

Groton Daily Independent

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Midwest Masonry & concrete Pumping

Greg Heilman, owner

405 E 1st Ave., Groton

Greg: 253/929-9137

Mike: 605/492-7041

midwestmasonry1@yahoo.com



Friday, Feb. 16

Boys' Basketball at Milbank. C game at 5:15 p.m.
followed by JV and Varsity
No School - Staff Inservice
Saturday: Wrestling Regions at Webster

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

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).

Hometown Hero Award

Sue Gates, Museum Director, and the DACOTAH PRAIRIE MUSEUM have won the "Hometown Hero" award at the Community Champions Award Luncheon on February 13, 2018 in Aberdeen, SD.

The Hometown Hero award recognizes an individual or organization that has shown superior dedication to the tourism industry in the Aberdeen area. Hometown Heroes work selflessly to ensure that their group's meetings, conventions, or events are held in the community. Visitors that attend these special events fill the hotels, restaurants, attractions, and retail outlets. The dollars they spend have a tremendous impact on the welfare of our city. By going the extra mile to bring in visitors, Hometown Heroes help ensure the economic vitality of the community continues to thrive.

The Museum Staff is thrilled for this honor and credit Sue's leadership in being a community champion.



Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

February 21, 2018 – 7:00pm

Groton Community Center

1. Liquor License Hearing – Julie Schaller Olde Bank N Café
2. Minutes
3. Bills
4. January Finance Report
5. Paint SD Program
6. Election reminder – Petitions must be submitted by February 23rd @ 5:00pm
7. DGR - Quotes
8. First Reading – Summer Salary Ordinance #718
9. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)

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The Moscow Times

Sunday's Saratov Airlines plane crash in which 71 people died was likely the result of pilot error, so say the investigators examining recovered black box data.

Even though the procedure is listed on a preflight checklist, the pilots didn't turn on the heating for the aircraft's pressure measurement equipment, leading to confusing speed readings.

Social media platforms Instagram, Facebook and YouTube are siding with the Kremlin against opposition leader Alexei Navalny by partially blocking or threatening to block his investigation into Kremlin-linked oligarch Oleg Deripaska.

Luckily, Facebook has promised we'll be able to read all about it in its annual Transparency Report — it's not censorship if you talk about it.

While Russian media watchdog Roskomnadzor's tentacles might have reached Silicon Valley, they are defenseless in Russian courtyards.

Clever Muscovites are taking advantage of the authorities' desire to erase Navalny from the face of the earth by writing his name over mounds of snow, prompting cleanup crews to do their jobs.

Next time somebody steals your parking spot, you know what to do.



If you've been feeling a little under the weather lately, you're not alone. President Vladimir Putin has caught a cold and even canceled some public appearances. No more going topless.

Moscow's Pioner Cinema, which defied the Culture Ministry by screening the "Death of Stalin," has been let off the hook. Instead, a court fined the cinema for showing a different Stalin film without a license — a move we feel is entirely justified given it stars Gerard Depardieu.

U.S.-led airstrike in Syria, the Kremlin says that just five Russians might have died. The rest is "classic disinformation."

Want to guarantee your children an interesting childhood? We recommend naming your newborns Ladomir, Zlatozara or Agrafena.



DI Pins are done; Groton DI Theater date set

The new Destination Imagination Pins are been made and will be ready for the regions. They are pictured on the left.

Groton DI, Destination Imagination, will host its Dessert Theater on Sunday, February 25, 2017. Skits will begin at 2 p.m. in the GES Commons Area. Dessert is being served at 1:45. DI is an extra-curricular activity that encourages teamwork, creative problem solving, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) Skills and 21st Century Skills.

Groton has six teams involved in DI this year. One team is Early Learning Teams – these students are in Kindergarten through second grade. We have three elementary teams which are students in third through fifth grade. There is one middle school team of comprised of students in the sixth, seventh, or eighth grade. Students in grades nine, ten, eleven and twelve are represented by our one high school team.

In the fall of the year, teams have a variety of challenges to research and decide which one is a good fit for their team. They have been working since October to solve their challenge. Each challenge has multiple solutions and therefore each presentation is different. It is always interesting to see what solutions various teams develop. Dessert Theater many times is the first public performance of the teams' solutions.

Please come and see the solutions that the Groton DIers have come up with. If you can't make Dessert Theater, Groton is hosting the NE Regional competition on March 3rd at the elementary school. We hope to see you at one of these events. THANK YOU for your continued support of Groton Destination Imagination!

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GHS 2nd Quarter Honor Roll

Seniors:

4.0 GPA: Jenifer Fjelstad, Alexis Gustafson, Madison Sippel, Madilyn Wright, Marshall Lane, Luke Thorson
3.99-3.50: Alexandra Stange, Jackson Oliver, Anthony Sippel, Gia Gengerke, Mitchel Thurston, Hannah Lewandowski, Hattie Weismantel
3.49-3.00: Erika Herr, Tyler Iverson, Brenna Johnson, Jessica Bjerke, Hayden Pigors, Brandon Keith, Hunter Monson

Juniors:

4.0 GPA: AnneMarie Smith, Emily Thompson, Jillian Barton, Ashley Garduno, Cassandra Townsend
3.99-3.50 Tylan Glover, Alexis Simon, Samantha Geffre, Kaitlyn Anderson, Kylie Kassube, Kaitlyn Kassube, Taylor Holm, Samantha Menzia
3.49-3.00: Jennie Doeden, Micah Poor, James Cranford, Miranda Hanson

Sophomores:

4.0 GPA: Kaycie Hawkins, Nicole Marzahn
3.99-3.50: Kaylin Kucker, KaSandra Pappas, Payton Colestock, Kayla Jensen, Tadyne Glover, Indigo Rogers, Madeline Schuelke, Rylee Rosenau, Kya Jandel
3.49-3.00: Amelie Hartwig, Caitlynn Barse, Austin Jones, Thomas Cranford, Benjamin Higgins

Freshmen:

4.0 GPA: Isaac Smith, Erin Unzen
3.99-3.50: Grace Wambach, Samantha Pappas, Tanae Lipp, Sage Mortenson, Alexa Herr, Trey Gengerke, Alexis Hanten, Steven Paulson, Regan Leicht, Grace Wiedrick, Jasmine Gengerke
3.49-3.00: Hailey Monson, Alex Morris, Dragr Monson, Tiara DeHoet, Dylan Krueger, Tessa Erdmann, Kale Pharis, Chandler Larson, Lucas Simon, Taryn Taylor, Brooklyn Gilbert, Chloe Daly, Alyssa Fordham, Braden Freeman, Hunter Kassube, Nevaeh Pardick

Eighth Graders

4.0 GPA: Allyssa Locke
3.99-3.50: Trista Keith, Stella Meier, Madeline Flihs, Riley Gengerke, Pierce Kettering, Seth Johnson, Madisen Bjerke, Jackson Cogley, Travis Townsend, Kansas Kroll, Lane Krueger, Kaden Kurtz, Macine McGannon, Kennedy Anderson, Jordan Bjerke, Julianna Kosel
3.49-3.00: Trey Johnson, Jace Kroll, Jayden Zak, Andrea Davidson, Megan Flihs, Hannah Gustafson, Kody Lehr, Rease Jandel

Seventh Graders

4.0 GPA: None
3.99-3.50: Caleb Hanten, Cole Bisbee, Ethan Clark, Jacob Lewandowski, Carter Barse, Jackson Dinger, Brooke Gengerke, Cade Larson, Elliana Weismantel, Kaleb Antonsen, Andrew Marzahn, Gracie Traphagen, Cadance Tullis
3.49-3.00: Shallyn Foertsch, Aspen Johnson, Jackson Bahr, Jacelynn Gleason, Ava Tunheim, Cole Simon, Dylan Anderson, Tate Larson, Shaylee Peterson, Marlee Tollifson, Brenna Carda, Porter Johnson, KayLynn Overacker

Sixth Graders

4.0 GPA: None
3.99-3.50: Emily Clark, Claire Heinrich, Jaycie Lier, Dillon Abeln, Kyleigh Englund, Emma Schinkel, Colby Dunker, Lexi Osterman, Karsyn Jangula, Abigail Jensen, Holden Sippel, Lane Tietz, Hannah Monson
3.49-3.00: Sydney Leicht, Anna Fjeldheim, Lydia Meier, Sara Menzia, Ashlyn Sperry, Anna Bisbee, Cadence Feist, Faith Flihs, Bradin Althoff, Michael Powers Dinger, Carly Guthmiller, JoZee Vondal, Bryson Wambach, Shea Jandel, Devin Untiedt, Camryn Kurtz

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Groton's third quarter comeback stalls in the fourth quarter

Groton's girls staged an amazing come-back in the third quarter, but still fell short as Milbank took home a 52-49 win.

The Bulldogs jumped out to a 16-0 lead and led, 16-5, at the end of the first quarter. Groton Area made three of 11 field goals for 27 percent and Milbank made seven of 13 for 54 percent. Groton's shooting cooled to 18 percent in the second quarter, making two of 11 shots and Milbank was six of 14 for 43 percent as the Bulldogs took a 29-14 lead at halftime.

The third quarter was all Groton. The Tigers made eight points off of Milbank's seven third quarter turnovers, shot 63 percent from the field making 10 of 16 shots and scored 17 straight points to take a 39-35 lead at the end of the period. Milbank was two of nine in shooting for 22 percent.

The game was tied three times and the lead changed hands three times in the fourth quarter. The Tigers had a chance to tie the game with a last second shot. In the fourth quarter, Groton made three of 13 field goals for 23 percent and Milbank made five of 12 for 42 percent.

For the game, Groton Area was 18 of 45 for 40 percent and Milbank was 20 of 38 for 42 percent. Groton scored 11 points off of Milbank's 15 turnovers. Milbank scored eight points off of Groton's 14 turnovers.

Three players hit double figures for Groton with Harleigh Stange leading the way with 14 points before she fouled out with 3:29 left in the game. Miranda Hanson had 12, Jennie Doeden 11, Payton Maine eight and Eliza Wanner had four points before fouling out with 27 seconds left in the game. Stange had eight of the team's 25 rebounds and four of the team's 10 steals. Maine had four of the team's seven assists.

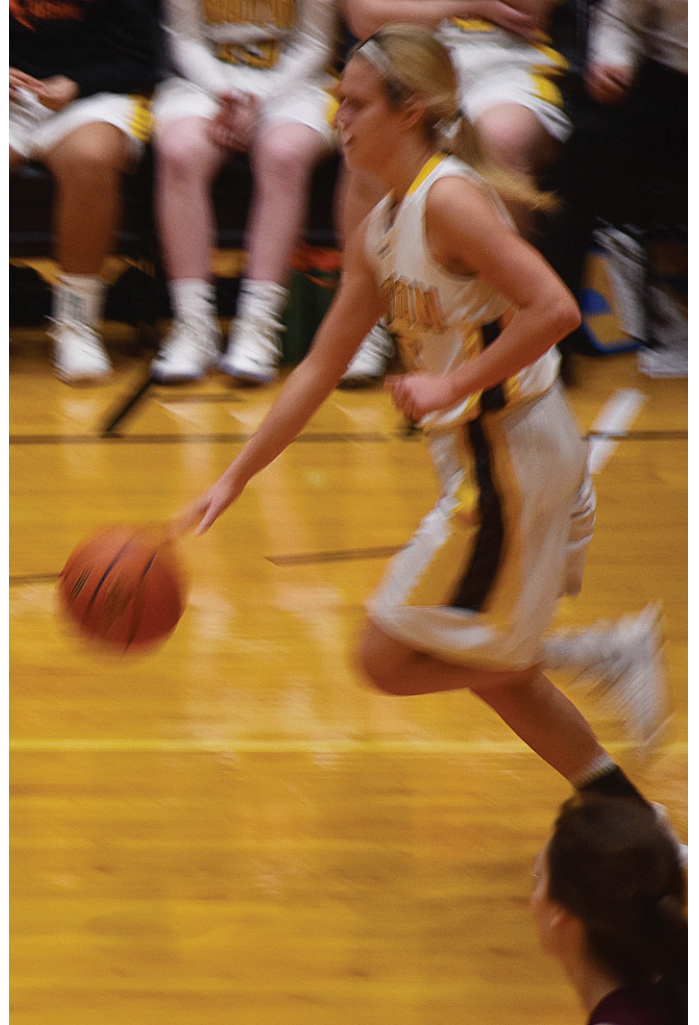
Groton Area made 11 of 17 from the line off of Milbank's 17 team fouls. Milbank made nine of 18 free throws off of Groton's 19 team fouls.

Jacey Engebretson led the Bulldogs with 12 points followed by Sophia Seffroad with 11, Molly Rick had nine, Caggi Cummins seven, MacKayla Johnson had five, Shea Hooth four and Lindsey Mertens and LaChristy Finley each had two points.

Groton won the C game, 38-9 Gracie Traphagen led the Tigers with 17 points, Maddie Bjerke had eight, Allyssa Locke five, Caitlyn Barse four and Payton Colestock and Trista Keith each had two points.

