the huge progress Pyongyang had been surreptitiously making on its nuclear programs plunged the Korean Peninsula into crisis. It has only deepened over the years as the North closes in on the ability to field an arsenal of nukes that can hit U.S. cities.

And so, with a little help from a liberal South Korean president eager to engage Pyongyang, the 2018 Pyeongchang Games open.

They do so with as much focus on the North, which has zero real medal contenders, as the South, which in the three decades since its last Olympics has built a solid winter program as it went from economic backwater and military dictatorship to Asia's fourth-biggest economy and a bulwark of liberal democracy.

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Could Pyeongchang's initial pitch — that it could contribute to peace on the Korean Peninsula — actually become reality? The opening ceremony offered at least some hints about that, and maybe more. What's certain is that these Games, more so than any in recent memory, are about far more than sports.

Foster Klug is AP's Seoul bureau chief and has covered the Koreas since 2005. Follow him on Twitter at @apklug.

Global stocks sink after major US index enters correction

By JOE McDONALD, AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Global stock markets sank Friday after the Dow Jones industrials on Wall Street plummeted more than 1,000 points, deepening a week-long sell-off.

Markets followed U.S. stocks lower after the Dow, coming off a record high, entered a "correction" — that is, a 10 percent decline from its latest peak — for the first time in two years.

In Europe, France's CAC 40 lost 1.2 percent to 5,087, Britain's FTSE 100 shed 0.7 percent to 7,122 and Germany's DAX fell 1.2 percent to 12,110. All three had dropped around 2 percent the day before.

Asian markets fell more sharply. The Shanghai Composite Index tumbled 5.5 percent before ending the day down 4 percent at 3,129.85. Tokyo's Nikkei 225 lost 2.3 percent to 21,382.62 and Hong Kong's Hang Seng retreated 3.1 percent to 29,507.42.

On Wall Street, futures for the Dow and the Standard & Poor's 500 were down 0.1 percent and up 0.2 percent, respectively, though the actual market open does not always follow the futures closely in times of volatility.

Financial analysts regard corrections as a normal event but say the latest unusually abrupt plunge might have been triggered by a combination of events that rattled investors. Those include worries about a potential rise in U.S. inflation or interest rates and whether budget disputes in Washington might lead to another government shutdown.

"Markets are down again today, maybe unnerved by fears that the U.S. Senate will not pass a budget bill in time to avoid a U.S. government shutdown," said Rob Carnell of ING in a report. "With financial markets vulnerable at the moment, this was not great timing for such political brinksmanship."

Chinese markets fell despite unexpected strongly trade data Thursday. Elsewhere in Asia, Seoul's Kospi 1.8 percent to 2,363.77 and Sydney's S&P-ASX 200 lost 0.9 percent to 5,838.00. India's Sensex retreated 1.1 percent to 34,017.83 and benchmarks in New Zealand, Taiwan and Southeast Asia also fell.

In Europe, markets were unnerved also by the Bank of England's indication on Thursday that it could raise its key interest rate in coming months due to stronger global economic growth.

U.S. stocks started to tumble last week after the Labor Department said workers' wages grew at a fast rate in January.

Investors worried rising wages will hurt corporate profits and could signal an increase in inflation that could prompt the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates at a faster pace, putting a brake on the economy.

On Wall Street, many companies that rose the most over the last year have borne the brunt of the selling. Facebook and Boeing have both fallen sharply.

The S&P 500, the benchmark for many index funds, shed 100.66 points, or 3.8 percent, on Thursday to 2,581. Even after this week's losses, the S&P is up 12.5 percent over the past year. The Nasdaq composite fell 274.82 points, or 3.9 percent, to 6,777.16.

The market, currently in its second-longest bull run of all time, had not seen a correction for two years, an unusually long time. Many market watchers have been predicting a pullback, saying stock prices have become too expensive relative to company earnings.

"We may have seen the worst, but it's too early to say for sure. However, our view remains that it's just another correction," said Shane Oliver of AMP Capital in a report.

Corrections of up to 15 percent "are normal," said Oliver.

"In the absence of recession, a deep bear market is unlikely," he said.

American employers are hiring at a healthy pace, with unemployment at a 17-year low of 4.1 percent. The housing industry is solid and manufacturing is rebounding.

Major economies around the world are growing in tandem for the first time since the Great Recession and corporate profits are on the rise. That combination usually carries stocks higher. But stock prices have climbed faster than profits in recent years. Many investors justified that by pointing out that interest rates were low and few alternatives looked like better investments. Fast rising interest rates would make that argument much less persuasive.

In currency markets, the dollar edged up to 108.95 yen from Thursday's 108.73 yen. The euro dipped to \$1.2244 from \$1.2248.

Benchmark U.S. crude lost 64 cents to \$60.51 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It fell 64 cents the previous session to \$61.15.

Brent crude, used to price international oils, lost 44 cents to \$64.37 in London. It retreated 70 cents on Thursday to \$68.81.

Appeals by 45 Russian athletes against Olympic bans rejected

By JAMES ELLINGWORTH, AP Sports Writer

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea (AP) — Russia's desperate attempt to get 45 banned athletes — including several medal favorites — into the Pyeongchang Olympics failed just hours before Friday's opening ceremony.

The International Olympic Committee had banned Russia because of a massive doping scheme at the 2014 Sochi Games, but gave individual athletes the chance to apply for admission to compete as "Olympic Athletes from Russia." There were 168 Russians who passed the vetting process. Dozens more filed appeals with the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

On Friday, the court upheld the IOC's right to decide who can compete.

Anti-doping officials praised the ruling, which is a heavy blow to Russian medal chances.

"That's it. The story is over," Russian delegation spokesman Konstantin Vybarnov said.

After two days of hearings, the CAS panel ruled that the commissions that evaluated whether Russian applicants were eligible did not act in a "discriminatory, arbitrary or unfair manner."

CAS secretary general Matthieu Reeb read from a statement and declined to take questions, saying the IOC process "could not be described as a sanction but rather as an eligibility decision."

Shamil Tarpishchev, a Russian member of the IOC, said the CAS ruling may have been legally correct but he disagreed with the spirit of the ruling.

"We are fighting for the truth," he said.

The IOC and the World Anti-Doping Agency welcomed the decision. The IOC said the decision "supports the fight against doping and brings clarity for all athletes."

WADA president Craig Reedie described it as "absolutely correct."

Among those excluded are six-time gold medalist Viktor Ahn, the short track speedskater whose return to his native South Korea for the Olympics had been eagerly anticipated by local fans.

Also out are cross-country skiing gold medalist Alexander Legkov and skeleton gold medalist Alexander Tretiakov, as well as potential medal contenders in biathlon, luge and bobsled.

Three former NHL players — Sergei Plotnikov, Anton Belov and Valeri Nichushkin — also lost appeals, though it was widely considered unlikely they would have played even if they had been successful because the Russian roster is already full.

U.S. Anti-Doping Agency chief executive Travis Tygart said the decision was "a small glimmer of hope in an otherwise dark and sordid affair."

"You hope justice has been served but how some of these athletes can keep dirty medals from Sochi but be excluded now is hard to reconcile," Tygart said. "And why the IOC rushed the process on the Sochi medal decisions is unexplainable and a tragedy for clean athletes."

