

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 15, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 217 ~ 1 of 46

"THERE ARE ONLY TWO WAYS  
TO LIVE YOUR LIFE. ONE IS  
AS THOUGH NOTHING IS A  
MIRACLE. THE OTHER IS AS  
THOUGH EVERYTHING  
IS A MIRACLE."  
- ALBERT EINSTEIN -

Chicken Soup  
for the Soul

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## Thursday, Feb. 15

Girls' Basketball hosts Milbank. C game at 5:15 p.m. followed by JV and Varsity  
JH Basketball at Webster: 7th grade at 4 p.m., 8th grade at 5 p.m.

## JOHNSON AGENCY

Real Estate & Insurance

Jay Johnson, Broker

[www.johnsonagencygroton.com](http://www.johnsonagencygroton.com)

102 N Main St. Office: 605/397-2424  
Groton, SD 57445 Home: 605/397-8565



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

**The cardboard/paper**  
recycling trailer at the school is

**Closed**

## Groton Prairie Mixed

Cheetahs 7, Chipmunks 5, Shih Tzus 4, Jackelopes 4, Foxes 3, Coyotes 1  
High game: Men – Brad Waage 227, 223, 217, Roger Spanier 226, Brad Larson 211, 199  
Women – Nicole Kassube 164, Karen Spanier 160, Vicki Walter 159  
High series: Men – Brad Waage 667, Brad Larson 580, Roger Spanier 566  
Women – Sue Stanley 468, Karen Spanier 468, Vicki Walter 451

## Clay Target League Sign-up is Feb. 19

There will be a parent meeting and sign up for students in grades 6-12 interested in participating in the South Dakota Clay Target League on Monday, February 19 at 7:00 PM in the GHS Gymnasium.

Questions should be direction to Stephan Wright (605-396-7695) or Tom Mahan (605-380-1253).



## Kiwanis Club gains new members

**Groton Kiwanis Club new members this past year, are L-R - Reid Litch, Kiwanis president; and new members, Chuck Padfield, Kiersten Sombke, Michelle Muilenberg, and Scott Hanlon, (Groton Mayor). Lee Schinkel and Roger Rix were their sponsors.**

## Outdoor Recreation Projects Funded

PIERRE, S.D. – Gov. Dennis Daugaard has awarded a total of \$424,862 in Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grants to several communities. The federal assistance program provides up to 50 percent reimbursement for outdoor recreation projects.

The following communities were awarded LWCF grants for outdoor recreation projects:

Aberdeen – Wylie Park Land of Oz playground development, \$50,000

Blunt – City Park playground equipment replacement, \$38,383

Box Elder – Community Park playground equipment replacement, \$70,000

Colton – Redway Park playground equipment replacement, \$15,935

Doland – City Park splash pad development, \$59,120

Freeman – Lions Park playground equipment replacement, \$30,000

Herried – Karl Deibert Park playground equipment replacement, \$54,408

Sisseton – development of 2 baseball fields, \$75,000

Tabor – Takota Park playground equipment replacement, \$20,000

Viborg – Glood Park playground equipment replacement, \$12,016

"I commend these project sponsors for their strong commitment to improve their communities and make South Dakota a better place to live, work and play," Gov. Daugaard said. "Their efforts will benefit future generations of South Dakotans."

Land and Water Conservation Funds come from the National Park Service and are administered in South Dakota by the state Department of Game, Fish and Parks.

For more information on the LWCF program, contact grants coordinator Randy Kittle at 605.773.5490 or [randy.kittle@state.sd.us](mailto:randy.kittle@state.sd.us).

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## Today in Weather History

February 15, 1969: Heavy snow along with winds of 15 to 25 mph caused blowing and drifting snow which closed many roads. The heaviest snow fell in the southeast part of the state where up to one and a half feet of snow was reported.

February 15, 1990: Heavy snow developed across southwest South Dakota early on the 15th and moved slowly across the state before ending early on the 16th. A narrow band of 10 to 12 inches accumulated in Central South Dakota from Pierre to near Huron. Lesser amounts of 3 to 6 inches fell north and south of the heavy snow band. Some of the heavier snowfall amounts included, 6 inches at Aberdeen and Sioux Falls, 10 inches Pierre, and 12 inches at Huron.

1982: A "meteorological bomb" exploded in the Atlantic southeast of Newfoundland. The term is used to describe a storm that rapidly intensifies. An intense cyclone off the Atlantic coast capsized a drilling rig killing 84 persons, and sank a Soviet freighter resulting in 33 more deaths. The storm produced 80 mph winds that whipped the water into waves fifty feet high.

2000: Amarillo, Texas set unusual temperature records today. The high of 82 degrees smashed the old daily high of 76 degrees set in 1921. The morning low of 41 degrees broke the old high-low record for the date of 40 degrees, which was also set in 1921.

1895 - A big Gulf snowstorm produced six inches at Brownsville TX and Mobile AL, 15 inches at Galveston TX, and 24 inches of snow at Rayne LA in 24 hours. Snow fell at the very mouth of the Mississippi River. Houston TX received 22 inches of snow, and nine inches blanketed New Orleans LA. (David Ludlum)

1936 - The temperature at Parshall ND plunged to 60 degrees below zero to establish a state record. On the 6th of July that same year the temperature at Steele ND hit 121 degrees, also a state record. (David Ludlum)

1982 - An intense cyclone off the Atlantic coast capsized a drilling rig killing 84 persons, and sank a Soviet freighter resulting in 33 more deaths. The cyclone produced 80 mph winds which whipped the water into waves fifty feet high. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A storm crossing the central U.S. produced severe thunderstorms which spawned tornadoes in Louisiana and Mississippi. Tornadoes injured four persons at Pierre Pass LA, three persons at Tangipahoa LA, two persons at Lexie MS and two persons at Nicholson MS. Thunderstorm winds gusting to 100 mph killed one person south of Sulphur LA. Jackson MS was drenched with 1.5 inches of rain in ten minutes. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Low pressure brought heavy snow to parts of Michigan, with eleven inches reported at Rogers City. A cold front crossing the Northern Rockies produced wind gusts to 74 mph at Livingston MT, and created blizzard conditions in Idaho. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thirty-seven cities in the southeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 80 degrees at Atlanta GA was a February record. Highs of 79 degrees at Chattanooga TN, 84 degrees at Columbia SC and 85 degrees at New Orleans LA equalled February records. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Snow, sleet and freezing rain along an arctic cold front prevailed from the north central U.S. to the Northern Atlantic Coast Region. High winds created near blizzard conditions in southern Wyoming, closing Interstate 80, while up to eleven inches of snow fell across central Minnesota.

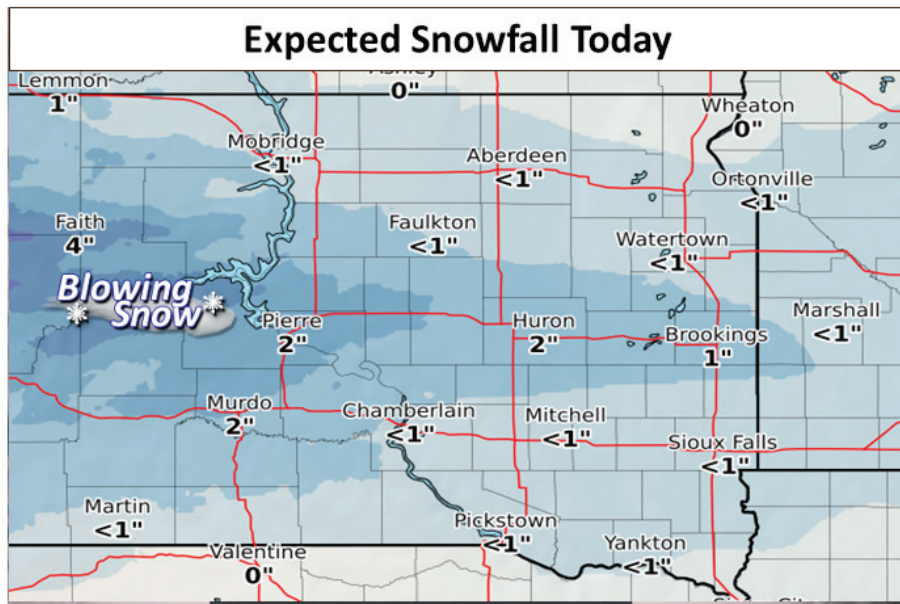
1990 - Heavy snow also blanketed the Northern Atlantic Coast States, with ten inches reported at Buffalo NY and Mount Washington NH. Freezing rain over southern New England knocked out electricity to more than 10,000 homes in the western suburbs of Boston MA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2004 - Up to 11 inches of snow fell in areas south of Nashville, TN, causing power outages and producing hazardous driving conditions. The Weather Doctor

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Thu Feb 15	Fri Feb 16	Sat Feb 17	Sun Feb 18	Mon Feb 19	Tue Feb 20	Wed Feb 21
28°F	25°F	28°F	25°F	9°F	10°F	14°F
-5°F	13°F	8°F	1°F	-4°F	-7°F	12°F
N 22 MPH	SW 17 MPH	NW 15 MPH	ENE 15 MPH	N 17 MPH	NNW 9 MPH	SW 8 MPH
Precip 40%			Precip 50%	Precip 60%	Precip 10%	



**Today**

Temperatures Falling  
Light Snowfall

**Friday**

Dry Conditions  
20 to 35°

Published on: 02/15/2018 at 5:34AM

2/15/2018 5:28 AM

A cold front will slide across the region with temperatures falling throughout the day. Light, accumulating snow will be possible along this front. The combination of falling snow and gusty northerly winds will produce patchy blowing snow, mainly in central and western South Dakota.

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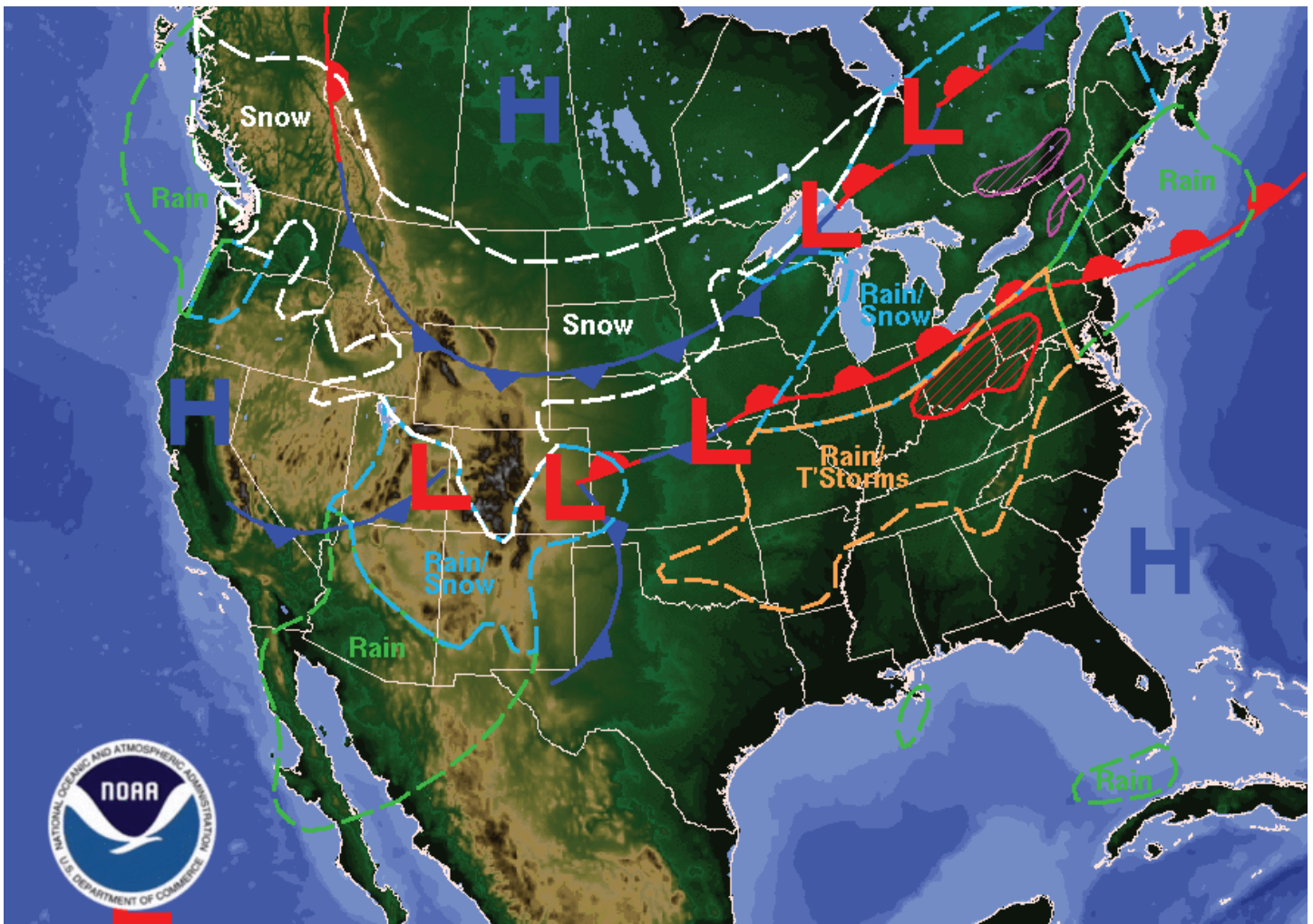
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## Yesterday's Weather

**High Outside Temp: 45.3 F at 5:11 PM**  
**Low Outside Temp: 10.1 F at 7:38 AM**  
**Wind Chill:**  
**High Gust: 20.0 Mph at 10:04 AM**  
**Precip: 0.00**

## Today's Info

**Record High: 65° in 1921**  
**Record Low: -35° in 1939**  
**Average High: 28°F**  
**Average Low: 7°F**  
**Average Precip in Feb: 0.25**  
**Precip to date in Feb: 0.00**  
**Average Precip to date: 0.72**  
**Precip Year to Date: 0.00**  
**Sunset Tonight: 6:01 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:33 a.m.**



### Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Thu, Feb 15, 2018, issued 4:52 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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## IN AND THROUGH - BUT NOT FROM

It was the middle of the night when the nurse entered my hospital room to take my "vital signs." With quiet confidence she went through her routine reading and recording various numbers.

As she was about to leave my room she stopped and said, "I'm sorry that I had to awaken you."

"Oh, you didn't awaken me," I replied. "Somehow I can't fall asleep tonight."

"Well, have you been saying the Lord's prayer?" she asked. "You know you'll do much better praying the Lord's Prayer than counting all those sheep people talk about. And besides, sheep don't count anyway. Only the Lord does."

As the door closed behind her, I began to recite the Lord's Prayer. When I got to the phrase "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" a sense of peace swept over me. As I reflected on those two words – "your will" – God spoke to me and said, "You know, I never said that you would be spared from the pain and suffering of life. Only that I would be with you and guard you in and through your life's journey and 'deliver you from the snare of the fowler.'" In His will we are always safe and secure.

Often the "snares" of the "fowler" appear when we least expect them. Satan would encourage us to doubt God's capabilities or care, His concern or compassion. Certainly the devil would be delighted if we came to the conclusion that our problems are beyond God's power. Surely he would want us to believe that God has favorites and we are just beyond His grace. But not so! God will protect His own!

Prayer: We thank You, Lord, for the assurance we have knowing that if You are for us, no one can destroy us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 91:3 Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler And from the perilous pestilence.

## 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

### President Orders Flags At Half-Staff For Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Victims

PIERRE, S.D. – President Donald Trump has called for flags at half-staff as a mark of solemn respect for the victims of the terrible act of violence perpetrated at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida on Wednesday, February 14.

In accordance with the President's order, Gov. Dennis Daugaard asks that flags across the state be lowered immediately and remain at half-mast until sunset on Monday, February 19.

## News from the Associated Press

### **3 people receive medical treatment after Sioux Falls fire**

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Three people received medical treatment after a small fire in a mixed-used building in Sioux Falls.

The fire department says two people were treated by paramedics at the scene for smoke inhalation and a third was taken to a hospital with unspecified injuries after the fire shortly before 12:30 a.m. Thursday.

Firefighters who responded to the scene used a letter to rescue people who were hanging out of a second-floor window. Inside, firefighters found a small fire in a stairwell between the second and third floors.

It was extinguished within 10 minutes and the building was ventilated to remove smoke. The cause of the fire wasn't immediately determined.

### **Fired veterans service officer appeals to Labor Department**

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — Davison County's former veterans service officer is appealing her firing to South Dakota's Labor Department.