Milbank won the junior varsity game, 33-16. Payton Colestock led the Tigers with 10 points while Caitlyn Barse, Trista Keith and Maddie Bjerke each had two points.

Groton Area finishes the regular season with a 7-13 record. Groton Area and Webster are now tied for sixth in the regional seeding. There are some games scheduled for tonight that could affect the outcome of the sixth place position. The only thing for certain right now is that Aberdeen Roncalli is the number one seed.



Harleigh Stange stole the ball and went the distance to score for the Tigers. (Photo by

Julianna Kosel)

Third Ballot Question Petition Validated for 2018 General Election Ballot

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Secretary of State Shantel Krebs announced that the petition submitted for an initiated measure to increase the State tobacco tax and create a postsecondary technical institute fund for the purposes of lowering student tuition and providing financial support to the State postsecondary technical institutes was validated and filed by her office. It is the third ballot question to be placed on the November 6, 2018 General Election Ballot. It will be titled Initiated Measure 25.

An Initiated Measure requires 13,871 valid signatures to be placed on the ballot. This initiated measure petition included 19,025 signatures.

“We reviewed the random sample of signatures, and 82.88 percent were found to be valid,” stated Secretary Krebs.

Any citizen may challenge the Secretary of State’s approval of a ballot measure and must submit an original, signed affidavit to the South Dakota Secretary of State’s office within 30 days of validation. Electronic submission of affidavits will not be accepted. The deadline for a challenge to Initiated Measure 25 would be Monday, March 19, 2018 by 5 p.m. central time.

The remaining five petitions will be reviewed by the Secretary of State’s office in the order in which they were received. The South Dakota Legislature also has the ability to include constitutional amendments on the 2018 ballot and South Dakota citizens have the ability to submit a referendum petition concerning laws passed during the 2018 Legislative session.

For more detailed information on potential 2018 Ballot Questions, click [here](#).

###

2-1-17.1. Submission of affidavit challenging petition to secretary of state--Appeal. Within thirty days after a statewide petition for an initiated constitutional amendment, initiated measure, or referendum has been validated and filed, any interested person who has researched the signatures contained on the petition may submit an affidavit to the Office of Secretary of State to challenge the petition. The affidavit shall include an itemized listing of each specific deficiency in question. Any challenge to the following items is prohibited under this challenge process:

- (1) Signer does not live at address listed on the petition;
- (2) Circulator does not live at address listed on the petition;
- (3) Circulator listed a residence address in South Dakota but is not a South Dakota resident;
- (4) Circulator did not witness the signers;
- (5) Signatures not included in the random sample; and
- (6) Petition that was originally rejected.

Any challenge by the same person or party in interest shall be included in one affidavit.

The original signed affidavit shall be received by the Office of Secretary of State by 5:00 p.m. central time on the deadline date. If the affidavit challenges any item that is prohibited by this section, only that line item shall summarily be rejected. A challenge to a line item is not a challenge to the petition as a whole.

The secretary of state's decision regarding a challenge may not be challenged a second time with the secretary of state, but may be appealed to the circuit court of Hughes County. If a person fails to challenge a petition pursuant to this section, it does not deny that person any other legal remedy to challenge the filing of an initiative or referendum petition in circuit court. A challenge to a petition in circuit court may include items prohibited in this section.

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Today in Weather History

February 16, 1969: Freezing drizzle and thick fog formed a heavy glaze on utility lines resulting in several broken power and telephone lines across northern South Dakota.

1903: The temperature at Pokegama Dam, Minnesota plunged to 59 degrees below zero to establish a state record. This record was held until February 2, 1996, when the temperature at Tower fell to 60 degrees below zero.

1989: A surge of arctic air produced all-time record high barometric pressure readings of 31.08 inches at Duluth Minnesota, 30.97 inches at Chicago Illinois, and 30.94 inches at South Bend Indiana. Readings of 31.00 inches at Milwaukee Wisconsin, and 30.98 inches at Rockford, Illinois, tied their all-time records. Unseasonably warm weather prevailed across the southeastern U.S. Highs of 81 degrees at Athens Georgia, 87 degrees at Charleston South Carolina, 85 degrees at Macon Georgia, and 86 degrees at Savannah Georgia were records for February.

1899 - Washington D.C. received 1.26 inches of rain in six hours atop a snow cover more than 30 inches deep making it the soggiest day of record. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1943 - Record cold prevailed in the northeastern U.S. The mercury plunged to 43 degrees below zero at Concord NH, and to -39 degrees at Portland ME. The morning low of -32 degrees at Falls Village CT established a state record, yet the afternoon high that day was 20 degrees above zero. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A winter storm produced snow and ice in the Ohio Valley and the Appalachian Region. Snowfall totals in Virginia ranged up to 14 inches around Farmville, while Granville NC reported eight inches of sleet and ice. Freezing rain in eastern North Carolina caused extensive damage to power lines. Gales lashed the coast of Virginia and North Carolina. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Santa Ana winds in southern California gusted to 50 mph in the Rancho Cucamonga area. Quiet weather prevailed across the rest of the nation. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

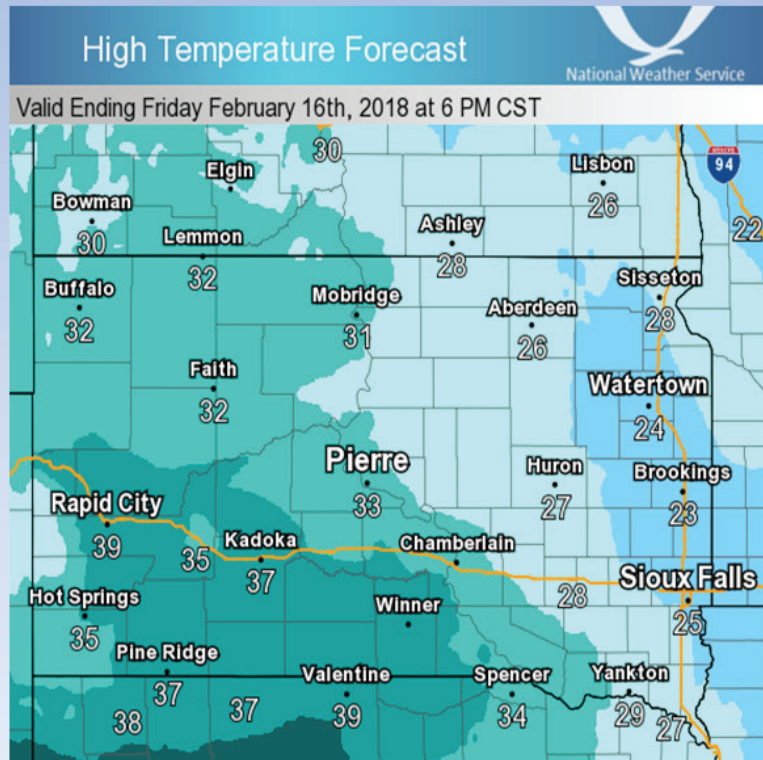
1990 - Strong thunderstorms developing ahead of an arctic cold front produced severe weather across the southeastern U.S. between mid morning on the 15th and early evening on the 16th. Thunderstorms spawned thirteen tornadoes, including one which, prior to dawn on the 16th, injured eleven persons near Carrollton GA. There were also 121 reports of large hail or damaging winds. A late afternoon thunderstorm on the 15th produced baseball size hail at Jackson MS, and prior to dawn on the 16th, a thunderstorm produced high winds which injured four persons at Goodwater AL. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Fri Feb 16	Sat Feb 17	Sun Feb 18	Mon Feb 19	Tue Feb 20	Wed Feb 21	Thu Feb 22
25°F	29°F	24°F	8°F	10°F	14°F	25°F
13°F	12°F	-1°F	-4°F	-8°F	1°F	15°F
SSW 19 MPH	W 14 MPH Precip 20%	ENE 17 MPH Precip 40%	NNE 16 MPH Precip 50%	NW 10 MPH	SW 9 MPH	SSW 11 MPH

A Little Warmer Today



Weekend Outlook

Saturday: Chance for light snow. Highs Mid 20s to lower 30s.

Sun-Mon: Chc of Snow, accumulations possible. Highs teens to lower 30s.

Published on: 02/16/2018 at 7:23AM

Today should be a little warmer, and dry. However, chances for snow enter the picture for tonight, and again over the weekend. The highest chances for decent accumulations are Sunday night into Monday.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 37.5 F at 12:47 AM

Low Outside Temp: 2.1 F at 11:29 PM

Wind Chill:

High Gust: 29.0 Mph at 9:17 AM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 56° in 1981

Record Low: -40° in 1936

Average High: 28°F

Average Low: 8°F

Average Precip in Feb: 0.27

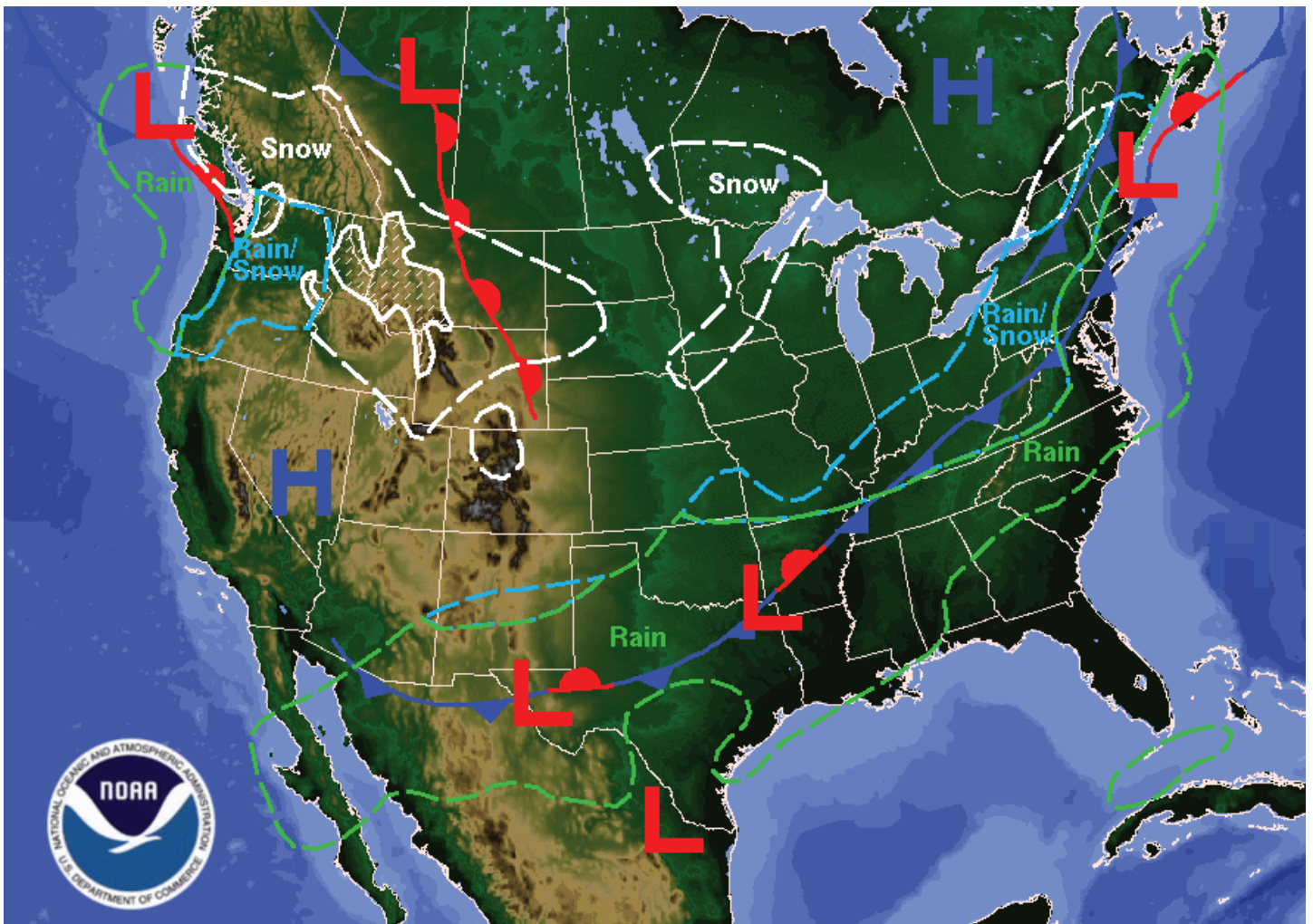
Precip to date in Feb: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.74

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 6:02 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:32 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Fri, Feb 16, 2018, issued 4:58 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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A RELIABLE REFUGE

The recent tornados that have wreaked havoc across the central United States have been devastating. The loss of loved ones, the scope of injuries that will take years to overcome, the destruction of homes and businesses, the feelings of grief and hopelessness that grasped individuals as they sorted through piles of rubbish that at one time represented their entire life is beyond understanding.

In the midst of these great tragedies, however, were the stories and pictures of some who were prepared for such an event. From past encounters with powerful winds and driving rain and hail storms were those who came to the conclusion that preparation for such a time was a top priority. They were the ones who built sturdy shelters beneath the ground where they were sure to be safe. They did not trust their lives to fate or chance. They recognized their need to prepare for the assaults of life.