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In a telephone interview, Reddie told The Associated Press: "I am delighted at the decision and the way they expressed it."

"They have quite clearly understood that there was systemic manipulation of the anti-doping process," Reddie said. "Athletes can get their heads down and go. This particular issue is behind us."

The IOC's vetting process was designed to exclude Russian athletes from the games if IOC officials weren't sure they were clean.

The "Olympic Athletes from Russia" will compete in neutral uniforms under the Olympic flag in a decision designed to balance the rights of individual athletes with the need for a strong deterrent to doping.

As well as the 45 athletes, the ruling covers a luge coach and a skeleton coach.

The IOC has refused to comment on individual Russian athletes but says it decided who to exclude using a newly obtained Moscow laboratory database with evidence of past doping offenses.

It refused to clear some Russians even after their disqualifications from the 2014 Olympics were lifted by CAS last week.

Stephen Hess, an international sports lawyer based in Colorado Springs, Colorado, said the decision was a victory for the IOC.

"There is no absolute right to get an invitation from the IOC to come to the Olympics," Hess said. "That was within the IOC's discretion. If Russia had an Olympic team, CAS might have said: 'IOC, the Russians can put them on their own team. You can't keep them out.' But Russia doesn't have an Olympic team."

Jim Walden, the lawyer for Russian whistleblower Grigory Rodchenkov, renewed calls for IOC President Thomas Bach to resign "for the sake of the Olympic ideal."

Walden has accused the IOC and CAS of being "complicit in enabling Russian doping" for not implementing strong punishments for Russian athletes, including a blanket ban.

Friday's verdict, he said, is "a small semblance of justice for clean athletes."

Angela Ruggiero of the IOC athletes' commission said the decision sent a message to athletes that "you should be incredibly confident that every athlete, including the Olympic Athletes from Russia, have had to clear incredibly high hurdles to get here."

The barred Russian athletes, however, are still considering their legal options.

Schellenberg Wittmer, from the Swiss law firm representing the Russian athletes, said "our clients consider — rightly so — that the decisions are unfair and harmful ... their Olympic dreams have been shattered."

Other athletes welcomed the end to the saga.

"That is great news," said U.S. women's skeleton athlete Katie Uhlaender, who placed fourth in the Sochi Olympics — one spot behind bronze medalist Elena Nikitina, who was one of the 45 appealing her ban.

U.S. bobsledder Nick Cunningham said "If dirty athletes are taken out, then clean athletes will prevail. That's what I hope."

AP Sports Writers Stephen Wade, Tim Reynolds and Eddie Pells contributed to this report.

More AP Olympic coverage: <https://wintergames.ap.org>

Trump aims to reduce drug costs under Medicare

By **RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR** and **MATTHEW PERRONE**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump will propose lowering prescription drug costs for Medicare beneficiaries by allowing them to share in rebates that drug companies pay to insurers and middlemen, an administration official said Thursday.

A senior administration official outlined the plan on condition of anonymity ahead of the release of Trump's 2019 budget plan next week.

Pharmaceutical companies now pay rebates to insurers and pharmacy benefit managers to help their medications gain a bigger slice of the market.

Insurers apply savings from rebates to keep premiums more manageable.

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Under Trump's proposal, seniors covered by Medicare's popular "Part D" prescription benefit would be able to share in the rebates for individual drugs that they purchase at the pharmacy.

Trump's budget would also expand Medicare's "catastrophic" drug benefit so that many seniors with very high costs would not face copayments. Seniors with high drug bills are currently still responsible for 5 percent of the cost of their medications. With some new drugs costing \$100,000 a year or more, patient costs add up quickly.

The White House proposal would put Trump in the middle of a tug-of-war between drug companies on one side and insurers and pharmacy benefit managers on the other, with billions of dollars at stake.

Insurers and pharmacy benefit managers say the reason drug costs are so high is that drug companies are free to charge what the market will bear.

The pharmaceutical industry says middlemen are the problem, because they keep rebates paid by drug makers instead of passing them on to patients. Insurers counter that rebates are passed on in the form of lower monthly premiums for everybody.

The drug industry lobbying group, Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, had no immediate reaction.

The Trump administration's new proposals come on top of a long list of Medicare changes in the congressional budget deal. Medicare is the government's premier health insurance program, covering about 60 million seniors and disabled people.

Lawmakers would shift a greater share of Medicare drug costs to the pharmaceutical industry. They also want to eliminate the drug coverage gap known as the "doughnut hole" one year earlier than currently scheduled, in 2019 instead of 2020.

"On the whole, I think this is a good bill for people with Medicare," said Joe Baker, president of the Medicare Rights Center, said of the congressional legislation. "This tilts toward getting a lot of good things done."

But his group opposes a provision that would raise premiums paid by the wealthiest retirees for coverage of outpatient services and prescription drugs.

Here's a look at some of the major Medicare provisions in the budget deal that Republican leaders are trying to push through Congress. Democrats are split over the overall measure, but the Medicare provisions appear to have support from both parties:

— PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Originally, beneficiaries in the "doughnut hole" coverage gap were responsible for the full cost of their medications, but the Affordable Care Act passed under former President Barack Obama gradually closes the gap. The budget deal accelerates the timetable by one year, to 2019.

Drug makers are already required to provide discounts to close the coverage gap, but the budget deal raises the level of company discounts, which in turn lowers the government's costs. That should act as a brake on the monthly premiums paid by beneficiaries.

"In theory when Medicare spending goes down, premiums would go down, too," said Tricia Neuman, a Medicare expert with the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation.

The drug industry is criticizing the proposal, saying it will mainly benefit insurance companies that act as middlemen providing the benefit.

The coverage gap starts when beneficiaries hit \$3,750 in total drug costs.

— CAPS REPEALED ON REHAB

The budget deal permanently repeals limits on therapy services commonly used by stroke patients and people recovering from major surgeries. Those services include physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy.

In previous years, Congress had routinely held off on applying the caps. Groups including AARP were pressing for a full repeal. It takes effect this year.

— HIGHER PREMIUMS FOR WEALTHIEST RETIREES

Premiums for outpatient coverage and prescription drugs would rise for about 1 million wealthy seniors with annual incomes of at least \$500,000 for an individual, or \$750,000 for a couple filing jointly.

Hiking premiums on the well-to-do is an idea that has bipartisan support among lawmakers, but advocates worry that Congress will ultimately start raising costs for middle-class seniors as well.

TELEMEDICINE AND CHRONIC CARE

The budget deal expands Medicare's ability to pay for telemedicine in a wide variety of situations, including for patients with stroke symptoms.

It also incorporates a bipartisan Senate bill that is intended to improve care coordination for patients with chronic illnesses, such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes.

COST CONTROL BOARD REPEALED

The deal would repeal the Independent Payment Advisory Board, a Medicare cost-control agency authorized under the Affordable Care Act. It was controversial from the beginning, and the Obama White House did not move forward to set up the board.

Low-key prosecutor escapes GOP fury as Trump winds whirl

By SADIE GURMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When President Donald Trump fired the acting attorney general last year for refusing to defend his controversial travel ban, Dana Boente stepped into the job.