Jessica Davidson alleges her November termination was in response to her "whistleblowing" on the state Department of Veterans Affairs. She had raised concerns about errors in veterans' files and what she felt was improper use of military insignia on souvenir coins.

Labor Deputy Secretary Tom Hart tells The Daily Republic that an administrative law judge will conduct a hearing and investigation on whether Davidson's firing violated state law. He says the typical grievance appeal takes three to five months to complete.

County Deputy State's Attorney James Taylor maintains that Davidson's claims are without merit.

### **No lower bond for suspect shot by Bismarck police officer**

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — A judge has refused to lower bond for a man accused of trying to hit a police officer with his vehicle in North Dakota.

Twenty-two-year-old Ulises Villalobos-Alvarado is jailed in Bismarck in lieu of \$500,000 cash bond on felony charges of attempted murder and fleeing a peace officer.

Defense attorney Bobbi Weiler on Wednesday asked for a reduction to \$10,000. Prosecutors objected, and Judge James Hill refused, citing a perceived risk to the community and law enforcement.

Villalobos-Alvarado is accused of trying to run over a Bismarck officer who subsequently shot him in the arm during a probation search on Jan. 18. He later turned himself in at a gas station in Brookings, South Dakota.

## **SD Lottery**

**By The Associated Press**

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

Dakota Cash

09-14-15-17-29

(nine, fourteen, fifteen, seventeen, twenty-nine)

Estimated jackpot: \$20,000

Lotto America

01-02-13-15-28, Star Ball: 10, ASB: 2

(one, two, thirteen, fifteen, twenty-eight; Star Ball: ten; ASB: two)



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Estimated jackpot: \$20.98 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$168 million

Powerball

37-39-44-46-69, Powerball: 26, Power Play: 2

(thirty-seven, thirty-nine, forty-four, forty-six, sixty-nine; Powerball: twenty-six; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$203 million

## South Dakota jumps out in 2nd half, beats Oral Roberts 85-67

TULSA, Okla. (AP) — Tyler Hagedorn had 20 points and 10 rebounds and South Dakota opened the second half on a 31-8 run and beat Oral Roberts 85-67 on Wednesday night.

South Dakota (23-6, 10-2 Summit League) has won five straight and a Division I program-best 23 games. The Coyotes have two games remaining, and are a half-game back of league leader South Dakota State (10-1). The two meet in the regular season finale on Feb. 22.

The Golden Eagles had a 41-33 halftime advantage, but Matt Mooney scored 12 points, Hagedorn added six and Tyler Peterson scored all six of his points to open the second half and the Coyotes led 64-49 with 9:33 remaining.

Mooney made three 3-pointers and finished with 19 points for South Dakota. Triston Simpson chipped in 14 points.

Javan White scored 15 points and grabbed 11 rebounds to lead Oral Roberts (10-19, 4-8), which has lost four of its last five games. Austin Ruder added 13 points and Emmanuel Nzekwesi 10.

## House panel passes geographic signature rule for initiatives

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota House committee has approved a bill that would impose tougher rules on citizens trying to put initiatives on the ballot.

The House State Affairs Committee voted Wednesday to send the bill to the full chamber.

It would require ballot measure campaigns to collect signatures from a majority of the state's Senate districts when supporters gather names to qualify questions for the ballot.

Right now, the state doesn't mandate a specific geographic distribution for signatures.

House Speaker Pro Tempore Steven Haugaard, the sponsor, says the bill represents an opportunity for sponsors to get a measure on the ballot that also "reflects the entire character of the state."

House Democratic leader Spencer Hawley says the requirement is an undue burden meant to "hold down" ballot questions.

## Northwestern Indiana police shoot man armed with knife

MERRILLVILLE, Ind. (AP) — Police in northwestern Indiana say officers have fatally shot a man armed with a knife who had chased an employee at a car dealership.

Northwest Indiana Major Crimes Task Force spokesman Greg Mance says the man was pronounced dead at a hospital following the midday shooting Wednesday at Art Hill Ford in Merrillville, about 30 miles southeast of Chicago.

The Lake County Coroner's Office identified the man as 30-year-old Jimmy Terry of Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Mance tells The (Northwest Indiana) Times a 911 caller said a man armed with a knife was "chasing an employee" inside the dealership. Mance says that as officers arrived, Terry was driving away from the dealership and was shot during a traffic stop.

Mance declined to say what led officers to open fire.

Information from: The Times, <http://www.nwitimes.com>

## **Security camera captures cougar video in southeast Wisconsin**

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — The Department of Natural Resources confirms that a Wisconsin homeowner captured video of a cougar near their home.

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reports a surveillance camera captured the big cat walking outside a Washington County home last week. The DNR said the cougar was likely traveling through.

Scott Walter, a DNR large carnivore specialist, calls a cougar's ability to cover ground "very impressive."

Despite a handful of recent sightings, the department said cougar sightings are rare in Wisconsin.

Cougars' nearest established population is in the Black Hills area of South Dakota. Cougars dispersing into Wisconsin likely originate from there, according to wildlife experts.

Walter said in one instance, DNR agents tracked a cougar at least 1,800 miles from northeastern Wisconsin to the East Coast.

## **SD lawmaker: No idea how racy joke ended up on Facebook page**

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota lawmaker says he does not know how a racy image and joke appeared on his personal Facebook page, and that he had the post deleted as soon as he found out about it.

Republican Representative Tim Goodwin of Rapid City says he was in "shock" when he saw the post and had to get a legislative page to take it down when he found out about it Wednesday. Goodwin says he did not post it.

KELO.com reports the photo was of a woman with a plunging neckline along with a joke about the size of a woman's breasts.

Goodwin tells The Associated Press he has a "crystal clean record of respecting the other sex" and would never post something "off-color."

Goodwin says he was among South Dakota lawmakers who attended sexual harassment training last month.

## **Under-21 tobacco sales ban rejected by South Dakota House**

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota House lawmakers have voted down a bill that would have raised the legal age to buy tobacco from 18 to 21.

The chamber rejected the bill Wednesday. It hadn't yet gone through the state Senate. Republican Rep. Leslie Heinemann, the sponsor, says it had been predicted to reduce the smoking rate.

Lobbyists for stores that sell tobacco have opposed the bill. House Majority Leader Lee Qualm says he couldn't support legislation denying the purchase of a legal product to people otherwise treated as adults.

The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids says California, New Jersey, Oregon, Hawaii and Maine, along with many localities, have increased the tobacco age to 21.

## **South Dakota, Marsy's Law campaign reach amendment deal**

**By JAMES NORD, Associated Press**

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota lawmakers advanced changes Wednesday to a constitutional bill of rights for crime victims under an agreement with the group that has persuaded voters in several states to approve "Marsy's Law."

The state would be the first to alter Marsy's Law of the six that have enacted it. But amendment supporters have committed to helping pass the new changes at the ballot, offering a major boost to South Dakota lawmakers seeking to overhaul provisions of the measure voters approved in 2016.

House Speaker Mark Mickelson earlier this legislative session proposed getting rid of the constitutional

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amendment and instead strengthening victims' rights in state law. He and others worked with the Marsy's Law campaign on the deal, which strategy consultant Ryan Erwin says maintains the "enforceable, constitutional rights" that citizens approved.

"Voters are more likely to be receptive to positive improvements to this knowing that the constitutional rights will be protected," Erwin said. "I anticipate that this will be very popular with voters."

The measure passed with about 60 percent support in 2016. It guarantees crime victims and their family members the right to privacy, protection from harassment or abuse and timely notice of trial, sentencing and post-judgment proceedings.

It's named after California college student Marsalee "Marsy" Nicholas, who was stalked and killed in 1983 by an ex-boyfriend.

Her brother, billionaire Henry Nicholas, has bankrolled constitutional amendments approved by voters in California, Ohio, Illinois, Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota. Montana's Supreme Court recently tossed the constitutional amendment that voters approved in 2016, citing flaws in how it was written.

In South Dakota, brokered peace will spare lawmakers from running a race against a well-funded opponent. The Marsy's Law campaign spent more than \$2 million to enshrine the 2016 amendment in the constitution with minimal opposition.

Mickelson, the sponsor of the proposed alterations, said the amendment has had unintended consequences. Critics say it's causing problems for law enforcement and prosecutors and spiking costs for counties.

Lynne Forbush told lawmakers that her husband was killed after a 16-year-old driver crossed a highway center line in South Dakota. She said the other driver's mother invoked Marsy's Law, forcing her to hire a lawyer to get an accident report to get an insurance claim started.

When Forbush's family members asked about Marsy's Law, she said they were told nobody knew how to handle the amendment because it was poorly written.

"It seemed like a hot potato that no one wanted to touch," she said. "Marsy's Law added to our emotional pain, added to the financial burden and prolonged the agony unnecessarily."

Minnehaha County Sheriff Mike Milstead has said his office depends on the eyes and ears of the public to help the Sioux Falls-based department solve cases, but the amendment has limited the information they can provide.

Pennington County State's Attorney Mark Vargo had to add four victims' advocates after the amendment passed to make sure the office could stay in compliance. Vargo said he thinks the new plan will be "much more streamlined."

The proposal would ask voters to make changes to the amendment including requiring victims to opt into many rights, explicitly allowing authorities to share information with the public to help solve crimes and limiting the definition of a victim.

"It will allow us to focus on the victims that are truly most in need of help through what is a very frightening time for victims," Vargo said.

The House State Affairs Committee voted unanimously to move the proposal to the chamber's floor. It also would have to pass through the state Senate before heading to voters.

Erwin said the Marsy's Law campaign would like the proposal to appear on the June primary ballot, rather than waiting to go before November voters. Mickelson said he would back the move if it has "broad bipartisan support."

## House passes out-of-state money cap for ballot questions

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A bill to restrict the flow of money from outside South Dakota into the state's ballot question campaigns is moving forward after faltering in the state House.

The bill passed out of the chamber Wednesday with no votes to spare after falling one short the day before. It now heads to the Senate.

The measure would restrict out-of-state donors to \$100,000 in contributions to a South Dakota ballot question campaign per general election cycle.

Republican Rep. Spencer Gosch, the sponsor, has said officials need to give the ballot measure process back to South Dakota citizens.

Republican Rep. David Lust, who opposed the bill, says residents are savvy enough to sort through different sources of speech.

The plan failed in a Senate committee last year.

## Sioux Falls officials defend boozy cupcake business

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sioux Falls officials are looking into local food laws after an online business selling alcohol-infused cupcakes closed amid legal uncertainty.

Intoxibakes consulted with regulators before opening to confirm they didn't need a liquor license to serve boozy sweets, including RumChata and Bourbon Maple Bacon cupcakes. But the business stopped all sales last week after receiving a note from City Hall saying it's illegal to make cupcakes with alcohol, the Argus Leader reported.

A South Dakota law protecting against "adulterated" foods says a confectionary is adulterated if made with "any vinous, malt, or spirituous liquor or compound or narcotic drug." Adulterated foods can often contain dangerous substances, such as E. coli, metal shavings or rat poison.

After learning about the business closing, Councilwoman Theresa Stehly posted the story on her Facebook page. She said several residents reached out and asked councilors to investigate.

"I just don't want any citizen to ever be hurt by government," Stehly said of Intoxibakes co-owner Holly Boltjes. "And from what it looks like from the outside, she tried to do everything right and she got caught up in a governmental quagmire."

"For me, it was concerning because we are such an entrepreneurial community, where we want people to go out and start their own businesses," Councilwoman Christine Erickson said.

She said she's contacted lawmakers to see if anything can be done by the end of the legislative session. Erickson also said she plans to contact the Department of Revenue, which oversees liquor licensing and handles complaints about alcohol in food.

"If it is the way it is, how can we change it?" Erickson said. "Right now, it's in the information gathering stage."

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

## Voters to decide South Dakota county's \$4.5M courthouse

OLIVET, S.D. (AP) — A special election will be held this spring for voters in southeast South Dakota to decide whether the county should build a new \$4.5 million courthouse.

Earlier this month, the Hutchinson County Commission agreed to move forward with replacing the current courthouse, which was built in 1881 and is the oldest in use in the state.

But County Auditor Diane Murtha told the Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan that petitions seeking a public vote contained enough valid signatures to force a special election. It likely will be scheduled April 10.

Commissioners sought a new \$4.5 million courthouse instead of remodeling the current facility, which was estimated to cost \$3.5 million.

Opponents have raised concerns about the location and necessity of a new courthouse. They also have questioned both of the projected costs for a new building or remodeling.

County officials have said the current courthouse has mold, water damage, cracks and other structural deficiencies. It also lacks handicapped accessibility and adequate courtroom space.

Commissioner Steve Friesen said the current building's problems won't go away even if voters reject a new courthouse. He said there's no way of repairing the current courthouse "without a lot of headaches."

Murtha said holding the special election will be costly.

"People have got to realize this is a county-wide election, so this is going to cost as much as (each of) the primary and general elections," she said. "In 2016, those elections cost (the county) a combined \$73,000."

And I have no budget for this special election in April.”

Commissioners will hold a special meeting at the courthouse on Feb. 20, where the public can take tours of the current facility. They'll present the details of the project and tape the presentation for later showing on local television access channels.

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

## Activist facing riot trial seeks judge's help with evidence

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON, Associated Press**

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — An American Indian activist accused of inciting a riot during protests in North Dakota against the Dakota Access oil pipeline wants a judge to force prosecutors to obtain and turn over evidence from private security firms.

The request by an attorney for Chase Iron Eyes says public law enforcement and private security worked together during the prolonged protests. That means private security workers were agents of the state and the government is obligated to turn over evidence from them that could benefit Iron Eyes, attorney Alexander Reichert argues.

Prosecutors Chase Lingle and Allen Kopyy are fighting the effort, saying the defense team is trying “to avoid having to subpoena information at their own expense.” They also say the defense is basing its claim largely on what prosecutors say are unreliable media reports about the interaction of public law enforcement and private security.

Iron Eyes and 73 others were arrested Feb. 1, 2017, after erecting teepees on land in southern North Dakota that authorities said is owned by Energy Transfer Partners. Protesters said they were peacefully assembling on land they believe rightfully belongs to American Indians under old treaties.

The Texas-based developer of the pipeline, Energy Transfer Partners, faced criticism from pipeline opponents over its use of North Carolina-based TigerSwan to help provide security. TigerSwan was founded by retired military special forces members. Internal company documents published by online news outlet The Intercept last year indicate that employees used military-style counter-terrorism measures, had a close working relationship with public law enforcement and used propaganda.

TigerSwan maintains it's the victim of a smear campaign. The company also contends it provided only consulting services in North Dakota and that on-the-ground security was handled by other companies.

Iron Eyes is seeking to gather more evidence to present a “necessity” defense, in which a suspect argues a crime was justified because it prevented a greater harm. Iron Eyes hopes to show that civil disobedience was his only option to resist a pipeline's incursion on his ancestral lands and to prevent a “civil rights conspiracy” to portray pipeline opponents as terrorists.

Iron Eyes has pleaded not guilty to felony inciting a riot and misdemeanor criminal trespassing. He could face up to five years in prison if convicted of the more serious charge. He's scheduled for a two-week trial beginning Aug. 13.

A judge during a November hearing gave the defense permission to request more material from the prosecution, including information that might give more insight into the efforts of law enforcement and pipeline private security. But Lingle at the time said he thought all available information had been given to the defense.

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

## South Dakota Senate panel rejects bathroom sign requirement

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Senate lawmakers have rejected a bill that would have mandated public restroom doors be posted notifying bathroom users that a person of the opposite sex may be inside.

The Senate State Affairs Committee voted unanimously Wednesday against the bill. Republican Sen. Phil

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Jensen, the sponsor says, the measure was a "child protection bill."

The proposal would have required people in charge of maintaining multi-person or unisex public restrooms to post the signs.

Republican Sen. Bob Ewing, the committee chairman, says the bill is "somewhat poorly written and leaves a lot of doors open."

## 70 years in prison for Rapid City stabbing

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Rapid City man has been sentenced to 70 years in prison for killing a woman he grew up with at a motel last spring.

Twenty-four-year-old Vincent Mousseaux had earlier pleaded guilty to first-degree manslaughter in the killing of 30-year-old Deziree Martinez at the Price Motel on March 8. Authorities say he and the victim grew up in the same foster family.

The Rapid City Journal says South Dakota Assistant Attorney General Scott Roetzel argued for a life sentence, noting that Martinez was stabbed at least 40 times following an argument. The defense asked for a "reasonable sentence" at Monday's hearing.

Police found Martinez's body at the motel after a passer-by saw her body because her room door was open. She had six children.

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

## Bipartisan immigration pact among several Senate proposals

By ALAN FRAM and KEVIN FREKING, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A group of senators reached a bipartisan agreement aimed at balancing Democrats' fight to offer citizenship to young "Dreamer" immigrants with President Donald Trump's demands for billions to build his coveted border wall with Mexico. Overnight, the Trump administration denounced the deal.