The author of Psalm 91 spoke of the need we have to prepare for the assaults of life. "He," wrote the author, "will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge."

While storm shelters can protect us from wind and rain, flying objects and falling buildings, only God can protect us from the destructive forces of sin. In Him we have the assurance that He will meet all of our needs – spiritual, emotional and physical – every day of our lives. And through Him we have His promise that He will give us His power and strength, presence and protection to overcome the attacks of the devil.

Prayer: Our hearts rejoice, Father, to know that we can dwell safely "under Your wings" and take refuge in You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 91:4 He shall cover you with His feathers, And under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler.

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

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News from the Associated Press

Thursday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Roncalli 68, Britton-Hecla 46
Canistota 58, Irene-Wakonda 49, OT
Corsica/Stickney 51, Hanson 49
Crazy Horse 75, Tiospaye Topa 25
Custer 69, Lead-Deadwood 45
Deuel 54, DeSmet 42
Flandreau 74, Howard 41
Freeman 58, Gayville-Volin 55
Great Plains Lutheran 45, Waverly-South Shore 37
Kimball/White Lake 54, Andes Central/Dakota Christian 49
Menno 55, Freeman Academy/Marion 48, OT
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 73, Gregory 66
Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 61, Iroquois 43
Platte-Geddes 74, Wagner 38
Potter County 68, Ipswich 51
Rapid City Central 59, Rapid City Stevens 55
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 47, Mitchell Christian 38
Sioux Falls Christian 82, Beresford 36
Sully Buttes 64, Faulkton 25
West Central 61, Canton 53
Wilmot 72, Clinton-Graceville-Beardsley, Minn. 64
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS
Spearfish vs. Douglas, ppd. to Feb 19.

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Burke/South Central 60, Gregory 32
Castlewood 55, Estelline 22
Corsica/Stickney 59, Kimball/White Lake 54
Crazy Horse 73, Tiospaye Topa 68
Custer 52, Lead-Deadwood 33
Dell Rapids St. Mary 47, Hendricks, Minn. 41
DeSmet 65, Deuel 25
Freeman 53, Gayville-Volin 30
Hanson 66, Pine Ridge 53
Herreid/Selby Area 54, Northwestern 47
Ipswich 60, Potter County 36
Langford 64, Edmunds Central 35
Leola/Frederick 57, Eureka/Bowdle 23
Madison 48, Dell Rapids 43
McIntosh 41, Lemmon 37
Menno 57, Freeman Academy/Marion 24
Milbank 52, Groton Area 49
Miller 63, Highmore-Harrold 48
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 47, Parkston 32

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Parker 44, Tea Area 27
Redfield/Doland 61, Clark/Willow Lake 54
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 53, Mitchell Christian 31
Sioux Falls Christian 63, Beresford 49
Sully Buttes 62, Faulkton 55
Tripp-Delmont/Armour 59, Scotland 44
Wagner 44, Platte-Geddes 35
Watertown 41, Huron 30
Waubay/Summit 57, Elkton-Lake Benton 27
Waverly-South Shore 53, Great Plains Lutheran 27
Webster 52, Tiospa Zina Tribal 44
Wolsey-Wessington 53, Hitchcock-Tulare 6
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS
Harding County vs. Newell, ccd.
Kadoka Area vs. Bennett County, ccd.
Spearfish vs. Douglas, ppd. to Feb 19.

Yankton concerned federal prison could close

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — Employees of a federal prison camp and others in Yankton are concerned the facility could be one of the minimum-security prisons that U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions would like to close.

Sessions has proposed closing two of the country's eight minimum-security prison camps, saving \$122 million. It's part of the Department of Justice's \$28 billion budget proposal.

The Argus Leader reports Yankton's city manager, Amy Nelson, has asked the city commission to reach out to the state's congressional delegation for support.

Sen. Mike Rounds says it's not clear which facilities would be targeted for closure if the DOJ budget advances. Rounds says he'll make a case for maintaining it.

The prison houses nearly 600 inmates on the former Yankton College campus.

City, landowner appeal Supreme Court's Buffalo Chip ruling

STURGIS, S.D. (AP) — The city of Sturgis and a Meade County landowner have appealed the South Dakota Supreme Court's decision in favor of the incorporation of the city of Buffalo Chip.

Buffalo Chip is located outside Sturgis and used to be a campground mainly used by motorcyclists.

The court last month said any challenge to a 2015 vote to incorporate Buffalo Chip must be brought by the state.

The Black Hills Pioneer reports that the city of Sturgis and landowner Jane Murphy this week asked for a rehearing of the case. Murphy says, "this is such a mess and the court did nothing to clear it up."

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

Man convicted of assaulting Ziebach County sheriff

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — An Eagle Butte man has been convicted of assaulting a law officer.

Authorities say 54-year-old Pete Knight shoved Ziebach County Sheriff Gary Cudmore on June 14, 2017, when Cudmore intervened to stop Knight from assaulting a suspect handcuffed in the back of Cudmore's squad car.

U.S. Attorney Ron Parsons says Knight was convicted after a recent jury trial in Pierre and faces up to eight years in prison when he's sentenced April 30.

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Fort Thompson man pleads guilty to involuntary manslaughter

FORT THOMPSON, S.D. (AP) — A Fort Thompson man has pleaded guilty to involuntary manslaughter for killing a man during a fight last spring.

Authorities say Zachery Ziegler got into a fight with Thomas Witt after entering a residence on the Crow Creek Reservation uninvited and drunk on May 23 and being asked to leave.

Ziegler was accused of punching Witt unconscious and then kicking him. Witt was pronounced dead at a Chamberlain hospital later that day. The cause of death was listed as a traumatic brain injury.

The Daily Republic reports Ziegler recently pleaded guilty to involuntary manslaughter in a deal with prosecutors. He faces up to eight years in prison. Sentencing wasn't immediately scheduled.

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

Wife charged with killing Oglala Sioux police officer

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The wife of an Oglala Sioux police officer is charged with killing him last weekend. Tiffany Janis is charged with second-degree murder in the shooting death of 52-year-old Officer Brian Garrett of Kyle. The Rapid City Journal reports Janis made her first appearance in federal court Wednesday.

The FBI says Garrett was killed early Saturday on the Pine Ridge Reservation during an apparent domestic dispute. He was off-duty at the time.

According to court documents, Janis told investigators Garrett had kicked her out after an argument and that she went to her truck and got her gun before returning to the house. Garrett was shot once in the chest.

Janis' federal public defender declined comment Thursday.

The FBI, the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Oglala Sioux tribal police are investigating.

Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press

Rapid City Journal, Rapid City, Feb. 13

Voters should support higher rates for water

Sometimes, it is difficult to understand where the Citizens for Liberty really stand on local issues.

On Tuesday, the citizens' group told the Rapid City Council it opposes a new Barnett Arena, citing wasteful spending while suggesting money would be better spent on items like infrastructure, which includes the city's vast water supply and distribution system.

At the same time, however, the same group is responsible for this month's \$60,000 special election that challenges the city council's recent vote to raise water rates.

The liberty group collected the signatures needed to challenge the vote on the ballot after the council approved what the city says is a 52 percent increase in water rates for the average residential user that will be phased in over five years.

Technically, though, the special election only addresses a technicality. The city council passed the hike with a resolution rather than an ordinance — which meant one fewer public hearing was held that likely would not have changed the outcome. The resolution was approved on a 9-1 vote by the council, which can revisit the rates whenever it chooses.

The liberty group seized on that perceived public slight as the reason for the special election, suggesting this is an issue of process, which is a smoke screen. The real issue, of course, is the percentage increase of the rate hike that seems alarming without considering the big picture.

Focusing on just the percentage increase is like watching a movie through a pinhole. This is about water, which has a direct impact on public health and safety, economic development, and life, liberty and happiness.

If one takes the time to enlarge the pinhole even just a little bit, they will discover that the availability of clean water from a reliable source will continue to be one of the best deals in town.

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Currently, most single-family homes are billed \$3.11 for every 748 gallons — or one billing unit — of water and uses the average 7.5 units a month. In addition, those users are assessed a \$7.39 meter charge for a total monthly bill of \$30.72, a little over a dollar a day.

By 2022, those same customers would pay \$4.73 per unit and an \$11.18 meter charge for a bill of \$46.22 a month, a little more than \$1.50 a day. If voters approve, it will be the first rate increase since 2013.

It's hard, therefore, to argue that having a reliable source of clean water delivered to your home for \$1.50 a day is a consequence of government largess or reckless spending, which is likely why opponents focus on process and percentage and not service and actual cost.

Nonetheless, the liberty group is entitled to challenge the council's decision on the ballot, where voters will be asked whether they support the city's decision to approve with a resolution rather than an ordinance.

In taking this approach, Citizens for Liberty is challenging the role of the city council in a bid to raise its own profile as spending hawks or government watchdogs — ironically at a cost of \$60,000 to taxpayers.

So, it is up to Rapid City residents to decide if they will take the time to vote, which can be a problem when a special election is held — especially in February when it can be cold, windy and slippery outdoors. Now is not the time, however, to shirk one's duty as a citizen, taxpayer and customer of the city's water service. Do you support the city's management of the water system or not? It's an opportunity to weigh in in a meaningful way.

City staff has done its due diligence in studying the need for a rate increase that will allow for upgrades to infrastructure and maintain the water service that is vital to a community while sending the clear message that Rapid City will continue to be a reliable provider to residents and businesses. The council and mayor have studied the issue and given their approval. If residents are unhappy with their decision, they can vote them out of office in a future election.

Early voting is now ongoing at the Pennington County Auditor's Office in Rapid City. Election Day is Tuesday, Feb. 20. A "yes" vote endorses the city's process and its commitment to providing affordable and clean water. A "no" vote means the process starts over and likely lays the groundwork for more special elections that will tie the hands of the city council and drive up the costs of future infrastructure needs that are sure to come.

The Daily Republic, Mitchell, Feb. 13

If dredge plan is decided, community backing needed

For nearly three dedicated years, there have been countless hours spent discussing and exploring all options to solve Lake Mitchell's woes.

In April 2015, an official with South Dakota State University met with the city's volunteer Lake Mitchell Advisory Committee to suggest the lake be drained to add habitat, control sediment and resculpt the lake.

After studies, plans and multiple improvement methods have been presented, the idea to drain and dredge the lake is again at the forefront of discussions in hopes of ridding the blue-green algae from the water. An estimated \$6 million initial investment would be the cost for the first major restoration effort, but Mitchell Mayor Jerry Toomey said it also would mean no Lake Mitchell for at least nine months.

That price tag is much more alluring than previous proposals from Omaha-based Fyra Engineering of between \$30 million to \$80 million. But it's safe to say there is hesitancy on the drain-and-dredge plan from homeowners who live near and on Lake Mitchell, which is likely why there was significant time spent searching for alternative options.

And while we recognize the aesthetics of Lake Mitchell will decline drastically in the fall, winter and spring during the work, we believe the short-term headache will be worth the long-term benefits.

Ultimately, the Mitchell City Council will need to approve this plan — but we hope council members hear a strong buy-in from residents near the lake well before any vote. It's rare to find a person in the city who doesn't believe we need to fix the lake.

If the best route of action to fix Lake Mitchell from a cost and efficiency standpoint is to drain and dredge, we need to get started on it — perhaps as soon as after Labor Day of this year.

Three years ago, what seemed to be a minor suggestion from that SDSU official ultimately has become a serious consideration. Now, after exploring all options and realizing it's likely the best option, we hope there's overwhelming support.

American News, Aberdeen, Feb. 14 **Courthouse security improvements are past due**

The folks who lead various Brown County departments might have to scrimp a bit this year. At least it's for a worthy cause.

County commissioners last week asked department heads to save money by trimming 7 percent from the amount they have budgeted for supplies this year. Commissioners plan to use that money and more for expenses related to making sure courtrooms are secure during hearings at the Brown County Courthouse.

The judges of the 5th Judicial Circuit forced the issue, ordering the commission to provide security to keep court officials and workers, as well as citizens involved in the hearings, safe.

It's past due.

The cost for the security improvements is expected to about \$200,000. Of that, the large majority — \$166,000 — is to hire two certified law enforcement officers and one noncertified officer for \$166,000. Paul Sivertsen, the county's chief information officer, and Sheriff Mark Milbrandt estimated cost of securing doorways and adding elevator stops will be about \$35,000.

Commissioners were in a tough spot when the judges sent them an order in December calling for the upgrades. This year's budget had already been approved and it can't be changed retroactively, Commissioner Doug Fjeldheim said.

That is to say the commission can't demand, for example, that the auditor's office or fair board spend less than what's already been allocated to them. So commissioners had to send a letter asking departments to be conservative.

That might be a bit easier for those who work in the courthouse and other office settings than, say, the highway department. If the highway department cuts back, it might mean less road work gets done.

Judges gave the commission a Feb. 5 deadline for the security upgrades. That date has come and gone, but the judges eased on it since the county was making progress.

The call by the judges was certainly reasonable. Security is rarely provided now at court hearings, though the county does have a detector it can and does use, generally for cases involving very serious crimes.