When Trump abruptly ousted dozens of Obama-era federal prosecutors, Boente was tasked with letting them know.

And when Republicans released a politically explosive memo last week on the monitoring of a Trump campaign adviser, Boente was revealed as one of the officials who signed off on the surveillance.

The unassuming career federal prosecutor keeps finding himself in the middle of Trump's political storms. But while some relatively obscure Justice Department veterans have sparked Republican rage for their roles in high-profile investigations, Boente has thus far emerged largely unscathed.

In fact, his profile continues to rise. FBI Director Christopher Wray recently chose him as general counsel, plunging him into the bureau's inner machinations during an especially tumultuous time.

It is the latest role for the Obama administration holdover once described by former Attorney General Loretta Lynch as the "consummate utility player." His willingness to pinch hit for the Trump administration has briefly landed him in some of the most influential posts in U.S. government, including acting attorney general and head of the Justice Department's national security division.

Boente was serving as deputy attorney general before Rod Rosenstein's confirmation in April when he approved an application to extend a surveillance warrant allowing officials to monitor the communications of Trump campaign adviser Carter Page. That detail was revealed last week in the hotly disputed GOP memo on the Russia investigation, the latest of a growing list of Republican grievances against the FBI and Justice Department.

The memo prompted conservative groups to call for the resignation of Rosenstein, whom Trump had also denounced in tweets. Republican rancor has intensified over months and some Justice Department officials have been fired, reassigned or otherwise departed amid the uproar. Among those under fire: Boente's predecessor as general counsel, James Baker, who was the subject of an angry Trump tweet after he was moved out of the position, which doesn't usually garner much public attention.

Boente hasn't escaped criticism completely. He was among officials slammed by Fox News host Sean Hannity for his role in the Page warrant, and a conservative website has suggested he may have to resign. And liberals say his reputation is marred by his willingness to enforce Trump policies, including the ban on visitors from Muslim-majority countries.

Still, he's largely managed to avoid the spotlight even while on center stage.

"During every major crisis in the last couple of years, Dana has been there," said Gene Rossi, an attorney who worked alongside Boente for more than 21 years, first in the Justice Department's tax division and then in the U.S. attorney's office for the Eastern District of Virginia.

Rossi called him the "Zelig of the United States Department of Justice," referring to the 1983 Woody Allen film about a man who morphs to take on the characteristics of anyone he meets. "Dana is the classic

calm inside a very turbulent storm.”

Boente, who declined through an FBI spokeswoman to be interviewed, was nominated by President Barack Obama in 2015 to lead Virginia’s Eastern District. Home to the Pentagon and the CIA, the district often prosecutes terrorism, espionage and national security cases.

Boente oversaw several high-profile corruption cases, including the prosecution of former Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell, whose conviction on corruption charges was later thrown out by the Supreme Court.

Eastern District prosecutors also were involved in the probe of Hillary Clinton’s use of a private email server, which ended without charges, a lingering source of outrage for Republicans.

Those close to Boente say he keeps his views to himself and takes pride in his reputation as a non-partisan career official. He signed off on Trump’s travel ban, they said, not because of his own ideology but because he thought he could defend it. Lower courts have repeatedly struck it down, and the latest version awaits Supreme Court review.

“Dana has always seemed apolitical to me and focused on the work of the U.S. attorney’s office and the Justice Department rather than politics,” said Jeremy Kamens, who heads the federal public defender’s office in the Eastern District of Virginia.

Lynch, speaking at Boente’s swearing-in ceremony in 2016, said he reminded her of the “reliable middle child” she could always count on.

Trump, at least initially, saw him similarly, thanking him at a White House round table in February 2017.

“Amazing the way you just stepped into the breach and have done such a good job,” Trump said.

Boente resigned as U.S. attorney in October so the Trump administration could nominate its own appointee to the powerful position.

The FBI did not immediately say why Wray chose Boente for general counsel, but in a recent message to FBI employees, the director praised Boente’s “astounding work ethic, thoughtfulness, and independence that will serve the Bureau well.”

And those close to Boente said he had hoped to remain in the department where he spent more than 30 years, working long days and weekends.

“He loves his job,” Rossi said. “He is married to the Department of Justice.”

This story has been corrected to show that Boente resigned as U.S. attorney in October, not November.

Kelly in harsh spotlight after senior aide’s resignation

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, CATHERINE LUCEY and JILL COLVIN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Pressure mounted on White House chief of staff John Kelly Thursday as questions swirled about his defense of a senior aide he fought to keep in a highly sensitive West Wing job despite accusations of spousal abuse from two ex-wives.

White House staff secretary Rob Porter, a member of President Donald Trump’s inner circle and arguably Kelly’s closest aide, cleaned out his desk on Thursday. But the aftershocks of his resignation reverberated amid concerns about his access to classified information.

Kelly himself faced criticism for initially defending his aide — only to later shift course after the publication of photos showing one of Porter’s ex-wives with a black eye.

“It’s fair to say we all could have done better over the last few hours or last few days in dealing with this situation,” said White House deputy press secretary Raj Shah, who faced a barrage of questions about Kelly during a press briefing.

Though the allegations against Porter became public this week, Kelly learned last fall that something was amiss with the staff secretary’s attempts to get a security clearance, according to an administration official who insisted on anonymity to discuss internal matters.

The chief of staff had sought information about the status of security clearance applications for top aides, and it was then he learned there were allegations against Porter from his ex-wives, said the official. Porter and Kelly later discussed the allegations.

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The White House official said that staffers felt misled about how Porter downplayed the allegations, both to Kelly at the end of the 2017 and to White House Counsel Don McGahn near the beginning of Trump's term.

When the allegations first emerged against Porter a number of senior aides rallied around him, and the White House acknowledged that personal relationships may have played a role in their response. Communications Director Hope Hicks, who was dating the staff secretary, helped draft the original statements defending him, according to three current and former White House officials.

Shah said Thursday that Hicks later "recused" herself from some aspects of the matter, but it was unclear from what. Kelly, meanwhile, was Porter's loudest defender, including in the first hours after the graphic photos of alleged abuse emerged.

Only later did the chief of staff, who had argued for Porter to keep his post, release a second statement in which he said he supported Porter's resignation.

Shah said that Trump was not aware until Tuesday of the accusations against Porter, who was a frequent presence in the Oval Office and helped craft last week's State of the Union address. By the time the president was fully briefed of the claims against Porter on Wednesday, the once-rising White House star had already resigned, according to the official.

A number of lawmakers criticized Kelly, and a leading women's group called for the chief of staff to resign. The president, for his part, has not signaled to allies that he is on the verge of making a change. But his frustration with Kelly has grown in recent weeks.

Trump has long resisted Kelly's attempt to control him. In recent weeks, the president has complained about the chief of staff to his circle of informal advisers, according to two people who speak to the president regularly but are not authorized to publicly discuss private conversations. One of the people said Trump was angry that Kelly did not bring the Porter allegations to him sooner.

Kelly also drew Trump's ire last month when he seemed to suggest that the president was flip-flopping on his call for a border wall. Trump complained to aides that the chief of staff had portrayed him as a child who had to be managed, a contention that particularly irked the president in the wake of the way he was portrayed in the recent Michael Wolff book, "Fire and Fury."