The compromise was announced Wednesday by 16 senators with centrist views on the issue and was winning support from many Democrats, but it faced an uncertain fate. Leaders were trying to schedule votes on that plan and three other immigration proposals for Thursday, which they hoped would bring the chamber's showdown over the hot-button issue to a close.

Trump on Wednesday urged lawmakers to oppose any plan that doesn't meet his more stringent demands, which include curbs on legal immigration and the abolition of a visa lottery. The Senate's No. 2 Republican, John Cornyn of Texas, warned that lawmakers need to address Trump's entire proposal, saying, "We need to take the president seriously."

Trump's Department of Homeland Security, in a statement issued just before 1 a.m. Thursday, condemned the deal, saying it will "create a mass amnesty for over 10 million illegal aliens, including criminals."

The statement said the compromises would "be the end of immigration enforcement in America and only serve to draw millions more illegal aliens with no way to remove them."

There were also qualms among Democrats. The party's No. 2 Senate leader, Dick Durbin of Illinois, said some Democrats had "serious issues" with parts of the plan. Those concerns focused on its spending for Trump's wall and its bar against Dreamers sponsoring their parents for legal residency.

"We're not there yet," Durbin said of the 60 votes the proposal would need for approval.

So far, no other proposals from either side seem able to do that. Republicans control the chamber 51-49, though Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., has missed the last several weeks while battling cancer.

The bipartisan measure's sponsors included eight GOP senators. That meant just three more Republicans would be needed for it to prevail if it is backed by all 47 Democrats and the two independents who usually support them.

The compromise emerged as senators spent a third day of debate largely as they spent the first two — with the chamber floor mostly empty. Other than an initial roll call allowing formal debate to begin, there

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have been no other votes while party leaders talk behind the scenes about scheduling votes on specific proposals.

The centrist proposal was produced by a group led by Sens. Susan Collins, R-Maine, and Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., that spent weeks seeking middle ground.

It would grant a 10- to 12-year route to citizenship for 1.8 million Dreamers, participants said.

That's the same number Trump has suggested helping with his own wider-ranging but more restrictive proposal. Dreamers are young immigrants who were brought to the U.S. illegally as children and still have no permanent protection from deportation.

The plan would provide \$25 billion over a decade, \$2.5 billion annually, for a wall and other border security measures, the same total Trump has requested. It would bar Dreamers from sponsoring their parents for citizenship, far narrower than Trump's proposal to prevent all legal immigrants from bringing parents and siblings to the U.S.

The moderates' measure does not alter a lottery that distributes about 55,000 visas annually to people from diverse countries. Trump has proposed ending it and redistributing its visas to other immigrants, including some who are admitted based on job skills, not family ties.

"The diversity lottery is kind of toxic politically because of some of the things said by the president," said Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., a reference to a vulgar description Trump used for African countries during a discussion of immigration.

The White House issued a written statement by Trump urging senators to back his bill and "oppose any legislation that fails to fulfill" his demands. But the statement did not say Trump would veto a bill that fell short of them.

A GOP measure tracking Trump's proposal and backed by McConnell has been introduced and was expected to receive a vote. Few expect it to attract 60 votes, but Sen. Mike Rounds, R-S.D., said he believed the bipartisan proposal could.

If that happens, Rounds said, "We'll allow the president to determine whether or not it moves in the direction that he wants."

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., indirectly embraced the bipartisan plan, saying, "Each side has had to give a great deal, but we are closer than we have ever been to passing something in the Senate to help the Dreamers."

Also in play is a more modest plan by McCain and Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del. It would let many Dreamers qualify for permanent residency and direct federal agencies to more effectively control the border by 2020. But it doesn't offer a special citizenship pathway for Dreamers, raise border security funds or make sweeping changes in legal immigration rules.

The White House said it opposes the McCain-Coons plan, saying it would "increase illegal immigration" and cause other problems.

Another vote will be taken on a proposal by Sen. Pat Toomey, R-Pa., that would add language blocking federal grants to "sanctuary cities," communities that don't cooperate with federal efforts to enforce immigration laws. The amendment is considered sure to lose.

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Associated Press writer Andrew Taylor contributed to this report.

## Ramaphosa elected as South Africa's new president

By CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA, Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — Cyril Ramaphosa on Thursday was elected as South Africa's new president by ruling party legislators after the resignation of Jacob Zuma, whose scandals brought the storied African National Congress to its weakest point since taking power at the end of apartheid.

Ramaphosa was the only candidate nominated for election in the parliament after two opposition parties said they would not participate. The opposition parties instead unsuccessfully called for the dissolution of the National Assembly and early elections.

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Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng presided over the parliamentary election and congratulated Ramaphosa, who had been Zuma's deputy and has called for a fight against corruption.

Zuma resigned after years of scandals that damaged the stature of the ruling ANC party, which had instructed him this week to step down or face a parliamentary motion of no confidence that he would almost certainly lose. Zuma denies any wrongdoing.

Ramaphosa is South Africa's fifth president since majority rule started after the end of apartheid in 1994. On Friday evening, he is expected to deliver the state of the nation address that had been postponed during the ruling party's days of closed-door negotiations to persuade Zuma to resign.

As some South Africans cheered the end to Zuma's era, the rand currency strengthened against the dollar in early trading Thursday.

The opposition Democratic Alliance party will cooperate with Ramaphosa if he acts in the interests of the South African people, said party leader Mmusi Maimane.

"We will hold you accountable and I will see you in 2019 on the ballot box," Maimane said.

Members of a smaller opposition party walked out of parliament before the election, saying the ruling ANC party plan to choose a new president was "illegitimate."

Julius Malema, leader of the Economic Freedom Fighters party, said ANC lawmakers had failed to hold former Zuma to account for alleged corruption and had therefore violated the constitution.

On Thursday the foundation of Nelson Mandela, South Africa's first black president, welcomed Zuma's departure but said the state must act against "networks of criminality" that have hurt the country's democracy.

As the country marks the centenary of Mandela's 1918 birth, "there is a need to reckon with the failures of the democratic era," the foundation said. "We believe that we are at a critical moment in our history, one which offers us the unique opportunity to reflect, to rebuild, and to transform."

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Follow Christopher Torchia on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/torchiachris](http://www.twitter.com/torchiachris)

## Florida teen charged with 17 murders legally bought AR-15

By TERRY SPENCER and KELLI KENNEDY, Associated Press

PARKLAND, Fla. (AP) — An orphaned 19-year-old with a troubled past and his own AR-15 rifle was charged with 17 counts of premeditated murder Thursday morning after being questioned for hours by state and federal authorities following the deadliest school shooting in the U.S. in five years.

Fourteen wounded survivors were hospitalized as bodies were recovered from inside and around Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

Nikolas Cruz, still wearing a hospital gown after being treated for labored breathing, and weighing in at 5-foot-7 and 131 pounds, was ordered held without bond and booked into jail.

His former classmates thought they were having another drill Wednesday afternoon when a fire alarm sounded, requiring them to file out of their classrooms.

That's when police say Cruz, equipped with a gas mask, smoke grenades and multiple magazines of ammunition, opened fire with a semi-automatic weapon, killing 17 people and sending hundreds of students fleeing into the streets.

It was the nation's deadliest school shooting since a gunman attacked an elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut, more than five years ago. The overall death toll differs by how such shootings are defined, but Everytown For Gun Safety has tallied 290 school shootings in America since 2013, and this attack makes 18 so far this year.

Cruz purchased the AR-15 legally about a year ago, a law enforcement official who is familiar with the investigation told The Associated Press. The official, not authorized to discuss this publicly, spoke on condition of anonymity. Federal law allows people 18 and older to legally purchase long guns, including this kind of assault weapon.



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President Donald Trump's reaction focused on Cruz's mental health.

"So many signs that the Florida shooter was mentally disturbed, even expelled from school for bad and erratic behavior. Neighbors and classmates knew he was a big problem. Must always report such instances to authorities, again and again!" Trump tweeted Thursday.

Authorities offered no immediate details about a possible motive, except to say that Cruz had been kicked out of the high school, which has about 3,000 students. Students who knew him described a volatile teenager whose strange behavior had caused others to end friendships with him.

Cruz's mother Lynda Cruz died of pneumonia on Nov. 1 neighbors, friends and family members said, according to the Sun Sentinel. Cruz and her husband, who died of a heart attack several years ago, adopted Nikolas and his biological brother, Zachary, after the couple moved from Long Island in New York to Broward County.

The boys were left in the care of a family friend after their mother died, said family member Barbara Kumbatovich, of Long Island.

Unhappy there, Nikolas Cruz asked to move in with a friend's family in northwest Broward. That family agreed and Cruz moved in around Thanksgiving. According to the family's lawyer, who did not identify them, they knew that Cruz owned the AR-15 but made him keep it locked up in a cabinet. He did have the key, however.

Attorney Jim Lewis said the family is devastated and didn't see this coming. They are cooperating with authorities, he said.

Victoria Olvera, a 17-year-old junior, said Cruz was expelled last school year because he got into a fight with his ex-girlfriend's new boyfriend. She said he had been abusive to the girl.

"I think everyone had in their minds if anybody was going to do it, it was going to be him," said Dakota Mutchler, also 17.

Cruz was taken into custody without a fight about an hour after the shooting in a residential neighborhood about a mile away. He had multiple magazines of ammunition, authorities said.

"It's catastrophic. There really are no words," said Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel.

The sheriff said 12 bodies were found inside the building, two others outside and another a short distance away from the school.

Sen. Bill Nelson told CNN that Cruz had pulled the fire alarm "so the kids would come pouring out of the classrooms into the hall."

"And there the carnage began," said Nelson, who said he was briefed by the FBI.

Frantic parents rushed to the school to find SWAT team members and ambulances surrounding the huge campus and emergency workers treating the wounded on sidewalks. Students who had taken shelter inside classrooms began leaving in a single-file line with their hands over their heads as officers urged them to evacuate quickly.

Hearing loud bangs as the shooter fired, many of the students hid under desks or in closets, and barricaded doors.

"We were in the corner, away from the windows," said freshman Max Charles, who said he heard five gunshots. "The teacher locked the door and turned off the light. I thought maybe I could die or something."

Charles said he passed four dead students and one dead teacher on his way out, and was relieved to finally find his mother.

"I was happy that I was alive," Max said. "She was crying when she saw me."

Noah Parness, a 17-year-old junior, said he was among students calmly walking to their fire-drill areas outside when he suddenly heard popping sounds.

"We saw a bunch of teachers running down the stairway, and then everybody shifted and broke into a sprint," Parness said. "I hopped a fence."

The scene was reminiscent of the Newtown attack, which shocked even a country numbed by the regularity of school shootings. The Dec. 14, 2012, assault at Sandy Hook Elementary School killed 26 people: 20 first-graders and six staff members. The 20-year-old gunman, who also fatally shot his mother in her bed, then killed himself.

Not long after Wednesday's attack in Florida, Michael Nembhard was sitting in his garage on a cul-de-sac when he saw a young man in a burgundy shirt walking down the street. In an instant, a police cruiser pulled up, and officers jumped out with guns drawn.

"All I heard was 'Get on the ground! Get on the ground!'" Nembhard said. He said Cruz did as he was told.

This story has been corrected to fix the attribution of a quote to Dakota Mutchler, not Victoria Olvera.

Associated Press writers Freida Frisaro, Curt Anderson, and Joshua Replogle in Miami and Sadie Gurman in Washington contributed to this report.

## Students: Shooting suspect harassed peers, bragged about gun

By KELLI KENNEDY, Associated Press

PARKLAND, Fla. (AP) — Students and neighbors describe the suspect in the deadly rampage at a Florida high school as a troubled teenager who threatened and harassed peers, talked about killing animals, posed with guns in disturbing photos on social media, and bragged about target practice in his backyard with a pellet gun.

Nikolas Cruz, 19, had been expelled from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School for "disciplinary reasons," Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel said, but he insisted he didn't know the specifics. Math teacher Jim Gard told the Miami Herald that before Wednesday's fatal shooting of 17 people, Cruz may have been identified as a potential threat - Gard believes the school had sent out an email warning teachers that Cruz shouldn't be allowed on campus with a backpack.

"There were problems with him last year threatening students, and I guess he was asked to leave campus," Gard told the paper.

Student Victoria Olvera, 17, said Cruz had been abusive to his ex-girlfriend and that his expulsion was over a fight with her new boyfriend. He'd been attending another school in Broward County since the expulsion, school officials said.

Cruz was an orphan — his mother, Lynda Cruz died of pneumonia on Nov. 1 neighbors, friends and family members said, according to the Sun Sentinel. Cruz and her husband, who died of a heart attack several years ago, adopted Nikolas and his biological brother, Zachary, after the couple moved from Long Island in New York to Broward County.

The boys were left in the care of a family friend after their mother died, family member Barbara Kumbatovich, of Long Island, said.

Unhappy there, Nikolas Cruz asked to move in with a friend's family in northwest Broward. The family agreed, and Cruz moved in around Thanksgiving. According to the family's lawyer, who did not identify them, they knew that Cruz owned the AR-15 but made him keep it locked up in a cabinet. He did have the key, however.

Jim Lewis said the family is devastated and didn't see this coming. They are cooperating with authorities, he said.

Longtime Cruz family neighbors Malcolm and Christine Roxburgh told the Sun Sentinel that the police came to the boy's house many times, as he used to get in trouble and harass people. Malcolm Roxburgh said a neighbor across the street kept pigs, and Nicolas Cruz targeted the family.

"He didn't like the pigs and didn't like the neighbors, so he sent over his dog over there to try to attack them," Roxburgh said.

His wife said she once caught Nikolas peeking in her window.

"I said, 'What are you doing here?' He said he was looking for golf balls. I said, 'This isn't the golf course,'" she said.

And, the couple said, when the boy didn't want to go to school, he would bang his head against a cement wall. They were scared of him. "He could have killed any of us," Christine Roxburgh said.

Cruz was getting treatment at a mental health clinic for a while, but hadn't been there for more than a

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year, Broward County Mayor Beam Furr said during an interview with CNN.

"It wasn't like there wasn't concern for him," Furr said. "We try to keep our eyes out on those kids who aren't connected ... Most teachers try to steer them toward some kind of connections. ... In this case, we didn't find a way to connect with this kid."

Officials said they're dissecting the suspect's disturbing social media posts, without elaboration. But peers said they recognized Cruz from an Instagram photo posing with a gun in front of his face. The students called Cruz "weird" and a "loner" - even those who'd been friendly with him said they hadn't seen him in more than a year since his expulsion.

Dakota Mutchler, 17, recalled Cruz posting on Instagram about killing animals and said he had talked about doing target practice in his backyard with a pellet gun.

"He started going after one of my friends, threatening her, and I cut him off from there," Mutchler said.

He said students weren't surprised officials had identified Cruz as the shooter: "I think everyone had in their minds if anybody was going to do it, it was going to be him." Mutchler said.

But Broward County School District Superintendent Robert Runcie said he did not know of any threats posed by Cruz to the school.

"Typically you see in these situations that there potentially could have been signs out there," Runcie said. "I would be speculating at this point if there were, but we didn't have any warnings. There weren't any phone calls or threats that we know of that were made."

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Associated Press reporter Bernard McGhee contributed to this report from Atlanta.

## Government says American detainee worked for IS in Syria

By DEB RIECHMANN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — An American detained by U.S. forces was carrying thumb drives containing files on how to make bombs plus administrative spreadsheets describing work he did for the Islamic State group at the time he surrendered in Syria last year, according to documents the U.S. government filed in federal court.

The government's justification for holding the detainee without charge, contained in more than 150 pages filed late Wednesday, is loaded with details about the still-unidentified man, who is married and has a 3-year-old daughter. Yet it raises more questions about why he was in Syria. He has told U.S. authorities that he was kidnapped and imprisoned by IS and had press credentials to do freelance writing about the conflict.

The case has sparked debate about the government's legal right to hold enemy combatants linked with IS under congressionally approved war powers written after the Sept. 11 attacks as well as the constitutional rights afforded every American citizen.

The government's court filing provides a detailed itinerary of the detainee's travels across the world, including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Turkey and Syria — and the United States where he went to college in Louisiana.

The FBI interviewed someone who met the detainee in New Orleans in July 2005 when he was a college student. The associate described the detainee's behavior at the time as "wild and typical of a college student" and that he engaged in drinking, partying, gambling and marijuana use. The associate said the detainee did not work but received "a sizable amount of money from the Saudi Arabian government each month" and that his "mother was very wealthy."