Soon, though, everybody attending a court hearing will have to pass through a security checkpoint. And that is the right thing.

Judge Tony Portra said last year that he had a video of a man in front of the clerk of courts office holding a garden shovel and wanting to talk to Judge Mark Anderson.

Those types of instances are outrageous, of course, but there's nothing to stop them now. It would not be difficult to sneak a weapon into the courthouse. And judges and attorneys sometimes have to make decisions that upset defendants, clients and others involved in the legal process.

"I don't want to be a plaque," Portra told commissioners in October when he first broached the idea of improved security. "I don't want to be like, 'Oh, that Judge Portra, he was a pretty nice guy, man, I sure miss him, I wish he didn't get shot.' I want somebody to do something about it ahead of time. I don't want a parade."

He's right.

There's never going to be a financially convenient time for the county to find the money, so sooner is better than later.

Here's hoping the departments heed the call of commissioners and can save some money to help offset the security costs.

Sioux Falls to host large pheasant-themed convention

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sioux Falls might get up to 30,000 visitors for this weekend's Pheasant Fest, which organizers believe would make it the largest convention ever held in South Dakota.

The 2018 Pheasant Fest and Quail Classic, informally called Pheasant Fest, will take place Friday through Sunday in Sioux Falls, the Argus Leader reported. The annual convention of conservation groups Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever will feature hundreds of exhibitors and be a boon to local businesses. Among the planned events are a parade and seminars on training a dog to hunt.

Organizers are anticipating between 25,000 and 30,000 attendees.

"It's massive," said Teri Schmidt, executive director of the Sioux Falls Convention and Visitors Bureau. "We've never had a true convention of this size in the state. It outpaces any event."

Pheasants Forever spokesman Jared Wiklund said they chose Sioux Falls to host the event because it's "smack dab in the middle of pheasant range and our member base." Wiklund said that some of the largest Pheasants Forever chapters are based in the region.

He said the organization was impressed by the number of hotel rooms, the city's welcoming attitude, the state-of-the-art convention center and the amount of free parking nearby.

"This is the only place we've ever gone to where the parking is free," Wiklund said. "That seems like a small thing, but really, it's huge."

Schmidt said the event will benefit local hotels, restaurants, retail stores and the newly available ride-sharing service, Lyft. She also said the convention will give thousands of visitors a close-up look at the city.

"This is a convention about a sector of our world that had affected South Dakota in every way forever, for 100 years," Schmidt said. "Sioux Falls is hosting the event, but we're selling the entire state."

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

Lawmakers encourage sentinel programs after Florida shooting

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota legislative leaders are encouraging school districts to allow approved employees to carry guns after a shooting at a Florida high school that killed 17 people.

South Dakota Senate Majority Leader Blake Curd said Thursday the state's "school sentinel" program is a resource schools should use.

It allows for the arming of school employees, hired security personnel or volunteers. State law requires that sentinels be trained.

Curd says officials' thoughts and prayers go out to those in Parkland, Florida, where the Wednesday shooting occurred.

South Dakota lawmakers passed a school sentinel law in March 2013, a few months after the deadly Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Connecticut.

The Tri-Valley School District in 2016 became the first in South Dakota to approve a school sentinel policy.

Fired veterans service officer appeals to Labor Department

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — A former veterans service officer in southeastern South Dakota is appealing her firing to the state's Labor Department.

Jessica Davidson alleges that she was fired in November because she blew the whistle on the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. She had raised concerns about errors in veterans' files and what she felt was the improper use of military insignia on souvenir coins.

Labor Deputy Secretary Tom Hart told the Daily Republic that an administrative law judge will conduct a hearing and investigation into whether Davison County's firing of Davidson broke state law. He said the typical grievance appeal takes three to five months to complete.

In her grievance resolution letter, Davidson alleges that the county commission didn't follow its policy manual for personnel in several areas, such as determining a reason for termination. She also called her

firing "improper and unlawful."

County Deputy State's Attorney James Taylor says Davidson's claims are without merit. Taylor responded in a letter that the county's personnel manual "clearly states that employment with the County is at will," which means Davison County can terminate employment at any time, with or without cause or advance notice.

Taylor said Davidson signed a receipt of reading the personnel manual in 2014.

South Dakota bid to ban gender identity teaching shelved

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota lawmaker dropped a plan Thursday that would have made the state the first to ban public schools from teaching about gender identity in elementary and middle schools.

Republican Sen. Phil Jensen rewrote his bill to remove any mention of transgender issues. A Senate panel killed the reshaped legislation, which instead would have allowed state standardized tests to be administered in paper or computerized form.

Jensen said he overhauled the proposal after realizing there were issues he hadn't thought of with his original idea.

"It wasn't a hoax," he said. "It wasn't until basically yesterday that I decided that I needed to go a different direction."

He declined to elaborate to The Associated Press.

The bill would have covered public school students through seventh grade. A spokeswoman for the state Department of Education has said she's not aware of any schools in the state currently addressing gender identity.

Nathan Smith, public policy director at GLSEN, a national group focused on safe schools for LGBTQ students, said the proposal's end is "good for South Dakota students."

Critics said the initial push targeted transgender students in the same way some states limit positively portraying homosexuality in the classroom. Gender identity is one's inner sense of one's own gender.

"We would certainly warn away South Dakota or any other state from considering legislation that restricts the ability of educators to address issues around sexual orientation or gender identity because we know that that's bad for students," Smith said.

GLSEN recently counted seven states — Alabama, Arizona, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Texas — with restrictions on positively portraying homosexuality in health classes.

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

States including California, Massachusetts and Washington have moved in the opposite direction.

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

Rural banker survey suggests economic outlook improving

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A monthly survey of rural bankers in 10 Plains and Western states suggests an improved economic outlook.

A report released Thursday says the Rural Mainstreet Index rose to its highest reading since May 2014, reaching 54.8 in February. January's figure was 46.8, and December's was 47.8.

Survey organizers say any score below 50 suggests a shrinking economy in the months ahead.

Creighton University economist Ernie Goss oversees the survey, and he says the solid February figure surprised him, given that only about a quarter of the bankers reported growth in their areas. Nonetheless, the confidence index jumped to 52.4 from 46.7 in January.

Bankers from Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming were surveyed.

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Fareway chicken salad public health alert issued in 5 states

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Chicken salad sold at Fareway grocery stores in five Midwest states has been pulled from stores and consumers are advised to throw it away after it made people sick in Iowa.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service on Wednesday issued a public health alert about the Fareway Chicken Salad sold in Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Nebraska and South Dakota.

It was produced between Dec. 15 and Feb. 13 and was sold in plastic deli containers with a Fareway store deli label.

The Iowa Department of Public Health contacted federal officials on Feb. 9 after an illness was reported. A spokeswoman declined to release the number of people sickened.

Salmonella, a bacterial illness, can cause diarrhea, abdominal cramps, and fever. Some people develop severe symptoms that require hospitalization.

Jury trials delayed for 3 people in GEAR UP scandal

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Jury trials have been rescheduled for three people who allegedly aided in an embezzlement scheme that helped spark South Dakota's GEAR UP scandal.

Attorney General Marty Jackley says trial for former Mid-Central Educational Cooperative Assistant Business Manager Stephanie Hubers has been moved from Charles Mix County to Sioux Falls, with the date moving from March 1 to June 25.

Jackley's office tells the Argus Leader the joint trial in Charles Mix County for former GEAR UP consultant Stacy Phelps and former Mid-Central Director Dan Guericke that was scheduled for June 25 will be delayed until after Hubers' trial.

Former Mid-Central Business Manager Scott Westerhuis in 2015 shot his wife and their four children, then set fire to their home and killed himself. Authorities believe the couple stole more than \$1 million before their deaths.

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.

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.

Lots of talk, little action in Congress after shootings

By MATTHEW DALY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For a brief moment after the Las Vegas massacre last fall, Republicans and Democrats in Congress talked about taking a rare step to tighten the nation's gun laws. Four months later, the only gun legislation that has moved in the House or Senate instead eases restrictions for gun owners.

The October deaths of 58 people in Las Vegas and other mass shootings have sparked debate but have had scant impact on the march toward looser gun laws under the Republican-controlled Congress. There's little sign that the shooting deaths of 17 people at a Florida high school Wednesday will change that dynamic.

The conversation at the Capitol Thursday followed a familiar pattern. Many Democrats revived calls for tighter gun laws, while Republicans focused on the mental health of the accused shooter.

"As a parent, it scares me to death that this body doesn't take seriously the safety of my children, and it seems like a lot of parents in South Florida are going to be asking that same question," said Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., a leading advocate of tighter gun control.

In the wake of the Las Vegas shooting, Murphy and other lawmakers from both parties pushed to ban bump stocks, the device that allowed the shooter's semi-automatic rifles to mimic the rapid fire of machine guns.

Those efforts soon fizzled amid opposition from Republican leaders. Instead, the GOP-controlled House approved a bill in December making it easier for gun owners to legally carry concealed weapons across state lines.

The concealed carry measure, a top priority of the National Rifle Association, would allow gun owners with a state-issued concealed-carry permit to carry a handgun in any state that allows concealed weapons.

The bill includes a provision to strengthen the FBI database of prohibited gun buyers — a response to another shooting in which a gunman slaughtered more than two dozen people at a Texas church in November.

House Speaker Paul Ryan said Thursday that Congress should focus on whether existing laws — including those designed to prevent mentally ill people from getting guns — are working.

"We need to think less about taking sides and fighting each other politically" and should instead pull together, Ryan said in comments that have become familiar. The Florida massacre was the 17th school shooting so far this year.

President Donald Trump, in a solemn address to the nation, promised to "tackle the difficult issue of mental health," but avoided any mention of guns.

The 19-year-old suspect, Nikolas Cruz, is a troubled teenager who posted disturbing material on social media. He had been expelled from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, for "disciplinary reasons," Broward County, Florida, Sheriff Scott Israel said.

The latest deadly shooting prompted Florida Sen. Bill Nelson to declare, "enough is enough."

Addressing those who say it's too soon to talk about gun violence, Nelson asked, "When is the right time? How many more times do we want to do this? How many more folks have to die?"

Nelson and other Democrats said Congress must do more than talk about mental illness. "Let's get to the root cause. Let's get these assault weapons off our streets," he said.

The accused Florida shooter was armed with his own AR-15 rifle, the same type of weapons used in Las Vegas and Texas last fall, as well as in earlier shootings at a nightclub in Orlando, Florida and a school in Newtown, Connecticut.

In a rare comment that appeared unscripted, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said he would speak to Trump and fellow Cabinet members about gun violence.

Testifying on the president's budget, Mnuchin called the school shooting a tragedy and said, "I urge Congress to look at this issue."

Mnuchin's remark seemed at odds with the White House, which has not sought legislation or additional money to curb gun violence.

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Other Republicans stuck largely to a now-familiar script.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., called for a moment of silence, adding: "To say that such brutal, pointless violence is unconscionable is an understatement."

Democrats, meanwhile, urged expanded background checks and renewed their call for a special committee to examine gun violence.

Rep. Mike Thompson, D-Calif., said the nation is in the midst of a crisis. "You can't turn around without there being a mass shooting," he said.

Thompson's criticized Republicans for failing to respond to the spate of mass shootings. "If I was a Republican member I'd be embarrassed that my leadership wouldn't address this issue," he said.

Ryan said legislation expanding concealed carry is a good "self-defense" measure, and he blamed the Senate for not acting to address loopholes in the instant background check system.

The House bill would penalize federal agencies that don't properly report required records and reward states that comply by providing them with federal grant preferences. The measure, which is pending in the Senate, was drafted after the Air Force acknowledged that it failed to report the Texas gunman's domestic violence conviction to the National Criminal Information Center database.

Asked whether authorities should be able to confiscate guns from mentally ill people, Ryan said, "This is not the time to jump to some conclusion not knowing the full facts."

Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., said it was legitimate for Congress to debate how to respond to the shooting, but said lawmakers must acknowledge their power is limited.

"If someone has decided, 'I'm going to commit this crime,' they will find a way to get the gun to do it," Rubio said Thursday on the Senate floor.

"I think it's also wrong to say that there is nothing we can do," Rubio added. "This is hard, but we need to do it."

Associated Press writers Kevin Freking, Andrew Taylor and Martin Crutsinger contributed to this report.

17 lives lost too soon mourned after Florida school shooting

By JAY REEVES, Associated Press

When a gunman opened fire with an AR-15 at a large high school in south Florida, he claimed the lives of students with their whole lives ahead of them, along with those of the teachers who tried to protect them. Here is a look at the 17 people who authorities say died in the deadly shooting Wednesday at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida:

COACH AND SECURITY MONITOR

Assistant football coach Aaron Feis was shot to death while selflessly shielding students from bullets. A tweet from the school football program ended: "He died a hero and he will forever be in our hearts and memories."

Feis, 37, graduated from the school in 1999 and worked mainly with the junior varsity, the team website said. It said he lived in nearby Coral Springs with his wife and daughter.