Though Trump frequently vents about senior aides, he is often loath to fire staffers. A dismissal of Kelly would surely revive the narrative of a White House in crisis as it faces the ongoing Russia probe and the midterm elections.

But Kelly's handling of the Porter affair rattled some aides, who questioned his full-throated defense of an accused batterer, according to more than a half-dozen White House officials and outside advisers who were not authorized to speak publicly about private conversations.

Democratic swiftly called for an investigation into Porter's presence at the White House.

"If John Kelly is covering this up, he needs to be held accountable," Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., told CNN's "New Day," adding, "He better have a really good reason. Otherwise, he's gone, too."

Toni Van Pelt, head of the National Organization for Women, was more direct. She revisited the accusations that Trump himself has sexually harassed women, allegations he has denied.

"White House chief of staff John Kelly must resign," said Van Pelt. "His pathetic defense of staff secretary Rob Porter reveals his true nature — an enabler of sexual abusers, a betrayer of trust and an avoider of responsibility."

The White House was also put on the defensive about Porter's interim security clearance, fielding questions about how someone could handle some of the nation's most sensitive documents while potentially being ripe for blackmail. In Thursday's briefing, Shah outlined the background check procedure, which is run by the federal law enforcement and intelligence agencies and was still underway for Porter.

Attorneys who specialize in security clearance said Porter should have disclosed the allegations, including the protective order granted to one woman, when he filed his lengthy national security application. John V. Berry, who represents government employees and contractors, said the FBI would have notified the White House about the allegations but noted that the interim clearance would not have prohibited Porter

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from having access to sensitive information.

Both of Porter's ex-wives have detailed the nature of the abuse they said they suffered at Porter's hands and said they informed the FBI. One of them, Jennifer Willoughby, posted about it in detail on Instagram in April 2017 and wrote of Porter that "When I tried to get help, I was counseled to consider carefully how what I said might affect his career."

She wrote again Thursday that she hoped her "story and my words can be a beacon forward for anyone who needs to be reminded: You are seen. You matter. You are enough."

Kelly was brought into the West Wing to bring calm to Trump's tumultuous operation but recently has created some of his own chaos, rattling aides and lawmakers with inflammatory remarks and political missteps.

For many staffers, Kelly had brought a much-needed sense of order to a White House that had been riven with rivalries and was frequently upended by the whims of a mercurial president. Kelly, along with Porter, helped organize the West Wing's policy and decision-making process and infused the staff with a clearer sense of purpose, officials said.

But that semblance of confidence has been eroded.

Kelly's claim Tuesday that some immigrants are "too lazy to get off their asses" and register for government protections stunned some aides who questioned the chief of staff's political instincts and were dismayed by his language.

AP reporters Darlene Superville and Juliet Linderman contributed.

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Eagles, Philly fans get catharsis through Super Bowl parade

By **MICHAEL R. SISK** and **ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE**, Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Philadelphia's first Super Bowl parade provided catharsis Thursday for hundreds of thousands of Eagles fans, deliriously joyful after decades without a title and relishing the national spotlight on a team that few outside the city thought could win it all.

Fans clad in Eagles green jammed the streets from dawn near the stadium to an afternoon rally at the city's famed "Rocky" steps, lining up 20 deep in spots to catch a glimpse of the champs. The Eagles rode in open-top double decker buses to the art museum that Sylvester Stallone made famous for a rally nearly 60 years in the making.

Center Jason Kelce gave voice to every frustrated Philly fan with a remarkable, impassioned and profane speech that had him defending the general manager, the coach and a litany of players who supposedly weren't smart enough, big enough or talented enough to win a championship.

"We were a bunch of underdogs," shouted Kelce, channeling Rocky himself. "Bottom line is we wanted it more!"

And so did football-crazed Philly — desperately.

Until Sunday's 41-33 victory over the favored New England Patriots, the Eagles remained the only team in their division without a Super Bowl title — an ongoing humiliation that gave Philly an inferiority complex and made Eagles fans an easy target for fans of other teams, especially the rival Dallas Cowboys and New York Giants.

"This Super Bowl championship is for you," Eagles owner Jeffrey Lurie told the vast crowd. "You are the most passionate and deserving sports fans on the planet. We couldn't have done it without you."

Added Super Bowl MVP quarterback Nick Foles: "We finally did it. We're Super Bowl champs!"

The parade began at the Eagles' stadium complex and slowly made its way up Broad Street past the cheering throngs. Carrying the Lombardi Trophy, coach Doug Pederson walked part of the route — allowing fans to touch the gleaming hardware — while Lurie held a sign saying "THANK YOU FANS" as he stood

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next to the team's three quarterbacks: Foles, injured starter Carson Wentz and third-stringer Nate Sudfeld.

Dan Tarvin, 29, was pumped after getting to high-five Pederson and GM Howie Roseman, who was instrumental in putting together a squad expected to compete for championships for years to come.

"They are more than heroes. They're legends. They're immortal in this city, forever," Tarvin said.

Corey Carter, 32, of West Philadelphia, clutched a woodcut of an Eagle that he dubbed the "Lombirdy Trophy."

"This is the greatest day!" Carter said. "Besides God, my kids and my wife, it's Eagles. That's all there is. My family and then Eagles, and this is the greatest day of my life, ever."

Schools, museums, courts, government offices and even the Philadelphia Zoo were shut down so the city could fete an underdog Eagles team that few outside Philadelphia thought had a prayer of beating the mighty Patriots led by superstar quarterback Tom Brady and coach Bill Belichick.

Organizers prepared for as many as 2 million people, though city officials didn't release a crowd estimate.

Terry Gallen, a fan from Glen Mills, in the Philadelphia suburbs, said he "broke down like a baby and cried" when the Eagles won the Super Bowl.

"It means everything," Gallen said. "We're loving it."

At the rally, Lurie, Pederson and a slew of players all took the microphone and dedicated Sunday's victory to the fans.

But it was the crowd-pleasing Kelce who best channeled the gruff but ultimately good-hearted "attytod" for which Philadelphians are famous.

Wearing an outlandishly sequined Mummies getup — a nod to Philadelphia's raucous New Year's Day parade — Kelce declared that "no one wanted us. No analyst liked to see us win the Super Bowl. And nobody likes our fans."

He then led the crowd in a jolly — and filthy — chant set to the tune of "My Darling Clementine": "No one likes us, no one likes us, no one likes us, we don't care!" The big-bearded lineman uttered at least two profanities that made it onto live TV, recalling Chase Utley's similarly profane speech at the Phillies' World Series parade 10 years ago.

Police investigated at least two stabbings on parade day, including one man stabbed inside a mall just off the route. No details about his condition were released. A second man was taken to a hospital with a stab wound, and police said they were trying to piece together what happened. City officials said they wouldn't have arrest numbers until Friday.

The parade was overwhelmingly peaceful, though, giving fans an emotional release after decades of disappointment.

For lots of fans, the parade was a reminder of the Phillies' victory lap after a 28-year World Series title drought.

For others, it took on spiritual shades of the pope's visit in 2015.

"It is like a religion," said Kevin Fry, 37, of Prospect Park in suburban Philadelphia, a press operator at the Inquirer and Daily News who helped print 700,000 copies of the Super Bowl edition that proclaimed "At Last!"