The associate also said that in about 2005 or 2006, the detainee lived briefly in Covington, Louisiana, where he also went to casinos and strip clubs. After an argument with friends about not repaying money he used to gamble, the detainee left Louisiana and returned to Saudi Arabia — he has dual citizenship there.

According to the government, the detainee signed up to be an IS fighter in 2014 during a visit to Syria, attended one of the militant's training camps and later worked various jobs, including distributing vehicles to members of IS and guarding an oil field under IS control.

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The detainee was captured around Sept. 11, 2017, by U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces at a checkpoint. He said he had been walking for two days. The SDF said all the land within two days' walk of the screening checkpoint was controlled by IS.

The detainee identified himself as "daesh," which is another name for IS, and told the SDF "that he wanted to turn himself in and speak to the Americans," the court filing said. The SDF took him into custody and handed him over to U.S. forces.

The filing says that when he surrendered, he was carrying \$4,200 and a global positioning device. The thumb drives also contained information about how to interrogate captives as well as other how-to manuals for an IS fighter, according to the government. He also had clothes, hats, a Koran and a scuba snorkel and mask.

In making a case for holding him as an enemy combatant, the government said the detainee's name and other biographical details as well as information labeling him as an IS fighter were found on another thumb drive. That drive, which contains what appear to be intake forms for new IS recruits, was recovered by local Syrian forces in July 2015. The Defense Department obtained that thumb drive in November 2015. The detainee's intake form says he joined IS in July 2014 in Jarabulus, Syria, a town that IS captured in mid-2013.

U.S. officials have been investigating the detainee trying to find out why he traveled to IS-controlled territory in Syria and determine whether he should be charged in federal court — possibly for allegedly providing material support of terrorism — or continued to be held as an enemy combatant. The government is considering one other option: handing him over to another country, perhaps Saudi Arabia because of his dual citizenship.

The government has claimed the right to detain him under war powers Congress passed after 9/11 in the fight against the Taliban and al-Qaida, the 2002 congressional authorization for the war in Iraq, and presidential power to imprison Americans indefinitely for national security reasons.

The American Civil Liberties Union, which is representing the detainee, argues those war powers don't apply in the battle against IS. For months, the ACLU has fought the government, first for holding the detainee without giving him access to a lawyer and now for continuing to hold him without charge.

"The bottom line is that the government is holding him illegally," said ACLU attorney Jonathan Hafetz. "He has a right to be charged with a crime consistent with the Constitution. If the government wants to continue to detain him, they should charge him with a crime."

The government said the detainee claims he had \$40,000 with him when he entered Syria in January 2015 with the help of a smuggler. The detainee "claimed that he intended to enter Syria to be a freelance writer and that he obtained press credentials." It's not clear what organization or news outlet issued the credentials. That is one of many details redacted from the court filing. But the government said the detainee indicated that he used his U.S. passport to obtain credentials from other press organizations as well.

He said he was kidnapped by IS after he arrived in Syria and was imprisoned for seven months until October 2015. He later trained with IS near Mayadin and was sent to the front lines in Deir el-Zour province in Syria. Later, he guarded an oil field. After another stay in IS detention, he spent time working for IS monitoring imams and prayer callers and also civilians working on heavy equipment.

After learning that he had an electrical engineering degree, IS gave him a car to drive to Raqqa, Syria, where he met with militants who told him about a special IS project to "use a type of machine, similar to a satellite dish, to transmit microwaves that could bring down an airplane," the government document said. The detainee declined to work on the project.

He remained in contact with his wife and last spoke with her via WhatsApp in July. He told his sister by text and through WhatsApp that everyone was leaving the IS and he was leaving, too. He was captured three weeks later.

## Porn star says she feels free to discuss Trump encounter

By JAKE PEARSON and JEFF HORWITZ, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Stormy Daniels, the porn star whom Donald Trump's attorney acknowledges paying \$130,000 just before Election Day, believes she is now free to discuss an alleged sexual encounter with the man who is now president, her manager told The Associated Press.

At the same time, developments in the bizarre case fueled questions about whether such a payment could violate federal campaign finance laws.

Daniels, whose real name is Stephanie Clifford, believes that Trump's personal lawyer, Michael Cohen, invalidated a non-disclosure agreement after two news stories were published Tuesday: one in which Cohen told The New York Times he made the six-figure payment with his personal funds, and another in the Daily Beast, which reported that Cohen was shopping a book proposal that would touch on Daniels' story, said the manager, Gina Rodriguez.

"Everything is off now, and Stormy is going to tell her story," Rodriguez said Wednesday.

At issue is what, exactly, happened inside a Lake Tahoe, Nevada, hotel room in 2006 between Trump, then a reality TV star, and Clifford, who was promoting a porn production company during a celebrity golf tournament.

In the years since, Clifford has claimed that she and Trump had sex once and then carried on a subsequent yearslong platonic relationship. But she has also, through a lawyer, denied the two had an affair. Trump's lawyer, Cohen, has denied there was ever an affair.

The actress first detailed her account of an alleged extramarital affair with Trump in 2011, when the celebrity website The Dirty published it but then removed the material under the threat of a lawsuit, according to the site's founder, Nik Richie.

Her story then remained largely out of public view until a month before the 2016 presidential election, when the website The Smoking Gun published an account that went mostly unnoted by major news organizations.

In January, The Wall Street Journal reported that a limited liability company in Delaware formed by Cohen made the six-figure payment to the actress to keep her from discussing the affair during the presidential campaign.

Cohen said the payment was made with his own money, and that "neither the Trump Organization nor the Trump campaign was a party to the transaction with Ms. Clifford, and neither reimbursed me for the payment, either directly or indirectly."

He was responding to inquiries from the Federal Election Commission, which is investigating an advocacy group's complaint that the October 2016 transaction violated campaign finance laws.

The case was reminiscent of the 2012 prosecution of former Democratic vice presidential nominee John Edwards, who faced six criminal charges after a pair of his wealthy friends spent nearly \$1 million to support his pregnant mistress, Rielle Hunter, during his 2008 presidential run.

Jurors eventually acquitted Edwards on one charge of accepting illegal campaign contributions, but were unable to reach a verdict on the five remaining counts including conspiracy and making false statements. The case ended when prosecutors elected not to retry Edwards.

As in that case, the payment by Trump's lawyer was not reported as a campaign expenditure nor an in-kind contribution, and the origin of the money is still unclear, said Paul Ryan, a vice president at Common Cause, the group that filed the complaint.

But Bradley Smith, the Republican chairman of the Federal Election Commission from 2000 to 2005, was skeptical that the payment by Cohen could pose a campaign finance issue.

"You'd have to prove that it was a coordinated expenditure, and that the reason it was done was for the benefit of the campaign," he said. If the payment was made to protect Trump's brand or avoid personal embarrassment, he said, that would likely not be a campaign problem.

At the time of the payment, which followed the release of footage from "Access Hollywood," in which Trump was recorded bragging about grabbing women's privates, Clifford was negotiating with multiple national news networks about telling her story.

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A White House spokeswoman referred all questions about the payment to Cohen.

The alleged affair between the actress and Trump occurred in 2006, a year after his marriage to his third wife, Melania.

A lawyer for Clifford, Keith Davidson, has previously distributed statements on her behalf denying there was any affair.

But in a 2011 interview with the gossip magazine In Touch Weekly, the actress — who the magazine said passed a polygraph exam — said the two had sex on one occasion and she described subsequent in-person meetings, phone calls and discussions about a potential TV appearance. The AP has previously reported that In Touch held off on publishing her account after Cohen threatened to sue the publication. It published the interview last month.

In recent weeks the actress has played coy, declining to elaborate when pressed on ABC's "Jimmy Kimmel Live!"

Rodriguez said her client will soon announce how and when she will tell her story publicly. The celebrity website The Blast first reported the contention that Cohen's comments freed Clifford from her nondisclosure agreement.

Horwitz reported from Washington. Associated Press writer Michael Biesecker in Washington contributed to this report.

## Delays done, Shiffrin wins Olympic GS gold; best event next

By HOWARD FENDRICH, AP Sports Writer

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea (AP) — The nervous energy accumulated for Mikaela Shiffrin while she waited, waited, waited for these Olympics — the ones that so many are expecting to be HER Olympics — to finally get started. First one race was postponed. Then another.

And so it was not until a week into the Pyeongchang Games that Shiffrin and the other female Alpine skiers got to compete in the rescheduled giant slalom, an event the 22-year-old American considers a work in progress for her. In second place and still feeling some jitters after the first of Thursday's two runs, Shiffrin did two things during the 3½ hours before the deciding leg of the GS: She took a nap, and then she sneaked onto the adjacent men's course at Yongpong Alpine Center for a little free skiing.

"Then," said Shiffrin's mother, Eileen, who is also a coach, "I think she was just like, 'I'm ready. I'm doing this.'"

Sure was. And sure did.

On a crisp, clear day with very little sign of the gusts that have played havoc with the skiing program, Shiffrin dealt well with her pent-up emotions and put together a pair of aggressive, if not quite perfect, trips through the gates to win the giant slalom for the second Olympic gold medal of her precocious career.

No American Alpine skier has won more.

"Definitely, it's been a mental strain the last couple days, thinking we're going to race and then not racing. So to finally have the race actually happen today, I was like, 'Well, I really hope that I actually can do it when the time comes that we finally race.' And, yeah, I did," said Shiffrin, who is based in Colorado. "So now we got the ball rolling. I'm really excited for tomorrow."

As well she should be.

That's because Friday brings the slalom, by far Shiffrin's best event, one that she has dominated for five years, including a gold at the 2014 Sochi Games plus a trio of world titles. She is a huge favorite in that one, unlike the giant slalom, in which Shiffrin was merely a strong contender. After that, Shiffrin will skip Saturday's super-G, according to her mom, because there's no time to properly prepare. She still intends to enter the downhill and combined.

"I don't think it gets any easier, but I think she can take a deep breath and say, 'The pressure's off a little bit. Maybe,'" said her father, Jeff. "She'll just approach it the way she's always approached it: It's left-right-left-right-left-right, forget about the result."

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In this instance, the result was a two-run time of 2 minutes, 20.02 seconds, good enough to beat surprise silver medalist Ragnhild Mowinckel of Norway by 0.39 seconds and Federica Brignone of Italy by 0.46. First-run leader Manuela Moelgg of Italy quickly gave away her 0.20-second advantage over Shiffrin and was eighth.

Mowinckel helped make it a three-medal Alpine day for Norway: Aksel Lund Svindal won the men's downhill about 30 miles away at the Jeongseon Alpine Center, and Kjetil Jansrud got silver. Switzerland's Beat Feuz was third in a race originally scheduled for Sunday. Svindal, 35, is the oldest man to win Olympic gold in Alpine skiing.

At Yongpong, Shiffrin found some problems in the choppy terrain of the second half of the 51-gate GS course, in part because nearby trees created shadows that made it tough to see.

But she wasn't the only one: Her first run was second-fastest; her other was fourth-fastest.

"She attacked both runs, and that's how we do it. It was the good way to do things," said France's Tessa Worley, the reigning world champion, who had a poor opening run and was seventh. "She wanted this medal, and we could see it."

Said Brignone: "She is much stronger than the rest of us right now — not physically, but mentally, and with the way she works and prepares."

That last part is key to appreciating the way Shiffrin regrouped and performed in a race originally slated for Monday. Mostly terrific on the World Cup circuit this season — winning 10 of 23 races she's entered to lead the overall standings — she stumbled in late January and failed to finish three of her last four races.

She acknowledged mental fatigue and took a couple of days off.

Definitely looked refreshed in the giant slalom, with which she contends she has "a love-hate relationship" because it doesn't come as naturally as the slalom.

Maybe so.

Yet after that hour's snooze in a lodge atop the mountain, followed by the impromptu skiing session with Mom, Shiffrin was able to perform at her best, which clearly is good enough.

"She brought out a lot more natural skiing in the second run that was far less rigid," coach Mike Day said. "To me, it was far more free."

After finishing, Shiffrin put her right glove on her chest, mouth agape. She paused and put her poles atop her neon helmet. She covered her ski goggles with both hands, taking the moment in.

Only briefly, though. There is more work to be done. And perhaps more medals to be won.

"It was my 15 seconds to let it all out," Shiffrin said, "and now I've got to focus on tomorrow."

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Follow Howard Fendrich on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/HowardFendrich>

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

## Trump breaks silence on domestic abuse, Kelly out of sight

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and ZEKE MILLER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump at last broke his silence to explicitly denounce domestic violence in the wake of allegations that a top White House aide had abused two former wives. Chief of staff John Kelly, under fire for mishandling the matter, stayed largely out of sight, his future in doubt and the White House in tumult.

The chaos surrounding the departure of aide Rob Porter put a harsh spotlight on Kelly, the retired general who was brought on last summer to instill military-like discipline in the free-wheeling West Wing. Questions persisted about what and when Kelly knew about the abuse allegations against Porter, who resigned as staff secretary last week after the accusations became public.

West Wing aides have had their faith in the chief of staff shaken, and morale has plunged to levels not seen since last spring's firing of FBI Director James Comey and the August uproar over Trump's refusal to denounce white supremacists after the violence in Charlottesville, Virginia.

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This White House scandal erupted initially without the president's involvement. But Trump fed the fury last week when he defended Porter and questioned the #MeToo movement that sprang up in recent months to protest the mistreatment of many women.

In Trump's first comments after Porter resigned, he praised his former aide. Next, he appeared to cast doubt on the ex-wives' allegations by tweeting: "Peoples lives are being shattered and destroyed by a mere allegation."

Finally, on Wednesday, Trump said the words that Democrats and Republicans alike had been listening for: "I am totally opposed to domestic violence and everybody here knows that," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office. "I am totally opposed to domestic violence of any kind. Everyone knows that, and it almost wouldn't even have to be said. So now you hear it, but you all know it."

The denunciation of domestic violence was greeted with relief by some West Wing aides. But a sense of unease about Kelly's fate persisted.

For months, Kelly — with help from Porter — had established a semblance of stability in a White House often rattled by an unpredictable president. That has eroded in a week's time, as accounts about the handling of the Porter matter continue to shift and some aides come to believe Kelly lied to save face and save his job.

Trump has complained to confidants that Kelly let the scandal spin out of control and that the constantly shifting narratives make the White House — and, by extension, Trump himself — look amateurish and incompetent, according to one person familiar with the discussions but not authorized to discuss them publicly.

The president has floated names of possible replacements for Kelly, including National Economic Council head Gary Cohn, House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, Budget Director Mick Mulvaney and businessman and GOP heavyweight Wayne Berman.

There was no sign that a move was imminent, according to four people with knowledge of Trump's recent conversations. The president is known to frequently poll his advisers about the performance of senior staff but is often reluctant to actually fire aides.

McCarthy tried to douse speculation about a possible change, saying: "I have not spoken to the president about anything about a job, and I never have. And there is no job opening."

Berman has not been approached about the job, according to a person familiar with his thinking but not authorized to discuss it publicly. Mulvaney has previously denied angling for the post.

Kelly has indicated he would step aside if he lost the faith of the president. But he has not offered to resign, according to a White House official and an outside adviser. Neither was authorized to discuss personnel matters publicly and spoke only on condition of anonymity.

A retired four-star Marine general, Kelly took the post last July and immediately tried to rein in a West Wing that was riven by rivalries and plagued by inexperience. He fired attention-seeking aides such as Steve Bannon and Sebastian Gorka, curtailed access to Trump for outside advisers and insisted that even powerful West Wing staffers, like Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump, receive his blessing to reach the president.

But as Kelly shook up the West Wing and had some success at clamping down on public backstabbing, he also made some enemies inside and outside the building. They were quick to pounce on a vulnerable chief of staff, leaking negative stories about him this week.

A number of aides who earlier had rallied around Kelly were dismayed and disillusioned by his handling of the domestic abuse allegations. Officials, up to press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders, took to couching their comments with the caveat they did not have firsthand knowledge of some of the details.

At a senior staff meeting last Friday, Kelly tried to press his own timeline concerning Porter in a way that played up his decisiveness once he learned the details of allegations, according to some aides. But Kelly, aides said, had encouraged Porter to try to weather the initial allegations.

But White House officials had known for months of at least the broad charges of abuse against Porter by his ex-wives, as revealed Tuesday by FBI Director Christopher Wray. Wray's testimony to lawmakers contradicted the accounts of West Wing officials.

Kelly, a dark cross on his forehead to mark Ash Wednesday, kept his distance from reporters as he helped



manage the White House response to the mass shooting at a Florida school.

The Porter drama has placed a renewed focus on the role of White House Counsel Don McGahn, who first informed Kelly about Porter's situation last fall.