The Sun Sentinel reported that Feis, acting as a school security guard, responded to the original call on a school walkie-talkie. Someone on the radio asked if loud sounds they heard were firecrackers, said football coach Willis May, who also carries a radio.

"I heard Aaron say, 'No, that is not firecrackers.' That's the last I heard of him," May said.

Yohance Williams, who plays linebacker, said "the sacrifice he made didn't surprise me the least."

VICTIM'S FAMILY: "LIVE FOR ALYSSA!"

Among the youngest victims was Alyssa Alhadeff, an avid soccer player whose mother screamed into CNN's camera demanding that President Donald Trump take action.

"President Trump, you say what can you do?" Lori Alhadeff said. "You can stop the guns from getting into these children's hands! Put metal detectors at every entrance to the schools. What can you do? You

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can do a lot! This is not fair to our families and our children go to school and have to get killed!

"I just spent the last two hours putting the burial arrangements for my daughters funeral, who is 14! Fourteen! President Trump, please do something! Do something. Action! We need it now!"

Later, on her Facebook page, she urged people to kiss their children, and "Live for Alyssa! Be her voice and breathe for her."

FRIEND WON'T GET TO SAY 'I GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL'

Joaquin Oliver, 17, was known by his nickname "Guac," short for "guacamole," because many struggled to pronounce his given name.

"My friend will literally never get to say, 'I graduated high school,'" said Tyra Hemans, a 19-year-old who said they had been friends since freshmen year.

She last saw him at school, before the shooting.

"It was just a brief 'Happy Valentine's,'" she said. "He was with his girlfriend and I was just like, 'Oh my God, you guys are so cute.'"

She added, "He's just a goofball. He's the only kid you'd know that would dye his hair bleach-blond, walk around school, put some tiger stripes in and just be unique. He was a unique soul."

ATHLETIC DIRECTOR 'WAS JUST AMAZING'

Chris Hixon, a married father of two and the school's athletic director, wasn't shy about jumping in wherever he was needed, said friend and one-time colleague Dianne Sanzari.

Hixon, 49, belonged to a Roman Catholic church in Hollywood. The Archdiocese of Miami confirmed his death Thursday.

When a volleyball team needed a fill-in coach, Hixon took over; the same thing happened with the wrestling team, Sanzari said. When the school needed someone to patrol the campus and monitor threats as a security specialist, Hixon did that, too.

It was in that security role that Hixon apparently came within range of the shooter.

'AN ANGEL TAKEN AWAY FROM US'

Meadow Pollack was beautiful inside and out, her cousin Jake Maisner told the Sun-Sentinel. She was a senior and had planned to attend Lynn University in Boca Raton, her father, Andrew Pollack, told the Palm Beach Post.

Meadow was the youngest of three kids and 10 Pollack grandchildren, he said.

"She was the baby of the family. Everyone wanted to protect her," he said.

"Her life was taken way too soon and I have no words to describe how this feels," friend Gii Lovito posted on Facebook.

Family friend Adam Schachtel said in a Facebook post that "an angel was taken away from us in that horrific tragedy ... no words can be said so just prayers and sadness."

"SELFLESS SERVICE"

Alaina Petty, 14, "loved to serve," her family said.

She participated in the school's Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, and spent countless hours volunteering for the "Helping Hands" program of her Mormon church. After Hurricane Irma struck Florida, she helped people clean up and rebuild their lives, they said.

"Her selfless service brought peace and joy to those that had lost everything during the storm," her family's statement said. "It is important to sum up all that Alaina was and meant to her family and friends. Alaina was a vibrant and determined young woman, loved by all who knew her."

Petty attended a local Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Petty was a "valiant young member of the Coral Springs Ward," Church leader Stephen E. Thompson wrote in an update.

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GEOGRAPHY TEACHER HELPED STUDENTS

Geography teacher and cross-country coach Scott Beigel, 35, helped students enter a locked classroom to avoid the gunman, and paid for the brave act with his life.

"If the shooter would have come into the room, I probably wouldn't be speaking to you now," student Kelsey Friend told Good Morning America.

Beigel "unlocked the door and let us in," she said. "I thought he was behind me, but he wasn't. When he opened the door he had to relock it so we could stay safe, but he didn't get a chance to."

Student Bruna Oliveda said she saw Beigel blocking the door.

"I don't know how we're alive," she said.

14-YEAR-OLD LOOKED OUT FOR UNDERDOGS

Ninth grader Jaime Guttenberg, 14, loved to dance and hoped to become an occupational therapist and mother, aunt Abbie Youkilis said.

"She always looked out for the underdog and the bullied and she probably had been kind to the (former) student who shot her," Youkilis said in a written statement sent to The Associated Press.

Guttenberg leaves her parents, Fred and Jennifer Guttenberg, and brother Jesse. Her father said in a Facebook post that he is "trying to figure out how my family gets through this."

Youkilis called for gun-control legislation, saying Jaime's parents were "the world's most loving and over-protective parents but they could not protect Jaime from the sickness that has gripped our country."

BALLOONS FOR THE VICTIMS

Martin Duque, 14, was one of Isaac Briones' best friends.

"He was like, one of the nicest people I knew," said Briones, 15. "He was so caring."

Briones said he last saw Martin the day of the shooting during first period.

"We were just playing around, talking about jokes and stuff," said Isaac, who was outside the school Thursday with others holding a group of white balloons for the victims.

On Instagram, Miguel Duque wrote that words can't describe the pain of losing his brother. He added: "I love brother Martin you'll be missed buddy. I know you're in a better place. Duques forever man I love you junior!!! R.I.P Martin Duque!"

FRESHMAN COLOR GUARD MEMBER

Gina Montalto was a 14-year-old freshman who participated on the winter color guard squad at the school. Friends and relatives posted tributes on Facebook, including mother Jennifer Montalto.

"She was a smart, loving, caring, and strong girl who brightened any room she entered. She will be missed by our family for all eternity," said the post.

One of Montalto's color guard instructors from middle school, Manuel Miranda, told the Miami Herald that Montalto was "the sweetest soul ever."

"She was kind, caring always smiling and wanting to help," Miranda said.

SWIMMING SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

Nicholas Dworet, 17, had committed to swim for the University of Indianapolis. The college announced Thursday that the senior was among those killed.

In a statement, UIndy swimming coach Jason Hite called Dworet an "energetic and very vibrant kind" who cheered for his soon-to-be university during a swimming meet last month.

"I spoke with his mom this morning, and she reiterated the fact that he was really looking forward to this next step in his life and becoming a Hound," said Hite. "He really felt like he had a family in the team, and was really excited about what we're doing up here."

Dworet "was very positive and a very cheerful person," his teammate Guillermo Barrios told the Sun-Sentinel. "He was the leader of the team. He was team captain. He was very leaderlike and mature."

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ROTC STUDENT

Peter Wang, 15, died wearing his gray ROTC shirt, and was last seen holding a door open for other students, his cousins Lin Chen and Aaron Chen told local media.

"He doesn't care about popularity. He always liked to cheer people up. He is like the big brother everyone wished they had," said Lin Chen.

She told the Sun-Sentinel that Wang had two brothers, ages 11 and 5, and his parents, too upset to talk, own a restaurant in West Palm Beach. They had planned to celebrate Chinese New Year's eve Thursday.

"I feel the family can never be the same," she said.

FAMILY SEARCHED HOSPITALS, AND THEN ...

Fifteen-year-old Luke Hoyer was a loving, sweet person who loved basketball and "smiled all the time," his aunt Joan Cox said.

"He was just a good kid ... very loving and just enjoyed life," said Cox, of Greenville, South Carolina.

She said Luke's parents, Gena and Tom Hoyer, searched for their son at hospitals before finally going to the law enforcement command center, where they eventually learned he had died.

"It's just a terrible thing," said Cox, who said the family — including Luke's older sister Abby and brother Jake — spent Christmas with her and other family in South Carolina. "He's going to be missed by many."

NATIONAL MERIT SEMIFINALIST AMONG VICTIMS

Carmen Schentrup was a smart girl with a sweet smile.

In September, she was named one of 53 National Merit Scholarship Program semifinalists in the county and a classmate tweeted "we all praised for her intelligence."

Cousin Matt Brandow posted on Facebook that the 16-year-old visited Washington State recently and said she wanted to go to the University of Washington. He asked: you like the rain?

"She answers, I hate sweating in the humid Florida weather," Brandow wrote. "That's when I knew you were perfect for Washington."

RESERVED AND ACADEMICALLY RELENTLESS

Helena Ramsay was soft-spoken, but also smart and a go-getter, her cousin Sefena Cooper said Thursday.

The 17-year-old junior especially loved hanging out with friends and family, "and for this to happen is heartbreaking," Cooper said.

"Although somewhat reserved, she had a relentless motivation towards her academic studies and her soft warm demeanor brought the best out in all who knew her," another relative, Curtis Page Jr., wrote on Facebook.

"She was so brilliant and witty, and I'm still wrestling with the idea that she is actually gone," he wrote. "She would have started college next year."

MEMORIAL FOR BAND MEMBER

Trombone and baritone player Alex Schachter was a "sweetheart of a kid," according to a social media post by his family.

In honor of his 14-year-old freshman son, a relative of the youth's father, Max Schachter, wrote on a gofundme page that he was starting a scholarship fund "to help other students experience the joys of music as well as fund increased security at schools."

The message said: "Please help keep Alex's spirit alive."

RELATIVES OF VICTIM "ABSOLUTELY GUTTED"

Cara Loughran, 14, was an excellent student who loved the beach and her cousins, according to her family.

An aunt, Lindsay Fontana, wrote on Facebook: "I had to tell my 8-year-old daughters that their sweet cousin Cara was killed in the shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School yesterday. We are absolutely

guttled.”

“While your thoughts are appreciated, I beg you to DO SOMETHING,” she wrote. “This should not have happened to our niece Cara and it cannot happen to other people’s families.”

Loughran’s neighbor posted a picture of her cheering on a young boy riding a bike with training wheels. “RIP Cara,” Danny Vogel wrote, “and fly with the angels. You will be greatly missed, and we will always love you and celebrate your beautiful life.”

Reeves reported from Birmingham, Alabama. Contributing to this report were Tammy Webber in Chicago; Rebecca Boone in Boise, Idaho; David Porter in New York; Kelli Kennedy in Parkland, Florida; Michael Hill in Albany, New York; and Amanda Lee Myers in Los Angeles.

Follow AP coverage of the shooting at: <https://apnews.com/tag/Floridaschoolshooting>

6 inseparable friends support each other in school shooting

By JASON DEAREN, Associated Press

PARKLAND, Fla. (AP) — It was the final period of the day at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High and Jonathan Blank was in history class, learning about the Holocaust. Across campus, five of his friends, pals since grade school, sat in different classrooms watching the clock. In 19 minutes, school would be out and the buddies had plans this Valentine’s Day: a little basketball and boys’ time.

Inside classroom 1214, the clock hit 2:21 p.m. Then: POP! POP! POP!

Instinctively, 16-year-old Jonathan hit the ground, taking cover under his desk. He smelled the chemical stench of gunpowder, noticed sawdust particles floating in the air: pieces of the classroom door that had been splintered by shots. Around the room, his schoolmates covered themselves with textbooks and took shelter behind filing cabinets.

One girl’s face was covered in blood. Nearby, a boy wasn’t moving. Jonathan realized he was probably dead.

Beyond the pockmarked door, gunfire sounded up and down the hallway, seesawing eerily between shots, then silence, shots, then silence. All that broke through the moments of quiet were horrifying shrieks — along with the groans of Jonathan’s wounded classmates.

The teen thought about texting his parents and of course his best friends, but he’d left his phone atop his desk and was too frozen with fear to reach up and grab it. Joey, Noah, John, Sam, Ethan — his band of brothers that had bonded over soccer, basketball and bar mitzvahs — he had no way of knowing if they were OK or if they, too, lay dying somewhere, in yet another deadly rampage inside yet another U.S. school.

They cheekily called themselves the “Jew Crew,” these six friends who met playing sports in elementary school and who, at 13, had planned back-to-back bar mitzvahs so the parties would stretch on for weeks. Along with Jonathan there was Joey Cordover, Noah Kaufman, John Greenberg, Sam Resnick and Ethan Rocha, who wasn’t Jewish but became an honorary “crew” member anyway.

The six jelled quickly and had been inseparable ever since, spending hours playing Xbox or just hanging out at Jonathan’s “the door-is-always-open” house in affluent Parkland, a suburb of gated developments and strip malls about an hour north of Miami. They’d even begun plotting to go to college together at the University of Florida. As juniors, they had to get through high school first.

As bullets tore through Jonathan’s classroom on Wednesday, Joey Cordover was in study hall, on the opposite side of the school. Suddenly, the fire alarm sounded — the second of the day. The students sitting around him looked at each other, confused. At first they shrugged it off as a false alarm. Then Joey and the others looked outside and saw students walking to the designated meeting spot for drills. They decided to go, too.

Sam and Noah were in history class together. They, too, figured it was a false alarm, but as their class started heading outside someone screamed, “It’s a Code Red!” Translation: Shooting on campus. Seconds

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later, they heard gunfire. The two took off running for the street as heavily armed police darted past them back toward the school.