And for Natasha Curley, 31, a janitor from Trenton, New Jersey, the Super Bowl title means that rival fans can stop their yapping — at least till next season.

"This stops all the hate," Curley said. "They got nothing to say now."

Associated Press reporter Kristen De Groot in Philadelphia and Michael Rubinkam in northeastern Pennsylvania contributed to this report.

For more AP NFL coverage: <http://pro32.ap.org> and http://twitter.com/AP_NFL

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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.

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.

Budget plan's \$1 trillion deficit sours some Republicans

By KEVIN FREKING and MATTHEW DALY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans rode the tea party wave to power eight years ago on a message of fiscal responsibility and attacking budget deficits, and kept at it during President Barack Obama's two terms. That was then.

The Republican-led Congress on Thursday was rounding up support for a bipartisan budget bill that would put the government on track for annual deficits topping \$1 trillion, a gap last seen toward the end of Obama's first term.

The projection for massive budget deficits has split Republicans. Dedicated fiscal conservatives criticized the plan while others accepted it as a necessary compromise to shore up military spending and keep the government running after a short-lived shutdown last month.

"I think the spending in this is reckless and irresponsible," said Rep. Thomas Massie, R-Ky., a conservative who is backed by the tea party.

Sen. Bob Corker, R-Tenn., said the budget agreement was "doubling down on the irresponsible mentality in Congress of spend now, pay later. To say I am discouraged by the outcome of these negotiations would be an understatement."

Corker voted for the recent Republican tax cut after raising similar concerns in the weeks leading up to the vote.

Republicans are pinning their long-term hopes on their \$1.5 trillion tax cut, which they say eventually will stimulate enough economic growth to help reduce the deficit. GOP leaders were using that argument and a desire to boost military spending to sell the budget plan. Congress needs to approve a spending bill by midnight Thursday to avoid a partial government shutdown.

Many in the GOP ranks were willing to sign on despite the soaring deficit.

"It all comes down to one thing — economic growth. That's where you take care of the debt and deficit," said Rep. Dennis Ross, R-Fla.

Republicans supporting the package include defense hawks who say military readiness has been harmed by years of automatic budget cuts known as sequestration. The budget bill boosts defense spending by \$165 billion over two years.

"If you vote no, you're voting against fixing the military," said Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee.

Conservative angst about the growing deficit was valid, he said, "but you are not going to fix them by cutting our military or by failing to provide the equipment that our troops need."

Other lawmakers cited the need to keep the government running and boost domestic spending on infrastructure and programs such as community health centers. The budget plan also was drawing support from Republicans representing states that would benefit from \$89 billion in aid to speed recovery from last year's hurricanes and wildfires.

Still, some Republican lawmakers and conservative activists worried that the deal reinforces the notion that congressional Republicans are not delivering on their promises to slash spending and reduce the size of government.

Sen. Rand Paul, R-Kentucky, said during a lengthy speech on the Senate floor that it was hypocritical for members of his party to criticize trillion dollar deficits under Obama, "and now Republicans are doing the same thing."

Jason Pye, vice president of legislative affairs at Freedom Works, a conservative group that helped launch the tea party movement, said Republicans are retreating on their deficit-reduction message. The House Freedom Caucus, a group of conservatives that grew out of the tea party, denounced the deal for

growing the size of government.

"The only folks who should be voting for this are the debt junkies, who love unsustainable spending bills," said Rep. Mo Brooks, R-Ala., a freedom caucus member.

A leader of the GOP's fiscal conservatives, Rep. Mark Walker of North Carolina, said he understands the frustration.

"You can make a case that it seems to be a little hypocritical because we ranted and raged during the eight years of Obama about the national debt," said Walker, who said he will vote against the budget bill. "If it's truly our core principle, it should be equal whoever is in the White House."

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Internet pioneer, songwriter John Perry Barlow dies at 70

By MATT O'BRIEN, AP Technology Writer

John Perry Barlow, an internet activist and lyricist for the Grateful Dead, has died.

The digital-rights group Electronic Frontier Foundation said Barlow died early Wednesday in his sleep at home in San Francisco. He was 70.

The cause of death was not immediately known. Barlow had been battling a variety of debilitating illnesses since 2015, according to supporters who organized a benefit concert for him in October 2016.

Barlow co-founded the EFF in 1990 to champion free expression and privacy online. In a 1996 manifesto, the "Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace," he argued that the U.S. and other governments shouldn't impose their sovereignty on the "global social space we are building."

"He's one of the very first people who recognized the internet was going to be important because it would help people connect in a way they couldn't in the physical world," said Cindy Cohn, the EFF's executive director.

Some of his policy views evolved over time, but he remained optimistic about the power of the internet to strengthen human connections as long as people weren't silenced by meddling governments or monopolistic businesses.

"He stayed consistent to this core idea that we could make something beautiful, or something awful, and it was up to us," Cohn said.

Barlow was born in rural Sublette County, Wyoming, in 1947 and raised near Pinedale, where his parents were ranchers and his father a state senator.

Barlow has said he grew up as a devout Mormon before leaping into the counterculture of the 1960s. He befriended Bob Weir, one of the Grateful Dead's founding members, when they were boarding school classmates at the Fountain Valley School in Colorado. Barlow graduated from Wesleyan University in 1969.

He later returned to Wyoming, where he ran the family cattle ranch for nearly two decades and dabbled in Republican politics. It was as a rancher in the 1980s that he first began exploring the web's early social networks.

"He saw very clearly that it was a way for those who had previously been disempowered to have a voice and to have agency, be able to express themselves and connect with kindred spirits," said software entrepreneur and EFF co-founder Mitch Kapor.

Kapor and Barlow began collaborating after both were sought out by FBI agents trying to investigate computer crimes.

"They didn't know what they were doing," Kapor said of the agents. "Men with guns, who aren't competent, is very scary."

The duo partnered with another software entrepreneur, John Gilmore, to create the EFF, which hired lawyers and sought to raise awareness about the importance of protecting civil liberties online. Although Barlow wasn't trained in computer science, his charm, oratory skills and big philosophical visions helped propel the cause forward, Kapor said.

By then, Barlow was already famous among fans of the Grateful Dead. He co-wrote several songs with

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Weir, including "Mexicali Blues," "Black Throated Wind" and "Cassidy." With keyboardist Brent Mydland, Barlow wrote "Blow Away" and "We Can Run." He also wrote songs for String Cheese Incident and Burning Spear.

"John had a way of taking life's most difficult things and framing them as challenges, therefore adventures," Weir said in an online post Wednesday. "He was to be admired for that, even emulated. He'll live on in the songs we wrote."

His survivors include three daughters and a granddaughter. His memoir, "Mother American Night: My Life in Crazy Times," is due to be published later this year.

AP Entertainment Writer Mark Kennedy in New York contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to remove "Touch of Grey" and "Brown Eyed Woman," which Barlow did not write, and to specify that the benefit concert was in 2016.

Twitter makes money for first time ever, but problems remain

By BARBARA ORTUTAY, AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Twitter made money for the first time in its nearly 12-year history, a milestone that satisfied investors in the short term but might not resolve the company's broader problems any time soon.