Lemire reported from New York. Associated Press writers Catherine Lucey, Jill Colvin and Ken Thomas contributed reporting.

Follow Lemire on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/@JonLemire> and Miller at <http://twitter.com/@ZekeJMiller>

## Romney postpones announcement on Senate race after shooting

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and STEVE PEOPLES, Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Mitt Romney is preparing to announce a bid for Utah's Senate seat held by retiring Orrin Hatch, a position some hope the 2012 GOP presidential nominee will use to continue his biting criticism of President Donald Trump.

Romney, who once called Trump "a phony" who was unfit for office, is not expected to address the president in an announcement video he has prepared for release online, according to people with direct knowledge of his plans.

Romney had planned to release the video on Thursday, they said, but he tweeted Wednesday night that he would not make an announcement about Utah's Senate race because of the deadly school shooting in Florida. It wasn't clear when he would reschedule his announcement.

Expected to be a heavy favorite to win Hatch's seat, Romney is planning a campaign with a laser-focus on Utah and will suggest that Washington has much to learn from the state the former Massachusetts governor now calls home, said those with knowledge of his plans.

"I think Mitt's going to make it very clear that he's not running for the Senate because of or in spite of anything to do with Donald Trump," said Spencer Zwick, Romney's former fundraising chief who now leads fundraising efforts for House Speaker Paul Ryan. "I think Mitt Romney would be running for the Senate whether Donald Trump was the president or Hillary Clinton was the president."

Romney's small team of longtime advisers plans to maintain a low profile. Having turned down repeated requests for national media appearances in recent days, Romney is carefully designing his campaign launch to avoid media questions about Trump.

Those with knowledge of his plans spoke on the condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak publicly.

Romney, one of the most famous Mormons, is widely liked and respected in Utah, which is heavily Mormon. He attended Brigham Young University in Provo, helped turn around the scandal-plagued 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City and made Utah his primary home after losing the 2012 presidential election.

In addition to his name recognition, Romney has a deep network of fundraisers and his own personal wealth to help carry him. Those close to him suggest he will not seek financial aid from any super PACs or Washington-based campaign committees.

If he becomes Utah's next senator, some supporters hope that the one-time Trump critic could serve as a political and moral counterweight to a president they see as divisive, erratic and undignified.

Kirk Jowers, the former chairman and general counsel of Romney's leadership PACs, said Romney "will always be a straight shooter" and will speak up and support the president when he takes actions that are good for America.

"If President Trump says or does something that he finds offensive or divisive, unnecessarily divisive, then I think you will continue to hear Romney as the voice of reason and conscience in the Republican Party," Jowers said.

Though he delivered a scathing speech denouncing Trump during the 2016 presidential election, Romney softened his stance after Trump won the presidency and put himself forward as a candidate for secretary

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of state. But he resumed his criticism last year, calling out the president for blaming “both sides” following a deadly white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Trump, in turn, has criticized Romney for his failed presidential bids in 2008 and 2012, saying he “choked like a dog.”

Any efforts by Trump to block Romney are unlikely to resonate in Utah, where the president received a lukewarm reception from Mormons who were repelled by his brash demeanor and degrading comments about women and minorities.

Former Rep. Jason Chaffetz, a Utah Republican who resigned last summer and became a Fox News commentator, said Romney’s clashes with Trump won’t hurt him with Utah voters but that he does need to explain why he wants to be their senator.

“I do think people want to know he’s running not just to be an agitator to the president. I don’t think that’s going to win the hearts and minds, but I also don’t think he’s going to do that,” Chaffetz said. “Mitt Romney’s always been diplomatic. It’s why Donald Trump almost named him the secretary of state. He’s very deliberate and smart in what he does.”

Romney isn’t expected to face any serious challenges for the seat. Even Utah’s conservatives, who see him as too moderate and establishment for their liking, admit they respect him and are unlikely to block him.

However, some in the state see Romney as an outsider who is simply banking on his fame.

Utah Republican Party Chairman Rob Anderson told The Salt Lake Tribune that Romney is “keeping out candidates that I think would be a better fit for Utah because, let’s face it, Mitt Romney doesn’t live here, his kids weren’t born here, he doesn’t shop here.”

Anderson told The Associated Press that he was just repeating concerns and complaints he’d heard from others, but said he’s excited to see the interest that Romney is generating. He said he spoke with Romney after the Tribune article was published, and Romney told him he would travel all corners of Utah to hear people’s concerns.

Hatch, one of the longest-serving senators in U.S. history after more than four decades in office, began floating Romney’s name last year as his potential successor.

When Hatch won re-election in 2012, he pledged that his seventh term would be his last. He flirted with breaking that promise and suggested he might run again in 2018 with the encouragement of Trump, who sought to block Romney.

In the end, Hatch decided to stick with his promise, saying, “Every good fighter knows when to hang up the gloves.”

Peoples reported from New York City.

## School shooting suspect made ‘disturbing’ social media posts

By KELLI KENNEDY, Associated Press

PARKLAND, Fla. (AP) — The suspect in a deadly rampage at a Florida high school is a troubled teenager who posted disturbing material on social media before the shooting spree that killed at least 17 people, according to a law enforcement official and former schoolmates.

Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel said the 19-year-old suspect, Nikolas Cruz, had been expelled from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School for “disciplinary reasons.”

“I don’t know the specifics,” the sheriff said.

However, Victoria Olvera, a 17-year-old junior, said Cruz was expelled last school year after a fight with his ex-girlfriend’s new boyfriend. She said Cruz had been abusive to his girlfriend.

School officials said Cruz was attending another school in Broward County after his expulsion.

Broward County Mayor Beam Furr said during an interview with CNN that the shooter was getting treatment at a mental health clinic for a while, but that he hadn’t been back to the clinic for more than a year.

“It wasn’t like there wasn’t concern for him,” Furr said.

“We try to keep our eyes out on those kids who aren’t connected ... Most teachers try to steer them

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toward some kind of connections. ... In this case, we didn't find a way to connect with this kid," Furr said.

Israel said investigators were dissecting the suspect's social media posts.

"And some of the things that have come to mind are very, very disturbing," he added without elaborating.

Daniel Huerfano, a student who fled Wednesday's attack, said he recognized Cruz from an Instagram photo in which Cruz posed with a gun in front of his face. Huerfano recalled Cruz as a shy student and remembered seeing him walking around with his lunch bag.

"He was that weird kid that you see ... like a loner," he added.

Dakota Mutchler, a 17-year-old junior, said he used to be close friends with Cruz but hadn't seen him in more than a year following his expulsion from school.

"He started progressively getting a little more weird," Mutchler said.

Mutchler recalled Cruz posting on Instagram about killing animals and said he had talked about doing target practice in his backyard with a pellet gun.

"He started going after one of my friends, threatening her, and I cut him off from there," Mutchler said.

"I think everyone had in their minds if anybody was going to do it, it was going to be him," Mutchler said.

Broward County School District Superintendent Robert Runcie told reporters on Wednesday afternoon that he did not know of any threats posed by Cruz to the school.

"Typically you see in these situations that there potentially could have been signs out there," Runcie said. "I would be speculating at this point if there were, but we didn't have any warnings. There weren't any phone calls or threats that we know of that were made."

However, a teacher told The Miami Herald that Cruz may have been identified as a potential threat to other students. Jim Gard, a math teacher who said Cruz had been in his class last year, said he believes the school had sent out an email warning teachers that Cruz shouldn't be allowed on campus with a backpack.

"There were problems with him last year threatening students, and I guess he was asked to leave campus," Gard said.

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This story has been corrected to show that Dakota Mutchler, not Victoria Olvera, said, "I think everyone had in their minds if anybody was going to do it, it was going to be him."

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This story has been corrected show that Dakota's last name is Mutchler, not Mentcher.

## Group of senators reaches immigration deal on Dreamers, wall

By ALAN FRAM and KEVIN FREKING, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A group of senators reached a bipartisan agreement Wednesday aimed at balancing Democrats' fight to offer citizenship to young "Dreamer" immigrants with President Donald Trump's demands for billions to build his coveted border wall with Mexico.

Though the compromise was announced by 16 senators with centrist views on the issue and was winning support from many Democrats, it faced an uncertain fate. Leaders were trying to schedule votes on that plan and three other immigration proposals for Thursday, which they hoped would bring the chamber's showdown over the hot-button issue to a close.

While not specifically mentioning the bipartisan pact, Trump urged lawmakers to oppose any plan that doesn't meet his more stringent demands, which include curbs on legal immigration and the abolition of a visa lottery. The Senate's No. 2 Republican, John Cornyn of Texas, warned that lawmakers need to address Trump's entire proposal, saying, "We need to take the president seriously."

There were also qualms among Democrats. The party's No. 2 Senate leader, Richard Durbin of Illinois, said some Democrats had "serious issues" with parts of the plan. Those concerns focused on its spending for Trump's wall and its bar against Dreamers sponsoring their parents for legal residency.

"We're not there yet," Durbin said of the 60 votes the proposal would need for approval.

So far, no other proposals from either side seem able to do that. Republicans control the chamber 51-49,

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though Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., has missed the last several weeks while battling cancer.

The bipartisan measure's sponsors included eight GOP senators. That meant just three more Republicans would be needed for it to prevail if it is backed by all 47 Democrats and the two independents who usually support them.

The compromise emerged as senators spent a third day of debate largely as they spent the first two — with the chamber floor mostly empty. Other than an initial roll call allowing formal debate to begin, there have been no other votes while party leaders talk behind the scenes about scheduling votes on specific proposals.

The centrist proposal was produced by a group led by Sens. Susan Collins, R-Maine, and Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., that spent weeks seeking middle ground.

It would grant a 10- to 12-year route to citizenship for 1.8 million Dreamers, participants said.

That's the same number Trump has suggested helping with his own wider-ranging but more restrictive proposal. Dreamers are young immigrants who were brought to the U.S. illegally as children and still have no permanent protection from deportation.

The plan would provide \$25 billion over a decade, \$2.5 billion annually, for a wall and other border security measures, the same total Trump has requested. It would bar Dreamers from sponsoring their parents for citizenship, far narrower than Trump's proposal to prevent all legal immigrants from bringing parents and siblings to the U.S.

The moderates' measure does not alter a lottery that distributes about 55,000 visas annually to people from diverse countries. Trump has proposed ending it and redistributing its visas to other immigrants, including some who are admitted based on job skills, not family ties.

"The diversity lottery is kind of toxic politically because of some of the things said by the president," said Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., a reference to a vulgar description Trump used for African countries during a discussion of immigration.

The White House issued a written statement by Trump urging senators to back his bill and "oppose any legislation that fails to fulfill" his demands. But the statement did not say Trump would veto a bill that fell short of them.

A GOP measure tracking Trump's proposal and backed by McConnell has been introduced and was expected to receive a vote. Few expect it to attract 60 votes, but Sen. Mike Rounds, R-S.D., said he believed the bipartisan proposal could.

If that happens, Rounds said, "We'll allow the president to determine whether or not it moves in the direction that he wants."

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., indirectly embraced the bipartisan plan, saying, "Each side has had to give a great deal, but we are closer than we have ever been to passing something in the Senate to help the Dreamers."

Also in play is a more modest plan by McCain and Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del. It would let many Dreamers qualify for permanent residency and direct federal agencies to more effectively control the border by 2020. But it doesn't offer a special citizenship pathway for Dreamers, raise border security funds or make sweeping changes in legal immigration rules.

The White House said it opposes the McCain-Coons plan, saying it would "increase illegal immigration" and cause other problems.

Another vote will be taken on a proposal by Sen. Pat Toomey, R-Pa., that would add language blocking federal grants to "sanctuary cities," communities that don't cooperate with federal efforts to enforce immigration laws. The amendment is considered sure to lose.

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Associated Press writer Andrew Taylor contributed to this report.

## Trump at last denounces abuse; Kelly's future in doubt

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and ZEKE MILLER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump at last broke his silence Wednesday to explicitly denounce domestic violence in the wake of allegations that a top White House aide had abused two former wives. Chief of staff John Kelly, under fire for mishandling the matter, stayed largely out of sight, his future in doubt and the White House in tumult.

The chaos surrounding the departure of aide Rob Porter put a harsh spotlight on Kelly, the retired general who was brought on last summer to instill military-like discipline in the free-wheeling West Wing. Questions persisted about what and when Kelly knew about the abuse allegations against Porter, who resigned as staff secretary last week after the accusations became public.

West Wing aides have had their faith in the chief of staff shaken, and morale has plunged to levels not seen since last spring's firing of FBI Director James Comey and the August uproar over Trump's refusal to denounce white supremacists after the violence in Charlottesville, Virginia.

This White House scandal erupted initially without the president's involvement. But Trump fed the fury last week when he defended Porter and questioned the #MeToo movement that sprang up in recent months to protest the mistreatment of many women.

In Trump's first comments after Porter resigned, he praised his former aide. Next, he appeared to cast doubt on the ex-wives' allegations by tweeting: "Peoples lives are being shattered and destroyed by a mere allegation." Finally, on Wednesday, Trump said the words that Democrats and Republicans alike had been listening for:

"I am totally opposed to domestic violence and everybody here knows that," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office. "I am totally opposed to domestic violence of any kind. Everyone knows that, and it almost wouldn't even have to be said. So now you hear it, but you all know it."

The denunciation of domestic violence was greeted with relief by some West Wing aides. But a sense of unease about Kelly's fate persisted.

For months, Kelly — with help from Porter — had established a semblance of stability in a White House often rattled by an unpredictable president. That has eroded in a week's time, as accounts about the handling of the Porter matter continue to shift and some aides come to believe Kelly lied to save face and save his job.

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The president has floated names of possible replacements for Kelly, including National Economic Council head Gary Cohn, House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, Budget Director Mick Mulvaney and businessman and GOP heavyweight Wayne Berman.

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Berman has not been approached about the job, according to a person familiar with his thinking but not authorized to discuss it publicly. Mulvaney has previously denied angling for the post.

Kelly has indicated he would step aside if he lost the faith of the president. But he has not offered to resign, according to a White House official and an outside adviser. Neither was authorized to discuss personnel matters publicly and spoke only on condition of anonymity.

Kelly, a dark cross on his forehead to mark Ash Wednesday, kept his distance from reporters as he helped manage the White House response to the mass shooting at a Florida school. And many questions about the matter went unanswered, as the daily press briefing was postponed repeatedly until, in the wake of

the shooting, it was cancelled completely.

And while Trump himself tweeted condolences about the shooting, he did not go on-camera or address the nation, a marked contrast from the emotional appearance by President Barack Obama following the school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, in 2012.

A retired four-star Marine general, Kelly took the post last July and immediately tried to rein in a West Wing that was riven by rivalries and plagued by inexperience. He fired attention-seeking aides such as Steve Bannon and Sebastian Gorka, curtailed access to Trump for outside advisers and insisted that even powerful West Wing staffers, like Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump, receive his blessing to reach the president.

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But White House officials had known for months of at least the broad charges of abuse against Porter by his ex-wives, as revealed Tuesday by FBI Director Christopher Wray. Wray's testimony to lawmakers contradicted the accounts of West Wing officials.

The Porter drama has placed a renewed focus on the role of White House Counsel Don McGahn, who first informed Kelly about Porter's situation last fall.

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Lemire reported from New York. Associated Press writers Catherine Lucey, Jill Colvin and Ken Thomas contributed reporting.

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Follow Lemire on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/@JonLemire> and Miller at <http://twitter.com/@ZekeJMiller>

## Report details harm to Cuba diplomats but offers no cause

By LAURAN NEERGAARD and JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Doctors are releasing the first detailed medical reports about the hearing, vision, balance and brain symptoms suffered in what the State Department has called "health attacks" on U.S. diplomats in Cuba. Still missing: A clear diagnosis of just what happened to trigger their mysterious health problems.

All together, the symptoms are similar to the brain dysfunction seen with concussions, concluded a team of specialists from the University of Pennsylvania who tested 21 of the 24 embassy personnel thought to be affected.

Whatever the cause, the Havana patients "experienced persisting disability of a significant nature," the Penn team concluded.

Cuba has insisted there were no attacks.

The Journal of the American Medical Association released the report late Wednesday, although key findings were first disclosed by The Associated Press in December.

The mystery began in late 2016 when U.S. embassy personnel began seeking medical care for hearing loss and ear-ringing that they linked to weird noises or vibrations — initially leading investigators to suspect "sonic attacks." Now, officials are carefully avoiding that term, as doctors involved in the probe wonder whether the sounds were a byproduct of something else that might help explain the full symptom list: memory problems, impaired concentration, irritability, balance problems and dizziness.

Wednesday's report makes clear that the findings are preliminary, essentially a listing of symptoms and

tests. And important complications remain, including that there's no information to compare the patients' brain or hearing health before they went to Cuba.