Joey also managed to make it out, leaving his backpack in a growing pile in the middle of the road, as instructed by police, but holding tight to his cell. At 2:33 p.m., his dad texted to check that he was OK. He said he was, but all around him kids were talking about students getting killed.

"At least 1 dead," Joey texted his father. "Unreal."

John Greenberg fled from a portable classroom and stood outside among throngs of terrified students. When someone said the shooter had possibly escaped, he decided to head home. Separately, Ethan Rocha also managed to make it out.

That left just Jonathan.

Outside on the street, where Sam and Noah stood together, rumors were spreading. They heard there may have been deaths in a history class, the one focused on the Holocaust. They knew Jonathan had that class during last period. Noah tried Jonathan's number, but the call wouldn't go through. Cell service was too jammed as everyone tried to reach loved ones.

Back in classroom 1214, in the building where 12 of the 17 victims would be found, armor-clad officers burst in, shouting, "Everyone put your hands up!" Jonathan raised his hands, sat up, looked around, and saw ruin.

After about 10 minutes, the police told the students to get out. Jonathan walked past his fallen classmates. In the hallway, two more bodies lay between him and the exit. He told himself not to look.

Outside, now surrounded by sirens and helicopters and sobbing children and parents, Jonathan texted his mother, who had already rattled off four urgent texts asking if he was OK. "They shot in my class," he responded. "3 people shot in my class." He would later learn it was four.

Then he turned to the group chat he'd set up for his "crew." There was a message waiting from Noah.

"R u ok. Bro. R u ok."

"Im traumatized."

"Tell me ur ok," Noah pressed.

"Im ok, 3 people shot in my class. Im ok tho."

Ethan chimed in next. Then, within minutes, texts arrived from the other four.

The next morning, all six went together to a counseling session for students at the local YMCA. Then, like so many times before, they gathered at Jonathan's place. This time, they hugged each other tight, saying "I love you, man," with no hint of irony or embarrassment.

"We don't know what to do. It's confusing," Sam Resnick said, sitting on a sofa between Jonathan and Ethan.

"When we're older and someone asks us where we went to high school and we say Marjory Stoneman Douglas, they're going to say: 'Hey, that's where the mass shooting was,'" Noah added. "They'll put us in the same category as Columbine or Sandy Hook. It doesn't feel real, honestly."

Hours later, still together, the crew headed to Pine Trails Park for a community vigil and a chance to begin coming to terms with it all.

Jonathan walked through the crowd, his mother following. His dark eyes were red. He saw his history teacher, Ivy Schamis, and they spoke briefly. He gave his buddy John a hug, and then he started to sob.

The friends know this was only the first hard day of many to come. Their connection, they said, is their key to finding a way to move on.

"We've created a bond you can't break," Jonathan said. "Going through a situation like this has brought us even closer together."

Follow the AP's complete coverage of the Florida school shooting here: <https://apnews.com/tag/Floraschoolshooting>

Follow Jason Dearen on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/JHDearen>

Did FBI miss a warning before Florida high school shooting?

By MICHAEL BALSAMO and SADIE GURMAN, Associated Press

The massacre at a Florida high school is again raising concerns about whether the FBI missed signs that might have stopped a mass shooting.

Last fall, a Mississippi bail bondsman and video blogger noticed a comment on one of his YouTube videos that said, "I'm going to be a professional school shooter." He immediately reported it to YouTube and the FBI and the next day two agents came to his office to take a printout of the comment and ask him whether he knew anything about the person who posted it.

Although the commenter's username was "Nikolas Cruz" — the same name as the 19-year-old man who authorities say killed 17 people at his former high school on Wednesday — the FBI couldn't identify the poster, Robert Lasky, the special agent in charge of the FBI office in Miami, said Thursday.

Federal agents interviewed the man who reported the comment and searched public records databases, actions in line with those done during an FBI assessment — the lowest level, least intrusive and most elementary stage of an FBI inquiry — but came up short. The FBI says it still hasn't conclusively linked the account to the alleged shooter.

Cruz walked into his former high school in Florida with an AR-15 rifle on Wednesday and opened fire, shooting at students and teachers in hallways and on school grounds.

It was the latest attack to raise questions about whether people who once caught the attention of law enforcement should have remained on the FBI's radar. In the last two years, a man who massacred 49 people at an Orlando nightclub, another who set off bombs in the streets of New York City and a third who gunned down travelers at a Florida airport, had each been looked at by federal agents but later determined not to warrant continued law enforcement scrutiny.

FBI assessments are routinely opened after agents receive a tip, which could be sparked by something as simple as noticing odd activity in a neighbor's garage or a classmate's comments. Agents routinely face a challenge of sifting through which of the tens of thousands of tips received every year — and more than 10,000 assessments that are opened — could yield a viable threat.

Had agents been able to confirm Cruz was the same person as the YouTube poster, they would have found dozens of photos of rifles, ammunition, targets filled with bullet holes, which likely would have led to a face-to-face interview. The FBI did not notify police in Florida about the post before the mass shooting.

"They owe us some more detail on what they did," retired FBI assistant director Ron Hosko said.

The questions come as the FBI is already under intense scrutiny and facing unprecedented attack from President Donald Trump and some congressional Republicans, who have seized on what they say are signs of anti-Trump bias, particularly as it relates to special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia probe.

But it's not clear the agency dropped the ball in this case, Hosko said.

"With anything that the FBI receives they are constrained to act based on what they have in front of them," said Hosko. "You have a random internet posting that suggests the person wants to do something, not that they are planning on doing something."

FBI guidelines meant to balance national security with civil liberties protections impose restrictions on the steps agents may take during the assessment phase.

Agents, for instance, may analyze information from government databases and open-source internet searches, and can conduct interviews during an assessment. But they cannot turn to more intrusive techniques, such as requesting a wiretap or internet communications, without higher levels of approval and a more solid basis to suspect a crime.

"It's a tricky situation because sometimes you get information regarding individuals and they may be just showing off, blustering," said Herbert Cousins Jr., a retired FBI special agent in charge.

A vague, uncorroborated threat alone may not be enough to proceed to the next level of investigation, according to Jeffrey Ringel, a former FBI agent and Joint Terrorism Task force supervisor who now works for the Soufan Group, a private security firm.

Many assessments are closed within days or weeks when the FBI concludes there's no criminal or na-

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tional security threat, or basis for continued scrutiny. The system is meant to ensure that a person who has not broken the law does not remain under perpetual scrutiny on a mere hunch — and that the FBI can reserve its scarce resources for true threats.

Had he had pledged his allegiance to the Islamic state, for example, investigators might have had enough evidence to proceed with a more intrusive probe.

Tips like the one that came in about the Florida gunman are among countless complaints that come into the FBI daily with varying degrees of specificity.

“How many of these do you expect the FBI to handle before it becomes the Federal Bureau of Complaints,” said Hosko. “They could spend their entire workforce tracking down internet exchanges that never going to go anywhere.”

Associated Press writer Eric Tucker in Washington contributed to this report.

Senate rejects immigration bills; young immigrants in limbo

By ALAN FRAM and KEVIN FREKING, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate has left hundreds of thousands of “Dreamer” immigrants in limbo, rejecting rival plans that would have spared them from deportation and strengthened the nation’s border security. Senators dealt President Donald Trump an especially galling defeat as more than a quarter of fellow Republicans abandoned him on an issue that helped propel him to the White House.

Also defeated Thursday was a plan by a bipartisan group of senators who offered a compromise that would have shielded the young immigrants and financed Trump’s demands for money to build his border wall, though more gradually than he wants. Eight Republicans joined most Democrats in backing that plan, but it fell short after the White House threatened a veto and GOP leaders opposed it.

The day’s votes, in which four separate proposals were defeated, illustrated anew Congress’ steep challenge in striking a deal on an issue that’s proven intractable for years and on which each party’s most fervent supporters refuse to budge. The outcome suggested there may be no permanent solution soon to help the young immigrants, who were brought to the U.S. as children, despite their sky-high support in public polling.

The Senate votes left the young immigrants facing a March 5 deadline that Trump has given Congress for restoring the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA, that he annulled last year. Federal courts have blocked him temporarily from dismantling the Obama-era initiative, but without congressional action the immigrants will face growing risks of deportation as their protections expire.

“Dreamers” are immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children and now risk deportation because they lack permanent authorization to stay. DACA gives them the ability to live and work in the U.S. for two-year periods that can be renewed.

“It looks like demagogues on the left and the right win again on immigration,” said Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., who helped craft the bipartisan package but also backed Trump’s plan. He added, “The only way forward is for President Trump to grab the reins and lead us to a solution.”

That scenario wasn’t in sight Thursday. The White House trashed the bipartisan proposal as “dangerous policy that will harm the nation,” denouncing a provision directing the government to prioritize enforcement efforts against immigrants who arrive illegally — beginning in July. Trump proved unwilling to fold on his demands for a tougher bill, reflecting the hard-line immigration stance that fueled his presidential run.

After the Senate rejected all four proposals on Thursday, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., blamed Democrats for failing to accept what he said was a “generous” offer from Trump.

“They turned away from a golden opportunity to solve the issue,” said McConnell. He expressed openness to considering a future compromise but said, “For that to happen, Democrats will need to take a second look” at Trump’s demands.

Trump had dangled a chance for citizenship for 1.8 million young immigrants, meeting a top Democratic demand. But that plan also included \$25 billion to build his border wall with Mexico and enact other border security measures, tighter curbs on relatives whom legal immigrants could sponsor for citizenship and an

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end to a visa lottery that encourages immigration from diverse nations.

No. 2 Senate GOP leader John Cornyn of Texas said after the votes that lawmakers might consider temporarily protecting Dreamers from deportation in a government-wide spending measure Congress will consider next month.

He said that approach "to me is not great, but that's kind of where we are."

Democrats said Trump was the major hindrance to a broader deal.

"This vote is proof that President Trump's plan will never become law," said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York. "If he would stop torpedoing bipartisan efforts, a good bill would pass."

The Senate derailed Trump's proposal by voting 60-39 against it — 21 votes shy of the 60 it needed to survive.

Fourteen Republicans — more than 1 in 4 — joined 46 Democrats in opposition. The "no" votes included some of the chamber's most conservative Republicans, many of whom were uncomfortable with offering citizenship to immigrants here illegally.

Just three Democrats backed Trump's proposal, all of them facing dicey November re-election in states he carried easily in 2016: Indiana's Joe Donnelly, North Dakota's Heidi Heitkamp and West Virginia's Joe Manchin.

The vote on the bipartisan plan was 54-45, six short of the required 60. Eight Republicans who helped craft that compromise supported it, and three Democrats voted "no," including Sen. Kamala Harris, D-Calif., who's viewed as a 2020 presidential hopeful.

That proposal offered the citizenship pathway for Dreamers and \$25 billion for border security, but doled it out over 10 years. Trump's bill would have prevented legal immigrants from sponsoring parents and siblings for citizenship and would have ended a visa lottery aimed at allowing more diverse immigrants into the U.S. The compromise bill would have left the lottery system intact but barred the young immigrants known as Dreamers who obtain citizenship from sponsoring their parents.

The bipartisan measure's sponsors included eight GOP senators. It was produced by a group led by Republican Sen. Susan Collins of Maine and Democrat Manchin.

Also rejected was a modest plan by Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Chris Coons, D-Del. It would have let many Dreamers qualify for permanent residency and directed federal agencies to more effectively control the border by 2020. But it didn't offer a special citizenship pathway, raise border security funds or make sweeping changes in legal immigration rules.

A proposal by Sen. Pat Toomey, R-Pa., was killed that would have blocked federal grants to "sanctuary cities," communities that don't cooperate with federal efforts to enforce immigration laws.

Associated Press writer Andrew Taylor contributed to this report.

Food box idea draws ire from Democrats, advocates

By JULIET LINDERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration is pushing what it calls a "bold new approach to nutrition assistance": replacing the traditional cash-on-a-card that food stamp recipients currently get with a pre-assembled box of canned foods and other shelf-stable goods dubbed "America's Harvest Box."

Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney likened the box to a meal kit delivery service, and said the plan could save nearly \$130 billion over 10 years. But the idea, tucked into President Donald Trump's 2019 budget, has caused a firestorm, prompting scathing criticism from Democrats and nutrition experts who say its primary purpose is to punish the poor.

"The main goal is to alleviate food insecurity, and the reason SNAP is so successful is because it gives low-income families the autonomy and dignity to make their own food choices," said Craig Gundersen, a professor in agricultural strategy at the Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Gundersen said people will leave the program as a result of the shift.

SNAP — the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program — is the official name for the food stamp pro-

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grams.

"All of a sudden you're saying, 'we don't trust you to make the right decisions for your family.' It's demeaning and it's patronizing. This is pro-hunger, because people will leave the program," Gunderson said.

Under the proposed plan, households that receive more than \$90 in SNAP benefits each month — roughly 81 percent of households in the program, or about 16.4 million — would be affected.

Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue called the box "a bold, innovative approach to providing nutritious food to people who need assistance feeding themselves and their families."