The company is still struggling to get people to sign up, despite the attention President Donald Trump's no-holds barred tweets have drawn to the service. One problem: Anyone can read tweets without signing up. As a result, Twitter's user base pales compared with Facebook and the Facebook-owned Instagram.

And that means fewer advertising opportunities.

Beyond that, Twitter has been dealing with policing hate speech and abusive comments, fake accounts and attempts by Russian agents to spread misinformation. Every time Twitter tries to respond to a problem, it's either not good enough, or some other problem emerges.

"They are playing whack-a-mole with these problems," said Michael Connor, whose Open Mic group helps investors push tech companies to address privacy, abuse and other issues. "They say they have the problem under control, but they don't know what the problem is exactly."

Add to that a revolving door of executives, including an influential chief operating officer leaving after Thursday's earnings report.

Twitter said it had an average of 330 million monthly active users in the final three months of last year, unchanged from the previous quarter and below Wall Street's estimate of 333 million. By contrast, Facebook has 2.2 billion and Instagram has more than 800 million.

Twitter hadn't turned a profit until now because — competing with Facebook, Google and others for digital ad dollars — it didn't attract enough advertising revenue to make up for its expenses. But it's been cutting costs and focusing on new revenue streams, such as live video.

In some good news, the company grew revenue by 2 percent to \$732 million in the final three months of 2017. That's above the \$687 million that analysts polled by FactSet were expecting. Its net income — a first — was \$91 million, or 12 cents per share. Adjusted earnings were 19 cents, above analysts' expectations of 14 cents.

The San Francisco company's stock jumped \$3.27, or 12 percent, to close Thursday at \$30.18. It peaked during the day at \$35, its highest level since 2015.

The quarter "was a breath of fresh air for investors that have patiently awaited for this turnaround story to manifest after years of pain," said Daniel Ives, head of technology research at GBH Insights.

Nonetheless, Twitter has big challenges ahead. Connor said that while investors don't want to micromanage Twitter, they at least want the company "to show that there is a level of management and governance on the senior level in place willing to address these issues."

While Twitter is well-known, it remains difficult to use, making it difficult for the company to explain to people why they need it. Twitter also has an "image problem," Wedbush analyst Michael Pachter said in

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a recent research note, "as it has been slow to act on harassment and other hostile behavior."

The company has enacted a slew of new policies, and Pachter says this renewed focus should help. But enforcing them will be a bigger hurdle .

Connor's group recently helped two large Twitter and Facebook shareholders file resolutions asking the companies to take more responsibility for fake news, abuse and hate speech. The companies have not formally responded, though Twitter has introduced a slew of new measures to weed out abusive account and has said that it "cares deeply" about misinformation and its harmful effect on civic discourse.

Then there's the issue of automated accounts made to look like real people. In the days after a New York Times report on the "shadowy global marketplace" of brands and celebrities buying fake retweets and followers, prominent Twitter users collectively lost more than a million followers, suggesting that Twitter either didn't know or didn't act until the expose.

Fake accounts aren't a new problem. Last June, Twitter said it has been "doubling down" on its efforts to weed out such accounts by "expanding our team and resources, and building new tools and processes." It estimates that less than 5 percent of monthly active users are fake. But the Times referenced a report saying it could be as high as 15 percent.

One chief problem: more fake accounts keep popping up, and those behind them are getting smarter, so Twitter's countermeasures haven't made much of a dent.

Forrester Research analyst Erna Alfred Lioukas said that while rival social networks such as Facebook deal with fake accounts, too, it may be "more elevated for Twitter" because there has been so much focus on its monthly user numbers. Anything that could jeopardize advertisers' ability to see how many people they will reach, she said, "is going to cause concern."

Another concern: last month Chief Operating Officer Anthony Noto announced his resignation from the company following Thursday's earnings report. Noto, who was also finance chief until last July, has served an influential and important role at the company and had led its venture into live video. Twitter said it is not replacing Noto, and instead will split his duties between executives.

"Now (that) he's gone, who's running the company?" Pachter said.

Technically, that's CEO Jack Dorsey. But Dorsey splits his time as head of payments company Square.

Twitter has "less than Jack's undivided attention," Pachter said, adding that nonetheless Dorsey runs the company with a "benevolent autocracy" that leaves little room for innovation.

By contrast, Pachter said Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg "is not afraid if they alter his baby, his invention, to make it better," even if in the end Zuckerberg may be the final arbiter.

Twitter declined to comment. But Dorsey said at a conference late last year that it's "not about the amount of time I spend at one thing but how I spend the time and what we're focused on."

Mars on Earth: Simulation tests in remote desert of Oman

By SAMUEL McNEIL, Associated Press

DHOFAR DESERT, Oman (AP) — Two scientists in spacesuits, stark white against the auburn terrain of desolate plains and dunes, test a geo-radar built to map Mars by dragging the flat box across the rocky sand.

When the geo-radar stops working, the two walk back to their all-terrain vehicles and radio colleagues at their nearby base camp for guidance. They can't turn to their mission command, far off in the Alps, because communications from there are delayed 10 minutes.

But this isn't the red planet — it's the Arabian Peninsula.

The desolate desert in southern Oman, near the borders of Yemen and Saudi Arabia, resembles Mars so much that more than 200 scientists from 25 nations chose it as their location for the next four weeks, to field-test technology for a manned mission to Mars.

Public and private ventures are racing toward Mars — both former President Barack Obama and SpaceX founder Elon Musk declared humans would walk on the red planet in a few decades.

New challengers like China are joining the United States and Russia in space with an ambitious, if vague,

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Mars program. Aerospace corporations like Blue Origin have published schematics of future bases, ships and suits.

The successful launch of SpaceX Falcon Heavy rocket this week “puts us in a completely different realm of what we can put into deep space, what we can send to Mars,” said analog astronaut Kartik Kumar.

The next step to Mars, he says, is to tackle non-engineering problems like medical emergency responses and isolation.

“These are things I think can’t be underestimated.” Kumar said.

While cosmonauts and astronauts are learning valuable spacefaring skills on the International Space Station — and the U.S. is using virtual reality to train scientists — the majority of work to prepare for interplanetary expeditions is being done on Earth.

And where best to field-test equipment and people for the journey to Mars but on some of the planet’s most forbidding spots?

Seen from space, the Dhofar Desert is a flat, brown expanse. Few animals or plants survive in the desert expanses of the Arabian Peninsula, where temperatures can top 125 degrees Fahrenheit, or 51 degrees Celsius.

On the eastern edge of a seemingly endless dune is the Oman Mars Base: a giant 2.4-ton inflated habitat surrounded by shipping containers turned into labs and crew quarters.

There are no airlocks.

The desert’s surface resembles Mars so much, it’s hard to tell the difference, Kumar said, his spacesuit caked in dust. “But it goes deeper than that: the types of geomorphology, all the structures, the salt domes, the riverbeds, the wadis, it parallels a lot of what we see on Mars.”

The Omani government offered to host the Austrian Space Forum’s next Mars simulation during a meeting of the United Nation’s Committee On the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

Gernot Groemer, commander of the Oman Mars simulation and a veteran of 11 science missions on Earth, said the forum quickly accepted.