"Before reaching any definitive conclusions, additional evidence must be obtained and rigorously and objectively evaluated," JAMA associated editor Dr. Christopher Muth cautioned in an accompanying editorial. He noted that many of the symptoms overlap with a list of other neurologic illnesses.

"It really looks like concussion without the history of head trauma," report co-author Dr. Douglas Smith of Penn's Center for Brain Injury and Repair, said in a podcast provided by JAMA.

He said that sound, heard by 18 of the 21 patients, couldn't be to blame: "There is no known mechanism for audible sound to injure the brain. We have to suspect that it's a consequence of something else."

The mysterious case has sent U.S.-Cuba relations plummeting from what had been a high point when the two countries, estranged for a half-century, restored relations under President Barack Obama in 2015.

The new report outlined the battery of testing the patients underwent, including some findings that can't be even unconsciously altered, bolstering the doctors' belief that the symptoms were not mass hysteria. At least six people had a change in work performance noted by supervisors and colleagues, the JAMA report found.

Viruses or chemical exposures are unlikely, Smith's team wrote, although they couldn't be "systematically excluded."

Advanced MRI scans spotted "a few" changes in what are called white matter tracts of the brain in some patients, with three showing more than would be expected for their age, the report said. But the authors acknowledged those abnormalities could be due to something earlier in life.

For many the symptoms lasted months, and doctors designed customized rehabilitation therapy that did seem to help.

Dr. S. Andrew Josephson, neurology chairman at the University of California, San Francisco, who wasn't involved in the study, called the work "a really important step" because it carefully describes the medical findings and shows they are remarkably similar across the group of patients.

"It moves you closer to understanding what the possible causes may be," he said.

The State Department, which wasn't involved in writing the article but reviewed it to ensure it did not contain any classified information, issued a health alert Wednesday citing the article "in order to inform U.S. citizens and medical providers."

"We encourage private U.S. citizens who have traveled to Cuba and are concerned about their symptoms to share this article with their doctor," the State Department said.

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Associated Press Science Writer Malcolm Ritter contributed to this story from New York.

## **Climber's death on popular Oregon peak underscores dangers**

**By GILLIAN FLACCUS, Associated Press**

GOVERNMENT CAMP, Ore. (AP) — Oregon's tallest peak rises above the streets of downtown Portland, its gorgeous snow-capped slopes luring 10,000 climbers a year.

The picture postcard view of Mount Hood makes it one of the most visited snow-capped peaks in the U.S., a destination to check off during any respectable visit to the City of Roses.

"It just stands there and calls to you — and during clear weather like we've had the past couple of days, that mountain is there calling to anyone who's ever thought about climbing it," said Mark Morford, spokesman for Portland Mountain Rescue.

But Mount Hood's accessibility and beauty obscure a treacherous history that once again came into focus Tuesday, when one man plummeted 1,000 (305 meters) feet to his death and three more were stranded on its icy slopes as a storm approached.

More than 130 climbers have died trying to reach the top of the dormant volcano, including a party of school children and teachers who froze to death in 1986 and several climbers whose bodies haven't been found.

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Compounding the difficulty Tuesday's rescue was the fact that for at least several hours, officials weren't sure exactly how many people remained on Mount Hood. At one point, they said they could be looking for anywhere between seven and 15.

Unlike rules in place for climbing some other iconic peaks in the West and Alaska, there is no registration requirement to scale Mount Hood. And no one monitors the skill level or preparedness of those attempting ascents. There is also no limit on how many can summit the 11,240-foot (3,429-meter) mountain daily.

That honor system and the peak's proximity to a major city can combine for a chaotic climbing environment on a mountain that's home to 11 active glaciers and deep crevasses, and prone to avalanches and erratic weather.

It takes only 90 minutes to drive from Portland to Timberline Lodge, where climbers can park in a lot only 5,000 feet (1,525 meters) below the summit. Properly prepared climbers in good shape can complete the climb and return to Portland for dinner.

"There's a bunch of warning signs in here but if someone says, 'Hey, I'm on vacation in Oregon and I've never climbed a mountain before and I want to climb Mount Hood,' there's nothing keeping them from doing it," said Sgt. Brian Jensen, spokesman for the Clackamas County Sheriff's Department.

Sheriff's officials on Wednesday identified the dead climber as Miha Sumi, 35, of Portland and said he and his group had "mid-level experience" and were properly equipped with ice axes, crampons and helmets.

Other climbers not in Sumi's party reached him and found him bleeding from the ears with fading vital signs. They performed CPR for 90 minutes before a helicopter could airlift Sumi.

Jennifer Wade, recreation and lands program manager for the Mount Hood National Forest, said in response to an email Wednesday that the mountain does not have a "check-in, check-out" system and that rescues are only triggered by 911 calls. Mountaineering clubs offer training, but there are no requirements for scaling the peak, she said.

Accidents like Tuesday's periodically stir debate about whether Mount Hood should have a permit system, Morford said. Climbers obtain wilderness permits and are encouraged to fill out forms listing planned routes and the equipment they have. But it's not mandatory and many don't do it, he said.

That's different from the approach on some other peaks in the West.

While there's no limit on the number of people who can climb Mount Rainier each day, there are limits to how many people who can camp nightly in specific zones. Most people take at least two days to climb that peak.

Nearly 11,000 people registered to climb the tallest peak in Washington state at 14,410 feet (4,362 meters) in 2016, the latest figures available.

At Mount Rainier National Park, there are 12 to 14 climbing rangers, some seasonal. During the peak climbing season that begins in mid-May, there are seven rangers at any given time on the upper mountain, said Stefan Lofgren, climbing program ranger.

Mount St. Helens, which is also visible from Portland on clear days, requires permits for those going above 4,800 feet (1,463 meters). During the summer, permits must be purchased in advance for the 8,328-foot (2,538-meter) volcano.

In Alaska, climbers attempting to scale Denali, North America's tallest mountain at 20,310 feet (6,190 meters), must register at least 60 days in advance and attend an orientation, said National Park Service spokeswoman Maureen Gualtieri.

Climbing parties on registration form list expertise or comparable wilderness experience. Mountaineering rangers review applications, and if teams appear to lack experience, rangers speak to them about other training they might consider. But there's no "screen-out" based on experience or skills, Gualtieri said.

There are 12 to 16 people on the Denali from 7,000 to 17,000 feet (2,134 to 5,182 meters) ready to help climbers in trouble, she added.

Mount Hood is much smaller, but veteran climbers like Scott Schoenborn don't take an ascent lightly.

Schoenborn, 53, always fills out the information forms before departing, even though they're not mandatory.

"Mount Hood's killed a lot of people and when I take new climbers up, the first thing I do is I tell them



to go to Wikipedia on 'deaths on Mount Hood' and start reading so that they know it's a serious mountain and to take it seriously," he said, as he rested with his ice pick still strapped to his back.

Schoenborn added: "You need to be trained (and) you need to go with someone who's experienced."

Associated Press Writers Phuong Le in Seattle and Dan Joling in Anchorage contributed to this report.

## **EPA chief says he flies first class due to security concerns**

**By MICHAEL BIESECKER, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The head of the Environmental Protection Agency has broken months of silence about his frequent premium-class flights at taxpayer expense, saying he needs to fly first class because of unpleasant interactions with other travelers.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt spoke about his flight costs on Tuesday in a pair of interviews in New Hampshire, following a first-class flight to meet with the state's Republican governor and tour a toxic waste site.

Pruitt told the New Hampshire Union Leader he had some "incidents" on flights shortly after his appointment by President Donald Trump last year.

"We live in a very toxic environment politically, particularly around issues of the environment," said Pruitt, who confirmed to the newspaper that he had flown first class from Washington to Boston before continuing on to New Hampshire. "We've reached the point where there's not much civility in the marketplace and it's created, you know, it's created some issues and the (security) detail, the level of protection is determined by the level of threat."

Pruitt is the first EPA administrator to have a 24-hour security detail that accompanies him at all times, even at the agency's headquarters in Washington. He has also taken other security precautions, including the addition of a \$25,000 soundproof "privacy booth" to prevent eavesdropping on his phone calls and spending \$3,000 to have his office swept for hidden listening devices.

Pruitt said he was not involved in the decision for him to fly first class.

"There have been instances, unfortunately, during my time as administrator, as I've flown and spent time, of interaction that's not been the best," Pruitt told WMUR TV in Manchester, New Hampshire. "And, so, ingress and egress off the plane ... that's all decisions all made by our (security) detail team, by the chief of staff, by the administration. I don't make any of those decisions. They place me on the plane where they think is best from a safety perspective."

Pruitt was asked about the issue following a Washington Post report on Sunday that detailed some of his travel expenses, including a \$1,641.43 first-class seat for a short flight in June from Washington to New York City. Pruitt's ticket cost six times what EPA paid for his aides seated in coach.

The Associated Press reported in July and again in December that spending on commercial airline tickets purchased for Pruitt indicated he was flying in premium-class seats. EPA's press office has repeatedly refused to comment on whether Pruitt was flying first class.

Federal regulations allow government travelers to fly business class or first class when no cheaper options are "reasonably available" or if there are exceptional security circumstances. However, past federal audits have found that those rules have been routinely violated by high-ranking government officials under both Republican and Democratic administrations.

The use of luxury air travel by members of Trump's Cabinet has been under scrutiny for months, after the resignation of Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price in September following media reports he spent at least \$400,000 in taxpayer funds on private jets for himself and his staff.

A report released Wednesday by the inspector general at the Department of Veterans Affairs found that Secretary David Shulkin and his staff made "false representations" to justify his wife accompanying him at taxpayer expense on an 11-day European trip that mixed business and sightseeing.

Records show Pruitt has taken at least four flights on non-commercial aircraft, costing more than \$58,000. EPA has said all of those flights were necessary and pre-approved by ethics lawyers.

EPA spokesman Jahan Wilcox did not immediately respond Wednesday to questions about whether Pruitt

had been granted similar waivers allowing him to fly premium class or about the past security incidents to which Pruitt referred.

Pruitt's frequent government-funded travel, which records show has often included weekend layovers in his home state of Oklahoma, is currently under review by EPA's internal watchdog. The office of EPA Inspector General Arthur Elkins said Wednesday it expects to release the results of its investigation by summer.

Meanwhile, the White House's budget proposal for EPA released earlier this week seeks to cut \$3.7 million, or 9 percent, in funding for Elkins' office. His spokeswoman, Jennifer Kaplan, said that would impair the ability of the inspector general to perform investigations like the one into Pruitt's spending.

"Without sufficient resources, we would not be able to take on many discretionary audits and investigations that the OIG believes yield considerable value and return on investment," Kaplan said.

Follow AP environmental writer Michael Biesecker at <http://Twitter.com/mbieseck>

## South African President Zuma succumbs to pressure, resigns

By CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA, Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — South African President Jacob Zuma resigned on Wednesday in a televised address to the nation, ending a turbulent tenure marred by corruption scandals that sapped the popularity of the ruling African National Congress and hurt one of Africa's biggest economies.

The resignation signaled an imminent end to a leadership crisis in South Africa and set the stage for Zuma to be replaced by Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa, who has promised a robust campaign against corruption but will quickly face pressure to produce results in a country struggling with unemployment, economic inequity and other problems. Ahead of 2019 elections, Ramaphosa also has the tough task of rebuilding a ruling party whose moral stature has diminished since it took power at the end of white minority rule in 1994.

"I have therefore come to the decision to resign as president of the republic with immediate effect," said Zuma, who added that he took the decision even though he disagreed with the ruling party's demand that he quit immediately or face a motion of no confidence in the parliament on Thursday. Zuma, 75, had said he was willing to resign early from his second five-year term but wanted to stay in office for several more months.

"Of course, I must accept that if my party and my compatriots wish that I be removed from office, they must exercise that right and do so in the manner prescribed by the constitution," Zuma said.

The African National Congress welcomed the resignation, expressing gratitude for Zuma's "loyal service" during his nearly 10 years as president and encouraging party members to support Ramaphosa, now the country's acting president. By the end of the week, Ramaphosa is likely to be elected president by the ANC-dominated parliament and to give a state of the nation address that had been postponed during the political turmoil.

South Africa's biggest opposition party, the Democratic Alliance, said the ruling party must act against associates of Zuma who are also suspected of wrongdoing and mismanagement.

"Zuma built a deep system of corruption that has penetrated every part of the government and the criminal prosecution system," Democratic Alliance leader Mmusi Maimane said.

"Now the country looks to Cyril Ramaphosa to save us from a man that he and the ANC protected and supported. We must never allow this to happen again," said Maimane, who wants parliament to be dissolved so that early elections can be held.

Ramaphosa, a union leader during apartheid, was a key negotiator of the transition from white minority rule to democracy in the 1990s and later became a wealthy businessman. He replaced Zuma as leader of the ANC in December and has been consolidating his control, while also raising his international profile with a visit last month to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

On Wednesday morning, South African police raided the home of prominent business associates of Zuma who are accused of being at the center of corruption scandals that have infuriated the country. An elite

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police unit entered the compound of the Gupta family, which has been accused of using its connections to the president to influence Cabinet appointments and win state contracts.

Several people were arrested during police operations, South African media reported.

Both Zuma and the Guptas deny any wrongdoing, though legal challenges are looming. As the Gupta-linked investigation proceeds, Zuma also could face corruption charges tied to an arms deal two decades ago. South Africa's chief prosecutor is expected to make a decision on whether to prosecute Zuma on the old charges, which were reinstated last year after being thrown out in 2009.

In another scandal, South Africa's top court ruled in 2016 that Zuma violated the constitution following an investigation of multi-million-dollar upgrades to his private home using state funds. He paid back some of the money.

Still, Zuma, a former anti-apartheid activist who spent a decade at the Robben Island prison where Nelson Mandela was held, was popular among some South Africans for his personal warmth and populist policies.

In 2006, while being tried on charges of raping an HIV-positive family friend, Zuma was widely criticized after testifying he took a shower after extramarital sex to lower the risk of AIDS. He was acquitted of rape. But during his tenure, he called for earlier and expanded treatment for HIV-positive South Africans that helped to curb the death rate and urged his countrymen to get tested for HIV.

He presided over a South African triumph, the staging of the World Cup soccer tournament in 2010. He was also leader during the fatal shooting by police of several dozen protesters during labor unrest at a platinum mine in Marikana in 2012.

The former president was defiant in a television interview earlier Wednesday, saying he had done nothing wrong despite the ANC's demand for his resignation.

"I'm being victimized here," Zuma told state broadcaster SABC. He complained that Ramaphosa and other ANC leaders had not given him clear reasons about why he should go.

However, Zuma was affable when he arrived hours later at government offices to give his resignation speech.

"Why do you look serious? You can't even say, 'Good evening,'" a beaming Zuma said to weary journalists. "What's happening ... you are tired. We are working, aren't we?"

Follow Christopher Torchia on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/torchiachris](http://www.twitter.com/torchiachris)

## Watchdog's report faults VA chief over Europe trip expenses

By HOPE YEN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin improperly accepted Wimbledon tennis tickets and his staff lied that he was getting an award in order to justify his wife accompanying him at taxpayer expense on an 11-day European trip that mixed business and sightseeing, according to a blistering government investigation released Wednesday.

The 87-page report by the VA's internal watchdog said Shulkin should reimburse the government more than \$4,000 for his wife's airfare and accused his top aide of doctoring emails to falsely represent that Shulkin as being honored in Denmark, inventing a rationale for his wife's free travel.

"The investigation revealed serious derelictions" by Shulkin and his staff, said the report, which cited "poor judgment and/or misconduct."

The findings are the latest in a series of controversies involving expensive or wasteful plane travel by top Trump administration officials. President Donald Trump's health secretary, Tom Price, resigned in September after questions arose about his use of private jets for multiple government trips.

Top lawmakers on the congressional oversight committees urged Shulkin, a former VA undersecretary of health who served in the Obama administration, to fully address the findings. They stressed in a joint statement that "whether intentional or not, misusing taxpayer dollars is unacceptable."

Rep. Mike Coffman, R-Colo., a member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, called on Shulkin to resign and said "it is time to clean house at the VA."

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In a response attached to the report, Shulkin said he did nothing improper and he attacked the investigation as containing the "thread of bias."

"A report of this nature is a direct assault on my spouse, my character, and my unblemished record of service to the Veterans Affairs Administration," he wrote.

Shulkin said he will consult with the agency's general counsel and reimburse the costs for his wife's airfare and the Wimbledon tickets if advised to do so.