But the proposal doesn't include any concrete details about how much the program would cost or how it would be implemented, saying only that states will be given flexibility to distribute the boxes "through existing infrastructure, partnership, and/or directly to residences through commercial and/or retail delivery services."

Lawmakers say they aren't even sure where the idea came from.

Rep. Jim McGovern, D-Mass., the ranking member of the House nutrition subcommittee, called the proposal a "cruel joke" that came out of nowhere. He said despite having numerous hearings on SNAP, Monday's budget was the first time he'd heard of the food box proposal.

"I don't even know how to implement it. Who would distribute these boxes?" he said. "How would we do this? Do they anticipate recipients getting them at supermarkets? In addition to being a cruel and demeaning and awful idea, it's just not practical."

A spokeswoman for House agriculture committee Chairman Mike Conaway, R-Texas, said the committee has held 21 hearings and invited 80 experts to speak about SNAP in its preparations of the forthcoming farm bill, and the idea of a food box was not once discussed.

An Agriculture Department spokesman said the idea was developed internally, but didn't provide further details on the brainstorming process. Mulvaney credited it to Perdue.

Michigan Sen. Debbie Stabenow, top Democrat on the Senate agriculture committee, said the food box idea "isn't a serious proposal and is clearly meant to be a distraction from this Administration's proposed budget that fails our families and farmers."

The proposal is part of a broader plan to gut the SNAP program, reducing it by roughly \$213 billion — nearly 30 percent — over the next decade. The plan also proposes tightening work requirements for recipients.

Matt Knott, president of hunger relief network Feeding America, called it "an unworkable solution in search of a problem."

"SNAP is an efficient program that already utilizes a grocery system," Knott said. "It's a program that expands and contracts as the economy expands and contracts as well. It's flexible, timely and efficient, and converting a sufficient portion of it to an antiquated program where boxes are delivered is simply unworkable."

2014 champ Shiffrin 4th behind Hansdotter in Olympic slalom

By HOWARD FENDRICH, AP Sports Writer

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea (AP) — Mikaela Shiffrin is, without a doubt, the best women's slalom skier there is. Has been for years. All of the victories confirm it. Her competitors are aware of it. And, yes, so is she.

"This is going to sound so arrogant," Shiffrin said Friday, her eyes closed. "I know that I'm the best slalom skier in the world."

She spoke those words after failing to live up to that billing. After, as she put it, "puking before the first run" because of what she initially thought might be food poisoning or a virus but eventually decided was simply anxiousness. After, she acknowledged, skiing too conservatively to put up a proper defense of her Olympic title and finishing fourth behind gold medalist Frida Hansdotter of Sweden.

"Sometimes," the 22-year-old American said, "I feel like the only one who can beat myself in slalom is me. And I beat myself ... today."

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Hansdotter took advantage, putting together two legs with a combined time of 1 minute, 38.63 seconds for her first Olympic medal. Switzerland's Wendy Holdener was 0.05 seconds back for the silver, followed by Austria's Katharina Gallhuber.

"A lot of surprises today," Holdener said.

Not really in the men's race across the way at the Jeongseon Alpine Center, where Austria's Matthias Mayer added a super-G gold to the downhill title he won four years ago. This time, Mayer edged Switzerland's Beat Feuz and Norway's Kjetil Jansrud.

The biggest news 30 miles (50 kilometers) away at the Yongpyong Alpine Center, really, was Shiffrin's showing. She finished in 1:39.03 — 0.08 away from the bronze and less than a half-second from the gold.

That Shiffrin's poor-for-her performance in slalom came one day after she won the gold medal in the giant slalom, an event at which she is not as good, was not only stunning but also perhaps related.

After attending the medal ceremony Thursday night, Shiffrin said, she didn't get to bed until around 10 p.m., roughly 1½ hours later than normal during the Pyeongchang Games. More influential than that, she thought, was the inability to properly modulate her emotions after that victory in the opening women's Alpine event.

"I had too much of a peak yesterday and too much of a valley today. And when you have two races in a row, it's really important to keep that mental energy stable. And I didn't really do that," Shiffrin said. "So today, it was like all of the tools that I have that make me feel equipped to handle whatever pressure I feel, I didn't have anymore."

Her whole Olympics are shifting now.

Shiffrin's mother, Eileen, who also coaches Mikaela, already had said Saturday's super-G was no longer part of the plan. Now Shiffrin says she might not ski the downhill, either, for what would shape up as a showdown against U.S. teammate Lindsey Vonn, the 2010 gold medalist in that event. Shiffrin did say she definitely will remain part of the field for the combined.

There is pressure galore, from others and from Shiffrin herself.

That is based in large part on her resume: She won the slalom gold at the age of 18 at the 2014 Sochi Olympics; she won three consecutive world championships in that event; she had a five-race winning streak in January; she is on pace for a second overall World Cup title.

"I think it's more my own expectations and knowing the magnitude of what I'm trying to do," Shiffrin said. "Less about what everybody else wants to see."

That might be.

It's why she says she would vomit before races last season. And it's what she thinks caused her to get sick Friday.

Now Shiffrin gets a few days to recalibrate. Won't be easy to forget what happened Friday, though.

"Moving forward? I am terrible at that. Every single, like, loss that I've ever had, I remember that feeling so thoroughly, it's like a piece of my heart breaks off and I can never get it back. And today is no different than that," she said. "Some day I'll be able to understand that it's part of life and I'm just learning."

AP Sports Writer Dennis Waszak contributed to this report.

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

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

Trump to tackle mental health, school safety _ but not guns

By CATHERINE LUCEY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Declaring the nation united and grieving with "one heavy heart," President Donald Trump is promising to tackle school safety and "the difficult issue of mental health" in response to the

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deadly shooting in Florida. He made no mention of the scourge of gun violence.

Not always a natural in the role of national comforter, Trump spoke deliberately Thursday, at one point directly addressing children who may feel "lost, alone, confused or even scared."

"I want you to know that you are never alone and you never will be," Trump said. "You have people who care about you, who love you, and who will do anything at all to protect you."

While Trump stressed the importance of mental health and school safety improvements, his latest budget request would slash Medicaid, the major source of federal funding for treating mental health problems, and cut school safety programs by more than a third. Last year, he signed a resolution blocking an Obama-era rule designed to keep guns out of the hands of certain mentally disabled people.

The president spoke to the nation from the White House, one day after a former student with an AR-15 rifle opened fire at a high school in Parkland, Florida, killing 17 people and injuring 14 more. It was the nation's deadliest school shooting since a gunman attacked an elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut, more than five years ago.

Trump, who owns a private club in Palm Beach, Florida, about 40 miles away, said he planned to visit the grieving community, but no date was immediately set. He canceled plans to promote his infrastructure plan in Orlando on Friday and to attend a campaign rally in Pennsylvania next week.

Trump's silence on guns was noted with displeasure by many who are seeking tougher firearm restrictions. But the White House said the president wanted to keep his remarks focused on the victims. Spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said the point was "to talk about grief and show compassion in unifying the country."

Before he was a candidate, Trump at one point favored some tighter gun regulations. But he embraced gun rights as a candidate, and the National Rifle Association spent \$30 million in support of his campaign.

During his brief, televised statement, Trump said he wanted to work to "create a culture in our country that embraces the dignity of life," a phrase likely to resonate with his conservative base.

He pledged to work with state and local officials to "help secure our schools and tackle the difficult issue of mental health," adding that safe schools would be a key focus when he meets with governors and state attorneys general later this month.

Trump made no specific policy recommendations, and he did not answer shouted questions about guns as he exited the room.

In contrast, former President Barack Obama tweeted out a call for "long overdue, common-sense gun safety laws." Obama wrote: "We are grieving with Parkland. But we are not powerless. Caring for our kids is our first job."

In reacting to previous mass shootings, Trump has largely focused on mental health as a cause, dismissing questions about gun control. After a shooting at a Texas church in November left more than two dozen dead, the president said, "This isn't a guns situation."

The 19-year-old suspect in Florida, Nikolas Cruz, is a troubled teenager who posted disturbing material on social media. He had been expelled from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School for "disciplinary reasons," Broward County, Florida, Sheriff Scott Israel said.

The profile photo on Cruz's Instagram account showed a masked face wearing a "Make America Great Again" hat like those associated with Trump's campaign.

The leader of a white nationalist militia called the Republic of Florida said Cruz was a member of his group and had participated in exercises in Tallahassee. But neither the Sheriff's Office in Tallahassee nor the Southern Poverty Law Center could confirm any link between Cruz and the militia.

Trump was criticized in early August for saying that both white nationalists and counter-protesters were responsible for the violent clashes at a white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia.

While Trump has offered somber responses to some tragedies, he has also drawn criticism for other reactions.

After the Orlando shootings at a gay nightclub that left 49 dead in June 2016, then-candidate Trump tweeted, "Appreciate the congrats for being right on radical Islamic terrorism." In the wake of a deadly terror attack in London last June, he went after Mayor Sadiq Khan on Twitter.

News of Wednesday afternoon's shooting had come as the White House was embroiled in a weeklong scandal surrounding the handling of domestic abuse allegations against Rob Porter, a top aide who resigned last week.

The typically daily White House press briefing was repeatedly delayed, as aides tried to craft a strategy on that issue. One option was to have chief of staff John Kelly, who has come under intense pressure for his handling of the Porter matter, be part of the briefing, according to two White House officials not authorized to publicly discuss internal deliberations.

Once the magnitude of the Florida tragedy became clear, the White House canceled the briefing. The president tweeted his condolences and the White House deliberated its next move.

Kelly was not in the room when Trump addressed the nation on Thursday morning, and his job security remained an open question. But with the West Wing focused on the shooting aftermath, any immediate change seemed unlikely.

Associated Press writer Jonathan Lemire contributed from New York. AP writers Zeke Miller, Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar and Maria Danilova contributed from Washington.

Afghans submitted 1.17 million war crimes claims to court

By KATHY GANNON, Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Since the International Criminal Court began collecting material three months ago for a possible war crimes case involving Afghanistan, it has gotten a staggering 1.17 million statements from Afghans who say they were victims.

The statements include accounts of alleged atrocities not only by groups like the Taliban and the Islamic State group, but also involving Afghan Security Forces and government-affiliated warlords, the U.S.-led coalition, and foreign and domestic spy agencies, said Abdul Wadood Pedram of the Human Rights and Eradication of Violence Organization.

Based in part on the many statements, ICC judges in The Hague would then have to decide whether to seek a war crimes investigation. It's uncertain when that decision will be made.

The statements were collected between Nov. 20, 2017, and Jan. 31, 2018, by organizations based in Europe and Afghanistan and sent to the ICC, Pedram said. Because one statement might include multiple victims and one organization might represent thousands of victim statements, the number of Afghans seeking justice from the ICC could be several million.

"It is shocking there are so many," Pedram said, noting that in some instances, whole villages were represented. "It shows how the justice system in Afghanistan is not bringing justice for the victims and their families."

The ICC did not give details about the victims or those providing the information.

"I have the names of the organizations, but because of the security issues, we don't want to name them because they will be targeted," said Pedram, whose group is based in Kabul.

Many of the representations include statements involving multiple victims, which could be the result of suicide bombings, targeted killings or airstrikes, he said.

Among those alleging war crimes is a man who asked The Associated Press to be identified only by his first name, Shoib, because he fears for his safety.

Shoib said his father, Naimatullah, was on a bus in Dawalat Yar district in Afghanistan's central Ghor Province in 2014 when a band of gunmen stopped it and two other buses, forced the passengers off and told them to hand over their identity cards. The 14 Shiites among them were separated from the rest and killed, one by one, he said.

The slayings outraged the country. A Taliban commander was soon arrested and brought before the media, but no news about a trial or punishment was ever reported, said Shoib, who is in his 20s.

Displaying a photo of the man he believes killed his father, Shoib said he doesn't go to the authorities for information about the incident because the commander had connections with the police and the local

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government administration.

Shoab is still afraid.

"Please don't say where I live, or show my face," he implored a reporter. "What if they find me? There is no protection in Afghanistan," he said.

"Everybody knows that they have connection in the government," he added. "I think in Afghanistan, if you have money, then you can give it to anyone, anywhere, to do anything."

Several powerful warlords, many of whom came to power after the collapse of the Taliban in 2001 following the U.S.-led intervention, are among those alleged to have carried out war crimes, said Pedram, who also is cautious about releasing any names.

After receiving death threats last year, Pedram fled Kabul briefly and now keeps a lower profile, no longer speaking to local media.

"The warlords are all here. You have to be very careful," he said. "In the morning, I kiss my little son goodbye, I kiss my wife goodbye because I don't know what will happen to me and when, or if I will see them again."

Established in 2002, the ICC is the world's first permanent court set up to prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. The ICC can only investigate any crimes in Afghanistan after May 2003, when the country ratified the Rome Statute, the treaty that established the court.

Former President Bill Clinton signed the treaty, but President George W. Bush renounced the signature, citing fears that Americans would be unfairly prosecuted for political reasons.

In November, when ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda sought judicial authorization to begin the investigation, she said the court had been looking into possible war crimes in Afghanistan since 2006.