Scientists from across the world sent ideas for experiments and the mission, named AMADEE-18, quickly grew to 16 scientific experiments, such as testing a “tumbleweed” whip-fast robot rover and a new space-suit called Aouda.

The cutting-edge spacesuit, weighing about 50 kilograms (110 pounds), is called a “personal spaceship” because one can breathe, eat and do hard science inside it. The suit’s visor displays maps, communications and sensor data. A blue piece of foam in front of the chin can be used to wipe your nose and mouth.

“No matter who is going to this grandest voyage of our society yet to come, I think a few things we learn here will be actually implemented in those missions,” Groemer said.

The Soviet Union’s 1957 launch of Sputnik ignited a space race between Moscow and Washington to land a crew on the Moon.

But before the U.S. got there first, astronauts like Neil Armstrong trained suspended on pulleys to simulate one-sixth of Earth’s gravity.

Hostile environments from Arizona to Siberia were used to fine-tune capsules, landers, rovers and suits — simulating otherworldly dangers to be found beyond Earth. Space agencies call them “analogues” because they resemble extraterrestrial extremes of cold and remoteness.

“You can test systems on those locations and see where the breaking points are, and you can see where things start to fail and which design option you need to take in order to assure that it does not fail on Mars,” said João Lousada, one of the Oman simulation’s deputy field commanders who is a flight controller for the space station.

Faux space stations have been built underwater off the coast of Florida, on frigid dark deserts of Antarctica, and in volcanic craters in Hawaii, according to “Packing For Mars,” a favorite book among many Mars scientists, written by Mary Roach.

“Terrestrial analogs are a tool in the toolkit of space exploration, but they are not a panacea,” said Scott Hubbard, known as “Mars czar” back when he led the U.S. space agency’s Mars program. Some simulations have helped developed cameras, rovers, suits and closed-loop life-support systems, he said.

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NASA used the Mojave Desert to test rovers destined for the red planet but they also discovered much about how humans can adapt.

"Human's adaptability in an unstructured environment is still far, far better than any robot we can send to space," Hubbard said, adding that people, not just robots, are the key to exploring Mars.

The European Space Agency's list of "planetary analogues" includes projects in Chile, Peru, South Africa, Namibia, Morocco, Italy, Spain, Canada, Antarctica, Russia, China, Australia, India, Germany, Norway, Iceland, and nine U.S. states. Next Thursday, Israeli scientists are to run a shorter simulation in a nature preserve called D Mars.

However, there remain so many unknowns that simulations "are not in any way a replacement for being there," Hubbard said.

The Oman team's optimism is unflinching.

"The first person to walk on Mars has in fact already been born, and might be going to elementary school now in Oman, or back in Europe, in the U.S. or China," Lousada said.

US skater Rippon wants Pence spat to take backseat to games

By DAVE SKRETTA, AP Sports Writer

GANGNEUNG, South Korea (AP) — Adam Rippon doesn't want his monthlong dispute with Mike Pence over the vice president's record on gay rights to overshadow his long-awaited Olympic performance.

Or those of the rest of the American team.

One of two openly gay U.S. athletes at the Pyeongchang Games, Rippon criticized the White House last month for choosing Pence to lead its official delegation for Friday's opening ceremony.

Pence has been considered an opponent of the LGBT community after the conservative vice president signed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act in March 2015 while serving as governor of Indiana.

Critics said the legislation encouraged discrimination against gay people. An amendment with protections for the LGBT community was passed a week later.

"I don't want to make this too much for my competitors and for my teammates," Rippon said after an afternoon practice session Thursday. "I'm just kind of focused on the competition. The opening ceremony is tomorrow. I don't mind talking about it but I don't want to distract my teammates."

Pence, who arrived in Seoul on Thursday, also tried to bury the story. He tweeted to Rippon: "I want you to know we are FOR YOU. Don't let fake news distract you. I am proud of you and ALL OF OUR GREAT athletes and my only hope for you and all of #TeamUSA is to bring home the gold. Go get 'em!"

Rippon's practice session ended before Pence's tweet, but his mother, Kelly Rippon, told CNN she objected to the vice president calling the story "fake news."

"When people keep saying that word, 'fake news,' over and over again it implies that you can do things and you can never be held accountable for them because you just say that it's fake," Kelly Rippon said. "That repetition of that term I don't think is good."

What Rippon jokingly referred to as "brouhaha" began with an interview with USA Today last month in which he called Pence, among other things, a hypocrite for espousing Christian virtues while standing by some of the divisive and inflammatory statements made by President Donald Trump.

"If he's OK with what's being said about people and Americans and foreigners and about different countries," Rippon said, "I think he should really go to church."

Pence's press secretary, Alyssa Farah, was quick to respond with a sharp rebuke. Farah said in a statement that some of Rippon's statements were "totally false" and had "no basis in fact," including an assertion he made that Pence once championed gay conversion therapy.

Their spat took another twist this week when USA Today, citing unnamed sources, said Pence had requested to speak with Rippon in mid-January but the skater turned down his overtures.

A White House official told reporters traveling with Pence to South Korea that his office did reach out to the U.S. Olympic Committee, offering to meet with Rippon. The vice president's chief of staff, Nick Ayers, called USOC executive Scott Blackmun after Rippon's initial criticism last month and objected to comments

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about gay conversion therapy and wanted to clear up the confusion, a White House official said.

Rippon did not address any of the olive branches Thursday, but he again said he has no interest in meeting with Pence until after the Olympics. The 28-year-old American will debut Monday in the free skate portion of the team event for the medal-contending U.S. squad, then he'll compete later this month with teammates Nathan Chen and Vincent Zhou in the individual competition.

"I mean, after the competition I'll have an open conversation," Rippon said, "but the opening ceremony is tomorrow. I'm really focused on the competition. I've waited 28 years to get here. I'm trying to stay focused. It's my opportunity to show the world what I've got and represent my country."

U.S. skier Gus Kenworthy, who also is gay, has been similarly critical of Pence's role in leading the U.S. delegation, calling him a "strange choice" in an interview with Ellen DeGeneres this week.

Rippon and Kenworthy both say they would skip a White House visit if Team USA is invited.

"I think at the very core I've always spoken my mind, spoken from the heart," Rippon said. "I think as an athlete that's important. And I know not everyone will agree with me, but I think that is what is special about the Olympics. It's a time to come together as athletes and unite."

More AP Olympic coverage: <https://wintergames.ap.org>

Romanian study: Half-day old snow is safe to eat

BUCHAREST, Romania (AP) — How safe is it to eat snow? A Romanian university has published the results of just such a study.

The 2017 experiment showed it was safe to eat snow that was a half-day old, and safer to eat it in the colder months. But by two days old, the snow is not safe to eat, Istvan Mathe, a professor at the Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, told The Associated Press.

Scientists collected snow from a park and from a roundabout in Miercurea Ciuc, central Romania, in January and February and placed it in hermetically-sealed sterile containers. They then tried to grow bacteria and mold in them.

The study took place in temperatures ranging from minus 1.1 degrees Celsius to minus 17.4 C (30 degrees to 0.7 degrees Fahrenheit) in the city, one of the coldest in Romania.

After one day, there were five bacteria per millimeter in January, while in February that number quadrupled. "Very fresh snow has very little bacteria," Mathe said Thursday. "After two days, however, there are dozens of bacteria."