Shulkin's overseas trip may have involved too much leisure time at taxpayers' expense, according to the report by the VA's inspector general, Michael Missal. It found that VA ethics officials should not have approved the commercial airfare for Shulkin's wife, Merle Bari, and they did so only after Shulkin's chief of staff, Vivieca Wright Simpson, altered emails to make it appear he was receiving an award to justify his wife's traveling on the public's dime.

The inspector general said that "since Ms. Wright Simpson's false representations and alteration of an official record may have violated federal criminal statutes," it referred the matter to the Justice Department, which decided not to prosecute.

The report called on the VA to take "appropriate administrative action" against Wright Simpson, and the agency said it was reviewing the matter. A VA spokesman, Curt Cashour, did not immediately respond to requests for comment from Wright Simpson.

The audit by VA inspector general Michael Missal also questioned Shulkin's decision to use agency staff on official time to arrange his personal sightseeing activities.

An 11-member VA delegation, including Bari and six members of Shulkin's security detail, traveled to England and Denmark last July, at a total VA cost of at least \$122,334, according to the report. The trip included a tour of Westminster Abbey, attendance at the women's final at Wimbledon featuring American Venus Williams and a cruise on the Thames River.

Missal called on Shulkin to reimburse \$4,312 paid by the Department of Veterans Affairs for Bari's travel costs as well as the price of the Wimbledon tickets. He received the seats as a gift from a professional acquaintance, Victoria Gosling, a former CEO of the 2016 Invictus Games, and then misrepresented to the news media that the gift had been preapproved by ethics counsel. In fact, his acceptance of Wimbledon tickets had not been reviewed.

The inspector general began a review in October after The Washington Post reported that Shulkin and his wife had spent nearly half their time on personal activities during the European trip. The VA said the two flew commercially, and the taxpayers covered her airfare as part of "temporary duty" travel expenses.

But the audit found the trip may have violated a cost-saving directive that Shulkin had issued to the department weeks prior to the trip to avoid unnecessary expenses.

As to the Wimbledon tickets, Shulkin told investigators that he accepted the tickets from Gosling, whom he described as his wife's friend, after he unsuccessfully attempted to purchase tickets himself. After further questioning, the IG's office learned that Gosling could not even recall the name of Shulkin's wife.

Shulkin's lawyers described the Europe trip as an important opportunity to discuss "best practices" with U.S. allies for veterans' health care. They said Shulkin and his wife acted appropriately in taking advantage of suitable "down time" in between scheduled business meetings and paid for their tickets to local attractions.

Shulkin insisted he had planned to pay for his wife's airfare but considered the VA reimbursement only after staff suggested the idea.

The trip included a weekend during which Shulkin and his wife did sightseeing. According to VA, it was unclear whether scheduling two separate trans-Atlantic trips to avoid the four-day gap between work-related events would have saved money.

Shulkin isn't the only Cabinet member to have faced questions about travel since Price resigned.

Others include Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, Energy Secretary Rick Perry and EPA chief Scott Pruitt, who have acknowledged the use of government or private flights costing tens of thousands of dollars. Zinke and Pruitt are being investigated by their respective department's inspector general for their trips,

which they said were pre-approved by ethics officials. Perry also has defended his travel as preapproved. Pruitt this week broke a long silence about his frequent use of premium-class airfare at taxpayer expense, saying he needs to fly first class because of unpleasant interactions with other travelers.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin was investigated for use of government aircraft for official trips. A Treasury audit last October said he failed to provide enough proof of why he needed to use more expensive modes of travel but there was no violation of law.

Follow Hope Yen on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/hopeyen1>

## How best to treat opioids' youngest sufferers? No one knows

By LINDSEY TANNER, AP Medical Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — Two babies, born 15 months apart to the same young woman overcoming opioid addiction. Two very different treatments.

Sarah Sherbert's first child was whisked away to a hospital special-care nursery for two weeks of treatment for withdrawal from doctor-prescribed methadone that her mother continued to use during her pregnancy. Nurses hesitated to let Sherbert hold the girl and hovered nervously when she visited to breast-feed.

Born just 15 months later and 30 miles away at a different South Carolina hospital, Sherbert's second child was started on medicine even before he showed any withdrawal symptoms and she was allowed to keep him in her room to encourage breast-feeding and bonding. His hospital stay was just a week.

"It was like night and day," Sherbert said.

The different approaches highlight a sobering fact: The surge has outpaced the science, and no one knows the best way to treat the opioid epidemic's youngest patients.

Trying to cope with the rising numbers of affected infants, hospitals around the United States are taking a scattershot approach to treating the tremors, hard-to-soothe crying, diarrhea and other hallmark symptoms of newborn abstinence syndrome.

"It's a national problem," said Dr. Lori Devlin, a University of Louisville newborn specialist. "There's no gold-standard treatment."

With help from \$1 million in National Institutes of Health funding, researchers are seeking to change that by identifying the practices that could lead to a national standard for evidence-based treatment. A rigorous multi-center study comparing treatments and outcomes in hard-hit areas could start by the end of this year, said Dr. Matthew Gillman, who is helping lead the effort.

"When there's so much variability in practice, not everyone can be doing the very best thing," Gillman said.

Once the umbilical cord is cut, babies born to opioid users are at risk for developing withdrawal symptoms. By some estimates, one infant is born with the condition in the U.S. every 25 minutes. The numbers have tripled since 2008 at a rate that has solid medical research comparing treatments and outcomes struggling to keep pace.

Not all opioid-exposed babies develop the syndrome, but drug use late in a pregnancy increases the chances and can cause dependence in fetuses and newborns. These infants are not born with addiction, which experts consider a disease involving compulsive, harmful drug-seeking behavior. But the sudden withdrawal of opioids from their mothers may cause increased production of neurotransmitters, which can disrupt the nervous system and overstimulate bodily functions. Symptoms can last for months.

The condition can result from a mother's use of illicit drugs, but it also can stem from mothers being prescribed methadone or other anti-addiction medicine. Doctors believe the benefits of that treatment for the mothers outweigh any risks to their infants.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention doesn't routinely track the condition, but the agency's most recent data — from 2014 — indicates that the syndrome affects nearly 11 in every 1,000 U.S. births. The CDC said it is working with the March of Dimes and several states to get a better picture of the number of affected infants and how they fare developmentally and academically into childhood.

Some studies have suggested possible increased risks for developmental delays and behavior problems,

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but no research has been able to determine if that's due to mothers' drug use during pregnancy, infants' treatment after birth or something completely unrelated. And there's no definitive evidence that these children fare worse than unexposed youngsters.

"It's very, very frustrating" not knowing those answers, Devlin said. "It's such a difficult population to go back and do research on. They're people who often don't trust the system, often people who have had lots of trauma in their lives."

Treatment aims to reduce or even prevent symptoms. Some hospitals use morphine drops, while others use methadone and sometimes sedatives. Some send the babies straight to newborn intensive care units and some focus on comfort care from moms, allowing them to room-in with their infants. A recently published Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center analysis linked rooming-in with less medication use and shorter hospital stays for infants, but it can be difficult if mothers are still in the throes of addiction.

A Florida hospital is even testing tiny acupuncture needles on affected infants.

Many hospitals use a 40-year-old scoring system to measure 21 symptoms and frame diagnosis and treatment length, but some have created their own scales.

The Government Accountability Office's health care team has called for federal action to address the issue, saying the current recommendations from the U.S. Health and Human Services Department amount to a half-baked strategy lacking priorities and a timeline for implementation.

The department's recommendations include education for doctors and nurses to teach them how to manage affected infants, along with an emphasis on non-drug treatment.

Katherine Iritani, director of the GAO's health care team, said government officials have since indicated that they are convening experts to develop and finalize a plan by March 15.

"We'll review it and make sure it's responsive to our recommendations," she said.

A separate GAO report released last week recommended beefed-up government guidance to help states implement programs that ensure safe care for opioid-affected infants and treatment for parents still struggling with drug use.

Medicaid pays for more than 80 percent of costs for treating affected babies, totaling about \$1 billion in 2012, the GAO has found.

At Greenville Memorial Hospital, where Sarah Sherbert's son was delivered two years ago, babies born to methadone users are given that drug before symptoms start and are sent home with a supply to continue treatment.

Clemson University research has showed that approach could reduce hospital stays by nearly half, to an average of eight days costing \$11,000 compared with the state average of 15 days at a cost of \$45,000.

"The baby has already been exposed to methadone for nine months so adding four to five weeks and making weaning gentle instead of quitting cold turkey we think won't have any additional effect on babies' brain development," said Dr. Jennifer Hudson, who developed the treatment approach.

Sherbert, 31, said her drug use began eight years ago after she was prescribed opioid painkillers for injuries from a car accident. She was on methadone prescribed by her doctor when her daughter, now 3, was born.

She later lost custody after relapsing and her parents are caring for the children. Sherbert said she has been sober for a year and recently was promoted to supervisor at her job. She said she's determined to get them back.

"I've worked so hard and come such a long way," she said. "Seeing their little faces — that's worth every bit of it."

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Follow AP Medical Writer Lindsey Tanner on Twitter at @LindseyTanner . Her work can be found here .

## Wanted by the IOC: A city to host the 2026 Winter Olympics

By **STEPHEN WADE, AP Sports Writer**

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea (AP) — Wanted: A city to host the 2026 Winter Olympics. Getting bidders for the Olympics used to be easy. But no longer, and particularly for the Winter Games. Six European cities pulled out of official bids or possible bids when the IOC sought candidates a few years ago for the 2022 Winter Olympics. Cities balked over soaring costs, political unrest or a lack of public support as expressed in referendums.

That left the IOC with only two proposals, both from authoritarian governments that backed cities devoid of winter sports traditions: Almaty, Kazakhstan, and Beijing, China.

Beijing narrowly won, but that set off alarms at IOC headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland.

"The 2022 (bidding) certainly highlighted the problems we were facing in attracting cities, particularly winter cities," IOC member and former vice president John Coates said. "We had to do something to address the cost of the games. Increased costs have forced our hand."

Coates said the International Olympic Committee is doing a "total rethink" over the way the games are presented to potential bidders, and how they're sold to the public.

The Switzerland-based Olympic body is trying to rebrand, billing itself as user friendly and at the service of host cities — and not the other way around. Officials are talking up flexibility and cost cutting, trying to change the IOC's image of pressuring cities to build new sports venues that quickly become unused "white elephants."

Four cities have shown preliminary interest for 2026: Stockholm, Sweden; Calgary, Canada; Sion, Switzerland; and Sapporo, Japan. Calgary and Sapporo have hosted previous Winter Olympics, and Stockholm held the Summer Olympics in 1912. Sweden has never held the Winter Olympics.

"We are saying, come around and dialogue with us," said Christophe Dubi, executive director of the Olympics.

Dubi said Norway, Austria and the United States had also shown some interest — if not for 2026, then for 2030.

U.S. Olympic officials say the nation won't bid for the 2026 Games, with Los Angeles hosting the Summer Olympics in 2028. Salt Lake City, Denver and Reno, Nevada, are expected to consider 2030 bids.

Richard Brisius, the CEO of Stockholm's exploratory committee, told The Associated Press he believes the IOC's changes are "real," not a cosmetic makeover.

"They (IOC) are taking big steps to change for the future," Brisius said. "That means for a small, democratic country like Sweden, we feel now we have a good chance at this."

European and North American candidates probably have an edge for 2026. Sapporo held great Olympics in 1972, but putting the games in Japan would come just after Tokyo's 2020 Olympics, and after two winter games in Asia: Pyeongchang and Beijing.

Coates joked that letting cities talking informally before bidding formally with the IOC eliminated "the schmoozing" and back-scratching that has gone on, driving up costs for cities that eventually win the bid — and even for losing cities that don't.

Chicago, the losing bidder for the 2016 Summer Olympics, is reported to have spent \$100 million on paperwork and consultants — and got nothing from it.

Winning bidders have wound up with even larger tabs. Rio de Janeiro spent about \$13 billion in private and public money to host the 2016 games, though some put the cost at \$20 billion.

Sochi famously spent \$51 billion to prepare for the 2014 Winter Olympics, a price tag that scared off many bidders; particularly cities in Europe and North America.

Last year, the IOC awarded two Summer Olympics simultaneously to Paris and Los Angeles — 2024 and 2028 — in one bid process. Dubi said it was "too early to speculate" if it might do the same for the 2026 and 2030 Winter Olympics.

Simon Chadwick, who specializes in Olympics research at the University of Salford in Manchester, England, says the IOC has a sales job on its hands.

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"At best, the scientific evidence suggests that the economic benefits associated with bidding for and hosting the Games are marginal," Chadwick said in an email to the AP. "As such, the case for hosting is open to debate, hence there has been an increasing trend for European countries to put bidding decisions to a popular vote via a referendum."

Voters in at least two European cities — Munich, Germany, and St. Moritz, Switzerland — turned down referendums to pursue bids for 2022. The Munich vote was embarrassing for IOC President Thomas Bach, who is from Germany.

"The costs are not just financial," Chadwick wrote. "People often perceive that there are social, legal and environmental costs too." He also added "opportunity cost," meaning money spent on the Olympics could have been spent elsewhere.

China spent at least \$40 billion on the 2008 Beijing Olympics. The Chinese are spending big again on the Winter Games.

Bach has cautioned China to rein in spending and "stick to the reforms." But he also lauded organizers for raising so much money.

The IOC generated almost \$6 billion in revenue in the last Olympic cycle — 2013-2016 — but uses just a fraction of that to help host cities.

"We have already discussed with the Beijing organizing committee about different venues, about the location for venues, about the scale of venues, in order to reduce costs," Bach said days before the Pyeongchang Olympics opened. "On the other hand, we have to say we are really almost overwhelmed by the marketing success of Beijing 2022."

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

## 8 lenders that aren't serving people of color for home loans

By **AARON GLANTZ, EMMANUEL MARTINEZ and JENNIFER GOLLAN of REVEAL, REVEAL**

Across America, a troubling pattern emerges in data analyzed by Reveal from The Center for Investigative Reporting: Nearly two-thirds of mortgage lenders denied home loans for people of color at higher rates than for white people. But among the 6,600 U.S. lenders, some banks stood out for particularly extreme practices.

Note: Unless otherwise specified, all figures below rely on publicly available Home Mortgage Disclosure Act data and reflect conventional home purchase lending in 2015 and 2016.

Some of America's biggest banks had the worst track records. Among banks that took in more than 10,000 conventional loan applications in 2015 and 2016, these two were the most likely to say no:

TD Bank - "America's most convenient bank"

Headquarters: Cherry Hill, New Jersey

The skinny: African American and Latino borrowers are more likely to get turned down by TD Bank than by any other major mortgage lender. The bank turned down 54 percent of black homebuyers and 45 percent of Latino homebuyers, more than three times the industry averages.

The response: TD Bank declined to discuss its lending. Bank spokeswoman Judith Schmidt sent a statement saying the bank "makes credit decisions based on each customer's credit profile, not on factors such as race and ethnicity." It said an internal review of its lending patterns found that, after taking into account creditworthiness, its black and Latino applicants were no more likely to be denied loans than white applicants.

Capital One - "What's in your wallet?"

Headquarters: McLean, Virginia

The skinny: Capital One exited the home mortgage market in 2017. In the years before, it took in a higher proportion of mortgage applications from people of color than most of its competitors. But when African



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Americans approached Capital One to buy a home, they were more likely to get turned down than get a loan. Latino applicants fared slightly better. They were rejected 31 percent of the time, the third-highest rate among major lenders.

The response: In an email, Capital One spokeswoman Tatiana Stead said the company "either exceeds or is in line with industry benchmarks" when it comes to serving people of color and minority neighborhoods. "We have and will continue (to) work to ensure that Capital One's lending standards and our commitment to fair banking practices are maintained across all of our banking operations," she said.

The economic recovery has been marked by the rise of mortgage lenders, which unlike banks are not required to follow Community Reinvestment Act rules to lend to low-income borrowers and in blighted communities.

Ruoff Home Mortgage - "A great name to know when you need a mortgage"

Headquarters: Fort Wayne, Indiana

The skinny: Since the housing bust, family-owned Ruoff Home Mortgage has originated the most loans in Indiana and is one of the fastest-growing mortgage lenders in the country. Although its biggest market was Indianapolis, with a large African American community, the company made 92 percent of its 5,300 conventional home loans to whites in 2015 and 2016.

The response: A spokeswoman for the company did not respond to two emails and a voicemail requesting comment.

Citizens First Wholesale Mortgage Co. - "Your hometown wholesale lender"

Headquarters: Sumter County, Florida

The skinny: Located in The Villages, a retirement community halfway between Gainesville and Orlando, Citizens First is one of the largest lenders in America to cater almost exclusively to whites. Federal lending documents show 97 percent of the home loans it made in 2015 and 2016 were to whites.