He said the microorganisms increase because of impurities in the air.

Mathe first had the idea for the study when he saw his children eating snow.

"I am not recommending anyone eats snow. Just saying you won't get ill if you eat a bit," he said.

Military bullies beware _ new policy means marks on records

By LOLITA C. BALDOR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Military members who harass or bully people on the job or online can now be certain of a permanent mark on their service record, according to a new Pentagon policy on harassment.

The policy being announced Thursday pulls together a complicated mix of rules governing sexual harassment, bullying, hazing and other forms of hostile online behavior and workplace discrimination. The goal is to clarify the process for victims filing complaints and make sure that those responsible are held to account for their actions.

The overhaul comes almost a year after an online nude photo sharing scandal rocked the Marine Corps. The ensuing criminal investigation forced leaders across all the military services to create more vigorous social media standards. The scandal showed how difficult it is to track or govern inappropriate behavior by military members in the largely anonymous online universe.

Pentagon officials said consolidating various harassment policies will make it easier for victims to report problems, seek help and see the consequences for offenders. Until now, some members of the military

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who engaged in such actions could face punishment but then see any mention of the infractions expunged from their records.

The military services will have 60 days to develop plans to put in place the policy.

"We have a sexual harassment policy, we have a memo that clarifies response and reporting of sexual harassment, we have regulations on hazing and bullying, we have a policy that covers discriminatory harassment," said Elise Van Winkle, the Pentagon's principal director for force resiliency. "What this does is pull these together to cover all forms of harassment."

An important change involves clearer guidelines on how a military member can report harassment, particularly for troops who may belong to one service but work in a job reporting to another service. Army soldiers, for example, can work at an air base overseas and report to an Air Force commander. A Navy officer working at U.S. Pacific Command may have airmen or Marines on staff.

The new policy will allow troops to file harassment complaints wherever they feel most comfortable, though their own service would provide them assistance. An alleged offender probably would go through the justice system. If found guilty, he or she would face punishment from his or her own service.

Standardizing the rules "helps increase the effectiveness of these policies when we deploy them to the field," Van Winkle said.

She said the services will have to set up 24-hour hotlines for harassment questions and complaints. Most services have hotlines for sexual harassment, but this expands the requirement to all forms of bad conduct.

"We owe our service members every protection we can give them," said Robert Wilkie, defense undersecretary for personnel. "While this policy is not perfect, it is a critical milestone in the department's efforts to eliminate harassment and fully prepare the entire force to protect the nation."

Today in History By The Associated Press.

Today in History

Today is Friday, Feb. 9, the 40th day of 2018. There are 325 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 9, 1943, the World War II battle of Guadalcanal in the southwest Pacific ended with an Allied victory over Japanese forces.

On this date:

In 1773, the ninth president of the United States, William Henry Harrison, was born in Charles City County, Virginia.

In 1825, the House of Representatives elected John Quincy Adams president after no candidate received a majority of electoral votes.

In 1861, Jefferson Davis was elected provisional president of the Confederate States of America at a congress held in Montgomery, Alabama.

In 1870, the U.S. Weather Bureau was established.

In 1893, Giuseppe Verdi's last opera, "Falstaff," was first performed in Milan, Italy.

In 1942, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff held its first formal meeting to coordinate military strategy during World War II. Daylight-saving "War Time" went into effect in the United States, with clocks moved one hour forward. The SS Normandie, a former French liner being refitted for the U.S. Navy at a New York pier, caught fire (it capsized early the next morning).

In 1950, in a speech in Wheeling, West Virginia, Sen. Joseph McCarthy, R-Wis., charged the State Department was riddled with Communists.

In 1964, The Beatles made their first live American television appearance on "The Ed Sullivan Show," broadcast from New York on CBS.

In 1971, a magnitude 6.6 earthquake in California's San Fernando Valley claimed 65 lives. The crew of Apollo 14 returned to Earth after man's third landing on the moon.

In 1984, Soviet leader Yuri V. Andropov, 69, died 15 months after succeeding Leonid Brezhnev; he was

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followed by Konstantin U. Chernenko (chehr-NYEN'-koh).

In 1991, voters in Lithuania overwhelmingly endorsed independence from the Soviet Union in a non-binding plebiscite.

In 2002, Britain's Princess Margaret, sister of Queen Elizabeth II, died in London at age 71.

Ten years ago: Democrat Barack Obama swept the Louisiana primary and caucuses in Nebraska and Washington state; Republican Mike Huckabee outpolled John McCain in the Kansas caucuses and Louisiana primary, while McCain won the Washington caucuses. A suicide bomber blasted a political gathering in northwestern Pakistan, killing at least 27 people. Space shuttle Atlantis, carrying a European-built science lab, docked with the international space station.

Five years ago: Hundreds of mourners and dignitaries, including first lady Michelle Obama, packed the funeral service for Hadiya Pendleton, a 15-year-old honor student who was shot and killed Jan. 29 as she stood with friends at a neighborhood park about a mile from President Barack Obama's Chicago home in the Kenwood neighborhood.

One year ago: A federal appeals court refused to reinstate President Donald Trump's ban on travelers from seven predominantly Muslim nations, unanimously rejecting the administration's claim of presidential authority, questioning its motives and concluding that the order was unlikely to survive legal challenges. President Donald Trump reaffirmed America's long-standing "one China" policy in a phone call with Chinese President Xi Jinping, potentially alleviating concerns about a major shift in Washington's relations with Beijing.

Today's Birthdays: Television journalist Roger Mudd is 90. Actress Janet Suzman is 79. Nobel Prize-winning author J.M. Coetzee is 78. Actress-politician Sheila James Kuehl (kyool) (TV: "The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis") is 77. Singer-songwriter Carole King is 76. Actor Joe Pesci is 75. Singer Barbara Lewis is 75. Author Alice Walker is 74. Actress Mia Farrow is 73. Former Sen. Jim Webb, D-Va., is 72. Singer Joe Ely is 71. Actress Judith Light is 69. Rhythm-and-blues musician Dennis "DT" Thomas (Kool & the Gang) is 67. Actor Charles Shaughnessy is 63. Actor Ed Amatrudo is 62. Former Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe is 61. Jazz musician Steve Wilson is 57. Country singer Travis Tritt is 55. Actress Julie Warner is 53. Country singer Danni Leigh is 48. Actress Sharon Case is 47. Actor Jason George is 46. Actress Amber Valletta is 44. Actor-producer Charlie Day is 42. Rock singer Chad Wolf (Carolina Liar) is 42. Actor A.J. Buckley is 41. Rock musician Richard On (O.A.R.) is 39. Actress Ziyi (zee yee) Zhang is 39. Olympic silver and bronze medal figure skater Irina Slutskaya is 39. Actor Tom Hiddleston is 37. Actor David Gallagher is 33. Actor Michael B. Jordan is 31. Actress Rose Leslie is 31. Actress Marina Malota is 30. Actress Camille Winbush is 28. Actor Jimmy Bennett is 22. Actor Evan Roe (TV: "Madam Secretary") is 18.

Thought for Today: "What we call progress is the exchange of one nuisance for another nuisance." — Havelock Ellis, English psychologist (1859-1939).