The response: A Citizens First official did not respond to a voicemail and two emails requesting comment.

The Community Reinvestment Act allows banks to draw lines on maps to define "assessment areas," where regulators should scrutinize their lending. Some of those that lend almost entirely to whites drew service areas that excluded neighborhoods where large numbers of people of color live.

First National Bank in Staunton - "Community banks care about their communities" Headquarters: Staunton, Illinois

The skinny: The St. Louis metro area is racially diverse, home to more than 500,000 African Americans. But over two years, none of the 324 home loans made by First National Bank in Staunton went to an African American or Latino. All nine of its branches are in neighborhoods of the metro area that are at least 89 percent white. First National told regulators who enforce the Community Reinvestment Act that it intends to serve two overwhelmingly white counties in the St. Louis area, stopping at the county line of St. Clair County - home to East St. Louis, a predominantly black city.

The response: A First National official did not respond to two emails and a voicemail requesting comment.

First Federal Savings and Loan Association of Greene County - "People you know, the people you can trust!"

Headquarters: Waynesburg, Pennsylvania

The skinny: Like St. Louis, Pittsburgh is a racially diverse city with a large population of African Americans, but First Federal Savings and Loan doesn't serve them. Its branches all are in majority-white neighborhoods. Of the 554 conventional mortgages it issued in 2015 and 2016, 99 percent went to whites. Like First National Bank in Staunton, Illinois, it crafted an assessment area under the Community Reinvestment Act that includes overwhelmingly white suburban and rural counties, but stops at the Allegheny County

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line, where large numbers of people of color live.

The response: In a letter to Reveal, the company's president and chief executive, Judi Goodwin Tanner, said that wasn't a problem: "While this statistic alone might certainly be used to attempt to cast First Federal in a negative light," she said, federal regulators had found "no evidence of discriminatory or other illegal credit practices." In her letter, Tanner stated that the county where the bank is headquartered is 94.8 percent white. It said the bank had approved nearly all nonwhite applicants who sought a residential mortgage.

The Justice Department and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development rarely sue banks for redlining. Only a handful of cases were brought under President Barack Obama. None have been brought under President Donald Trump. These are two banks that had cases brought against them and the results:

KleinBank - "A foundation of integrity and trust"

Headquarters: Chaska, Minnesota

The skinny: A week before Obama left office, the Justice Department sued KleinBank, accusing it of unlawful redlining of majority-minority neighborhoods in the Minneapolis area. Federal lending data shows the bank made one loan to an African American and six to Latinos in 2015 and 2016, out of 585 total. In its lawsuit, the Justice Department cited KleinBank's self-designated Community Reinvestment Act service area, a horseshoe around sections of the Twin Cities metro area where large numbers of people of color live. KleinBank is defending itself by citing its most recent satisfactory Community Reinvestment Act review from the federal Office of the Comptroller of the Currency.

The response: "My comments are already in the public domain and on the public record, so I'd suggest you follow those," Doug Hile, the bank's president and chief executive, said before hanging up the phone. In an interview with The New York Times last year, Hile said of the Justice Department suit: "We are just not going to accept the premise that we should have to admit to doing something wrong when we didn't do something wrong."

Associated Bank - "Bank of the Packers since 1919"

Headquarters: Green Bay, Wisconsin

The skinny: In May 2015, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development reached a \$200 million fair lending settlement with Associated Bank, a major regional holding company. The company's two largest markets are the racially diverse cities of Chicago and Milwaukee, but in 2014, the year before its settlement with HUD, 92 percent of the company's conventional mortgage loans went to whites. By the end of 2016, the bank had improved but still made 32 times as many loans to white homebuyers as African American ones. In Chicago, it had a whiter borrower profile than any major bank in the area.

The response: A spokeswoman for Associated Bank did not respond to a voicemail and two emails requesting comment.

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## As Gaza deteriorates, Israel turns to world for help

By JOSEF FEDERMAN, Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — Four years ago, Israel inflicted heavy damage on Gaza's infrastructure during a bruising 50-day war with Hamas militants. Now, fearing a humanitarian disaster on its doorstep, it's appealing to the world to fund a series of big-ticket development projects in the war-battered strip.

In a windfall, the wealthy Gulf Arab state of Qatar, a key donor, has become an unlikely partner in Israel's quest, and has urged other nations to follow suit.

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But it remains unclear whether the rest of the international community is in a giving mood.

Donors say that while there have been some successes with reconstruction since the 2014 war, Israeli bureaucracy and security reviews are still too slow and Israel's ongoing blockade of Hamas-ruled Gaza is stifling the broader goal of developing the territory's devastated economy.

"Israel now realizes the growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza and its impact on the population," said the World Bank, which has helped oversee international reconstruction efforts. "Donors will be more encouraged to invest if the right conditions on the ground are put in place to allow sustainable growth."

Gaza, a tiny strip of land sandwiched between Israel and Egypt, has seen conditions steadily deteriorate since Hamas overran the territory in 2007 and took control from the internationally backed Palestinian Authority.

Israel and Egypt clamped a blockade in an attempt to weaken Hamas, and Israel and Hamas have fought three wars. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, hoping to regain control, has stepped up pressure on Hamas by cutting salaries of civil servants and limiting electricity deliveries.

The last war, in 2014, was especially devastating. Nearly 20,000 homes were destroyed, and over 150,000 others were damaged, according to U.N. figures. Hospitals, schools and infrastructure were also damaged.

Following the war, international donors gathered in Cairo and came up with a \$3.5 billion reconstruction plan. But only 53 percent of the promised money has been delivered, according to the World Bank, and Gaza's economy is in shambles. Unemployment is over 40 percent, tap water is undrinkable and Gazans receive only a few hours of electricity a day.

Signs of distress are visible throughout Gaza's potholed streets. Young men sit idly in groups on sidewalks, shopkeepers kill time on their smartphones as they mind their empty shops and the smell of sewage from the Mediterranean often wafts through the air.

Israel blames Hamas, a militant group sworn to its destruction, for the conditions. It says it has no choice but to maintain the blockade, which restricts imports and exports, because the group continues to plot ways to attack Israel.

But fearing a humanitarian disaster that could spill over into violence, Israel has begun to soften its line, echoing warnings by international officials.

"We are well beyond a humanitarian crisis, but on the verge of a total system failure in Gaza, with a full collapse of the economy and social services with political, humanitarian and security implications to match," U.N. Mideast envoy Nickolay Mladenov said.

Looking forward, Israel and the international community have different visions for how to fix the situation.

On Jan. 31, Israeli Cabinet Minister Tzachi Hanegbi and Maj. Gen. Yoav Mordechai, who oversees Israeli civilian policies for Gaza, appealed to an emergency gathering of donor nations in Brussels to deliver hundreds of millions of dollars for long-delayed projects sought by the international community.

According to a document obtained by The Associated Press, the Israeli list included a power line, natural gas line, desalination plant, industrial zone and sewage treatment facility.

"Israel is ready to provide its technological skills and infrastructure to prevent a humanitarian disaster in Gaza, on the condition that the funds come from the international community and that we know that they will not go to strengthen Hamas," Hanegbi told the Ynet news site.

In a rare interview, Mohammed Al-Emadi, the head of Qatar's Gaza reconstruction committee, urged other nations to support the effort.

"We have to fund as soon as possible," he told the AP. "When you want to do work in Gaza, you have to go through the Israelis."

Qatar, along with the United States and European Union, has been a leading donor to the "Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism," a system set up after the 2014 war to rebuild the territory while avoiding contact with Hamas.

Under the arrangement, the Palestinian Authority leads the projects, Israeli security officials review and approve them, while the U.N. monitors the delivery of goods to make sure that items like cement and metal pipes don't reach Hamas. It relies on various tools, including authorized vendors, security cameras and spot inspections of construction sites.

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Israel considers the system to be a success, given the challenging circumstances. According to Israeli figures, nearly 90,000 homes have been rebuilt, while 380 large projects, such as hospitals, housing complexes and water treatment facilities, have been completed.

Qatar has funded some of the most high-profile projects, including an \$84 million highway running the 40-kilometer (25-mile) length of Gaza, a \$114 million high-rise development in southern Gaza and a \$17 million state-of-the-art rehabilitation hospital.

Life-size pictures of Qatar's former emir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, and his son, current emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, greet visitors at the hospital entrance.

In Brussels, Jason Greenblatt, the White House Mideast envoy, also called for donors to "rededicate" themselves to investing in Gaza's infrastructure.

Other key donors, however, seem to be more hesitant. It appears unlikely they will open their wallets with internal Palestinian reconciliation at a standstill, the Trump administration unable to restart peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians, and continued international frustration over Israel's 11-year blockade of Gaza. U.S. cuts to UNRWA, the U.N. agency that assists more than half of Gaza's population, have further complicated the situation.

Illustrating the atmosphere, the new Qatari hospital overlooks a beach contaminated by untreated sewage water that pours into the sea due to power failures.

Guri Solberg, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman for Norway, one of the sponsors of the Brussels meeting, said the gathering was meant to reiterate support for a two-state solution and to enable the Palestinian Authority to regain control of Gaza.

It was "not a pledging conference," she said, adding it was impossible to say whether countries are ready to pledge more funds. A "number of donors" expressed concerns over the cuts to UNRWA, she added.

U.N. and World Bank officials say the reconstruction mechanism has worked well on routine projects but that Israeli bureaucracy and lengthy security reviews on complicated pieces of equipment have resulted in delays of up to six months.

Rebhi Sheikh-Khalil, deputy head of the Palestinian Water Authority, said a one-year project to build the first phase of a desalination plant end up dragging on for three years.

"This is due to the Israeli approvals that take a long time and so many procedures," he said.

In Brussels, the Israelis pledged to ease some restrictions to speed up construction — a step welcomed by the World Bank.

Mladenov, the U.N. envoy, said that for Gaza's economy to truly recover, the world must focus on broader goals: enabling Abbas' government to retake control, ending the Israeli blockade and halting Hamas' militant activities.

"This will fully enable the international community to support the economic and social revival of Gaza," he said.

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Associated Press writer Fares Akram in Gaza City, Gaza Strip, contributed to this report.

## Asian shares track Wall St gains as inflation fears subside

By KELVIN CHAN, AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — Asian shares posted solid gains on Thursday that mirrored Wall Street's advance as investors' worries over inflation receded, although trading was thinning as markets closed for Lunar New Year holidays.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 rose 1.3 percent to 21,435.13 and Hong Kong's Hang Seng advanced 1.3 percent to 30,908.64. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 climbed 0.9 percent to 5,893.90. Markets in mainland China, South Korea and Taiwan were closed for the lunar new year holiday.

INFLATION: A report showed U.S. consumer prices climbed at a slightly faster pace than economists expected in January while a separate report on retail sales showed they were unchanged in December and slipped last month. Surprisingly, markets shrugged off the figures, suggesting investors are now

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much less concerned about inflation than they were earlier this month, when an upbeat wage growth report sent markets reeling over fears the Federal Reserve might start raising interest rates faster than anticipated earlier.

**ANALYST TAKEAWAY:** "Having just gone through the roller coaster of equity sell-off induced by bond yield rises, I am frankly at a loss to explain what is now happening now," said Rob Carnell, chief Asia economist at ING. "I can only assume that we are in a temporary lull before the turmoil returns," he added, noting that trading volumes have been lower in recent days, likely because traders are winding down for the Lunar New Year holiday in Asia and President's Day holiday in the U.S. on Monday.

**WALL STREET:** Major U.S. benchmarks rose for the fourth straight day. The Standard & Poor's 500 index rose 1.3 percent to close 2,698.63. The Dow Jones industrial average added 1 percent to 24,893.49. The Nasdaq composite climbed 1.9 percent to 7,143.62.

**CURRENCIES:** The dollar was at a 15-month low, weakening to 106.64 yen from 106.94 yen in late trading Wednesday. The euro strengthened to \$1.2452 from \$1.2452.

**ENERGY:** U.S. benchmark crude oil rose 38 cents to \$60.98 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract rose \$1.41, or 2.4 percent, to settle at \$60.60 a barrel on Wednesday. Brent crude, used to price international oils, gained 35 cents to \$64.71 a barrel in London.

## Today in History By The Associated Press

### Today in History

Today is Thursday, Feb. 15, the 46th day of 2018. There are 319 days left in the year.

### Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 15, 1798, a feud between two members of the U.S. House of Representatives (meeting in Philadelphia) boiled over as Roger Griswold of Connecticut used a cane to attack Vermont's Matthew Lyon, who defended himself with a set of tongs. (Griswold was enraged over the House's refusal to expel Lyon for spitting tobacco juice in his face two weeks earlier; after the two men were separated, a motion to expel them both was defeated.)

### On this date:

In 1564, Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei was born in Pisa.

In 1764, the site of present-day St. Louis was established by Pierre Laclede and Auguste Chouteau.

In 1898, the U.S. battleship Maine mysteriously blew up in Havana Harbor, killing more than 260 crew members and bringing the United States closer to war with Spain.

In 1933, President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt escaped an assassination attempt in Miami that mortally wounded Chicago Mayor Anton J. Cermak; gunman Giuseppe Zangara was executed more than four weeks later.

In 1942, the British colony Singapore surrendered to Japanese forces during World War II.

In 1952, a funeral was held at Windsor Castle for Britain's King George VI, who had died nine days earlier.

In 1953, Tenley Albright, 17, became the first American woman to win the world figure skating championship, which was held in Davos, Switzerland.

In 1961, 73 people, including an 18-member U.S. figure skating team en route to the World Championships in Czechoslovakia, were killed in the crash of a Sabena Airlines Boeing 707 in Belgium.

In 1971, Britain and Ireland "decimalised" their currencies, making one pound equal to 100 new pence instead of 240 pence.

In 1989, the Soviet Union announced that the last of its troops had left Afghanistan, after more than nine years of military intervention.

In 1992, a Milwaukee jury found that Jeffrey Dahmer was sane when he killed and mutilated 15 men and boys. (The decision meant that Dahmer, who had already pleaded guilty to the murders, would receive a mandatory life sentence for each count; Dahmer was beaten to death in prison in 1994.)

In 2002, a private funeral was held at Windsor Castle for Britain's Princess Margaret, who had died six

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days earlier at age 71.

Ten years ago: Business tycoon Steve Fossett, 63, was declared dead by a judge in Cook County, Illinois, five months after his small plane vanished after taking off from an airstrip near Yerington, Nevada. (Fossett's remains were discovered in October 2008 in California's Sierra Nevada.)

Five years ago: With a blinding flash and a booming shock wave, a meteor blazed across Russia's western Siberian sky and exploded, injuring more than 1,000 people as it blasted out windows. Pressing his case in Chicago, the town that launched his political career, President Barack Obama called for the government to take an active, wide-ranging role in ensuring every American had a "ladder of opportunity" into the middle class.

One year ago: President Donald Trump's nominee for labor secretary, Andrew Puzder, abruptly withdrew his nomination after Senate Republicans balked at supporting him, in part over taxes he had belatedly paid on a former housekeeper not authorized to work in the United States. In an ultimatum to America's allies, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis told fellow NATO members to increase military spending by year's end or risk seeing the U.S. curtail its defense support.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Claire Bloom is 87. Author Susan Brownmiller is 83. Songwriter Brian Holland is 77. Rock musician Mick Avory (The Kinks) is 74. Jazz musician Henry Threadgill is 74. Actress-model Marisa Berenson is 71. Actress Jane Seymour is 67. Singer Melissa Manchester is 67. Actress Lynn Whitfield is 65. "Simpsons" creator Matt Groening (GREE'-ning) is 64. Model Janice Dickinson is 63. Actor Christopher McDonald is 63. Reggae singer Ali Campbell is 59. Actor Joseph R. Gannascoli is 59. Musician Mikey Craig (Culture Club) is 58. College and Pro Football Hall of Famer Darrell Green is 58. Actor-comedian Steven Michael Quezada is 55. Country singer Michael Reynolds (Pinmonkey) is 54. Actor Michael Easton is 51. Rock musician Stevie Benton (Drowning Pool) is 47. Actress Renee O'Connor is 47. Actress Sarah Wynter is 45. Olympic gold medal swimmer Amy Van Dyken-Rouen is 45. Actress-director Miranda July is 44. Rock singer Brandon Boyd (Incubus) is 42. Rock musician Ronnie Vannucci (The Killers) is 42. Singer-songwriter-musician Conor Oberst (Bright Eyes) is 38. Actress Ashley Lyn Cafagna is 35. Blues-rock musician Gary Clark Jr. is 34. Actress Natalie Morales is 33. Actress Amber Riley is 32.

Thought for Today: "We live by encouragement and die without it — slowly, sadly and angrily." — Celeste Holm, American actress (1917-2012).