Bensouda said in November that "there is a reasonable basis to believe" that crimes against humanity and war crimes were committed by the Taliban as well as the Haqqani network. She also said there was evidence that the Afghan National Security Forces, Afghan National Police and its spy agency, known as the NDS, committed war crimes.

Bensouda also said evidence existed of war crimes committed "by members of the United States armed forces on the territory of Afghanistan, and by members of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in secret detention facilities in Afghanistan," as well as in countries that had signed on to the Rome Statute. The secret detention facilities were operated mostly between 2003 and 2004, she said.

It was the first time that Bensouda has targeted Americans for alleged war crimes. Bensouda said an investigation under the auspices of the international tribunal could break through what she called "near total impunity" in Afghanistan.

The prosecutor's formal application to the court set up a possible showdown with Washington. While the U.S. is not a member state of the ICC, its citizens can be charged with crimes committed in countries that are members.

At the time of Bensouda's announcement, a Pentagon spokesman said the U.S. Defense Department does not accept that such an investigation of U.S. personnel is warranted. The U.S. State Department has said it opposes the court's involvement in Afghanistan.

Another Afghan who went to the ICC is Hussain Razaee, whose fiancée, Najiba, was among 30 people killed in July when a Taliban suicide attacker rammed a car bomb into a bus carrying employees from the Ministry of Mines.

For months, Razaee said he contemplated suicide. He had spent two years convincing Najiba's parents to allow them to marry, and they had finally agreed. Unlike most Afghan couples, theirs was not to be an arranged marriage.

"I lost the person I loved," he said.

Razaee said he went to the ICC because he wants those responsible to be punished, even if a peace deal with the Taliban is reached.

"I am pursuing this because I want the ICC to record these cases so that if there is a peace agreement, the Taliban leaders will be required to identify the people behind the killings," Razaee said.

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"I don't trust the international community to bring any of these warlords or Taliban to justice, but if an international legal body rules according to the law, then the government could be forced to enforce it," he said.

Associated Press writer Michael Corder in The Hague contributed.

In many US states, 18 is old enough to buy a semiautomatic

By LISA MARIE PANE and BRENDAN FARRINGTON, Associated Press

Just months after his 18th birthday, Nikolas Cruz went to a Florida gun store to buy a weapon. But there were limits on what he could purchase at his age.

Cruz wasn't old enough to buy any of the handguns at the store. But there's no such restriction for rifles, shotguns or the AR-15 that police say he used to carry out the nation's deadliest school shooting in more than five years.

The young age of the man accused in the Florida high school shooting that killed 17 people has revived the debate over age requirements for gun purchases in a country where a patchwork of laws and rural states steeped in hunting culture allow kids as young as 14 to buy rifles.

In most states, it's easier for teenagers to buy rifles than handguns.

Federal law requires someone to be at least 21 to buy a handgun from a licensed dealer, but only 18 in most places to buy a long gun. In some states — mostly rural places with a strong tradition of hunting — you can buy a rifle at the age of 14 or 16.

Gun-rights advocates call the long gun an integral part of American culture, allowing kids and their parents to bond while out in the woods hunting and providing a way to teach youngsters firearms safety.

Gun-control advocates counter the laws are outdated and fail to recognize the toll that modern, militaristic-style long guns have played in killing scores of innocent men, women and children. They say such rifles should not be in the same category as a bolt-action rifle that a young hunter uses to shoot a deer and vow to add this to the list of restrictions they are pushing for despite having little momentum in Congress to do so.

"It used to be the case that long guns were hunting guns. They were bolt-action shotguns and single-shot rifles and things really people bought for hunting or sport shooting and weren't the kind of (AR-style rifles) that are used in mass shootings," said Robyn Thomas, executive director of the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence.

An estimated 8 million AR-style guns have been sold since they were first introduced to the public in the 1960s, and about half of them are owned by current or former members of the military or law enforcement, according to the National Shooting Sports Foundation.

On average, more than 13,000 people are killed each year in the United States by guns, and most of those incidents involve handguns while a tiny fraction involve an AR-style firearm. Still, the AR plays an oversized role in many of the most high-profile shootings, including the nightclub shooting in Orlando and the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history: the attack by a gunman holed up in a Las Vegas hotel that left 58 dead and hundreds injured.

States including Maine, Minnesota and Vermont allow teens 14 or 16 years old to buy or purchase long guns without parental consent, with some exceptions. Only two states — Hawaii and Illinois — have imposed stiffer age restrictions, requiring someone to be at least 21 before they can purchase a long gun.

The disparity in age requirements between handguns and long guns exists largely because of the popularity of hunting in the U.S. Hunting deer, ducks, geese, varmints and various other animals is a way of life for youth in many states, and the laws are generally written to accommodate purchases of rifles and handguns for teenagers.

The younger age for long guns dates back to the 1880s. While handguns have long been tied to crime, long guns have been part of the fabric of American life — from hunting and target shooting to gun clubs in the Boy Scouts and some schools.

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Florida is a large and diverse state. Despite the buzz and glitz of some of its largest cities like Miami and Orlando, large sections of the state remain rural, conservative and gun-friendly. Republicans have held strong majorities in both legislative chambers for the past two decades and have moved more often to expand gun rights than restrict them — leading some gun-control advocates to call the Sunshine State the Gunshine State.

The man designated to be Florida's next House Speaker, Republican Rep. Jose Oliva, indicated hours after the school shooting that he wouldn't be in favor of gun restrictions.

"You don't take cars off the road because someone got drunk, used one and killed someone. You don't take a car off the road because someone rented a U-Haul and ran it into some people in New York City," Oliva said.

Florida is a state where one of the leading Republican candidates for governor, Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam, proudly agreed when a newspaper editorial called him a sellout to the National Rifle Association.

Gun-control advocates and even some police officials are holding out hope — albeit a longshot given current political realities — that there will be some movement to change age requirements.

"An 18-year-old with an AK-47 and an AR-15 is completely unreasonable," said Frank Fernandez, director of public safety in Coral Gables, Florida, and the chairman of the International Association of Chiefs of Police's firearms committee. "That is a weapon that is meant for destruction. It's not a weapon that you can use to go hunting. That is a weapon ... used in the theater of war."

Follow the AP's complete coverage of the Florida school shooting here: <https://apnews.com/tag/Floraschoolshooting>

Follow Lisa Marie Pane on Twitter at: <https://twitter.com/lisamariepane> and Brendan Farrington at <https://twitter.com/bsfarrington>

'Dreamers' left in limbo as Senate rejects immigration bills

By ALAN FRAM and KEVIN FREKING, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate left hundreds of thousands of "Dreamer" immigrants in limbo Thursday, rejecting rival plans that would have spared them from deportation and strengthened the nation's border security. Senators dealt President Donald Trump an especially galling defeat as more than a quarter of fellow Republicans abandoned him on an issue that helped propel him to the White House.

Also defeated was a plan by a bipartisan group of senators who offered a compromise that would have shielded the young immigrants and financed Trump's demands for money to build his coveted border wall with Mexico, though more gradually than he wants. Eight Republicans joined most Democrats in backing that plan, but it fell short after the White House threatened a veto and GOP leaders opposed it.

The day's votes, in which four separate proposals were defeated, illustrated anew Congress' steep challenge in striking a deal on an issue that's proven intractable for years and on which each party's most fervent supporters refuse to budge. The outcome suggested there may be no permanent solution soon to help the Dreamers, who were brought to the U.S. as children, despite their sky-high support in public polling.

The Senate votes left the young immigrants facing a March 5 deadline that Trump has given Congress for restoring the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA, that he annulled last year. Federal courts have blocked him temporarily from dismantling the Obama-era initiative, but without congressional action the immigrants will face growing risks of deportation as their protections expire.

"Dreamers" are immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children and now risk deportation because they lack permanent authorization to stay. DACA gives them the ability to live and work in the U.S. for two-year periods that can be renewed.

"It looks like demagogues on the left and the right win again on immigration," said Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., who helped craft the bipartisan package but also backed Trump's plan. He added, "The only way

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forward is for President Trump to grab the reins and lead us to a solution.”

That scenario wasn't in sight Thursday. The White House trashed the bipartisan proposal as “dangerous policy that will harm the nation,” denouncing a provision directing the government to prioritize enforcement efforts against immigrants who arrive illegally — beginning in July. Trump proved unwilling to fold on his demands for a tougher bill, reflecting the hard-line immigration stance that fueled his presidential run.

After the Senate rejected all four proposals on Thursday, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., blamed Democrats for failing to accept what he said was a “generous” offer from Trump.

“They turned away from a golden opportunity to solve the issue,” said McConnell. He expressed openness to considering a future compromise but said, “For that to happen, Democrats will need to take a second look” at Trump's demands.

Trump had dangled a chance for citizenship for 1.8 million young immigrants, meeting a top Democratic demand. But that plan also included \$25 billion to build his border wall with Mexico and enact other border security measures, tighter curbs on relatives whom legal immigrants could sponsor for citizenship and an end to a visa lottery that encourages immigration from diverse nations.

No. 2 Senate GOP leader John Cornyn of Texas said after the votes that lawmakers might consider temporarily protecting Dreamers from deportation in a government-wide spending measure Congress will consider next month.

He said that approach “to me is not great, but that's kind of where we are.”

Democrats said Trump was the major hindrance to a broader deal.

“This vote is proof that President Trump's plan will never become law,” said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York. “If he would stop torpedoing bipartisan efforts, a good bill would pass.”

The Senate derailed Trump's proposal by voting 60-39 against it — 21 votes shy of the 60 it needed to survive.

The White House reacted angrily Thursday night, releasing a statement accusing “Schumer Democrats” of not being serious about DACA, immigration reform or homeland security.

And yet, 14 Republicans — more than 1 in 4 — joined 46 Democrats in opposition. The “no” votes included some of the chamber's most conservative Republicans, many of whom were uncomfortable with offering citizenship to immigrants here illegally.

Just three Democrats backed Trump's proposal, all of them facing dicey November re-election in states he carried easily in 2016: Indiana's Joe Donnelly, Heidi Heitkamp in North Dakota and West Virginia's Joe Manchin.

The vote on the bipartisan plan was 54-45, six short of the required 60. Eight Republicans who helped craft that compromise supported it, and three Democrats voted “no” including Sen. Kamala Harris, D-Calif., who's viewed as a 2020 presidential hopeful.

That proposal offered the citizenship pathway for Dreamers and \$25 billion for border security, but doled it out over 10 years. Trump's bill would have prevented legal immigrants from sponsoring parents and siblings for citizenship and would have ended a visa lottery aimed at allowing more diverse immigrants into the U.S. The compromise bill would have left the lottery system intact but barred Dreamers who obtain citizenship from sponsoring their parents.

The bipartisan measure's sponsors included eight GOP senators. It was produced by a group led by Republican Sen. Susan Collins of Maine and Democrat Manchin.

Also rejected was a modest plan by Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Chris Coons, D-Del. It would have let many Dreamers qualify for permanent residency and directed federal agencies to more effectively control the border by 2020. But it didn't offer a special citizenship pathway, raise border security funds or make sweeping changes in legal immigration rules.

A proposal by Sen. Pat Toomey, R-Pa., was killed that would have blocked federal grants to “sanctuary cities,” communities that don't cooperate with federal efforts to enforce immigration laws.

Associated Press writers Andrew Taylor and Ken Thomas contributed to this report.

McDonald's moves cheeseburgers off Happy Meal menu

By JOSEPH PISANI, AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — McDonald's is taking cheeseburgers and chocolate milk off its Happy Meal menu in an effort to cut down on the calories, sodium, saturated fat and sugar that kids consume at its restaurants.

Diners can still ask specifically for cheeseburgers or chocolate milk with the kid's meal, but the fast-food company said that not listing them will reduce how often they're ordered. Since it removed soda from the Happy Meal menu four years ago, orders for it with Happy Meals have fallen 14 percent, the company said. Hamburgers and Chicken McNuggets will remain the main entrees on the Happy Meal menu.

The Happy Meal, which has been around for nearly 40 years, has long been a target of health advocates and parents who link it to childhood obesity. McDonald's has made many tweaks over the years, including cutting the size of its fries and adding fruit. Most recently, it swapped out its apple juice for one that has less sugar.

It's been especially important as the company tries to shake its junk-food image, since McDonald's is known for getting more business from families with children relative to its traditional rivals, such as Burger King and Wendy's. McDonald's doesn't say how much revenue it makes from the \$3 Happy Meal, but the company said 30 percent of all visits come from families.

McDonald's will make the changes, including new nutritional standards for the Happy Meal changes, by June in the United States.

"It's a good step in the right direction," said Margo Wootan, the vice president for nutrition at the Center for Science in the Public Interest. "We would love to see many more restaurants do the same."

McDonald's said Thursday that it wants all its Happy Meal options to have 600 calories or fewer and have less than 650 milligrams of sodium. It also wants less than 10 percent of the meal's calories to come from saturated fat and the same percentage to come from added sugar.

The cheeseburger and chocolate milk didn't meet those new standards, the Oak Brook, Illinois-based company said. It is, however, working to cut sugar from the chocolate milk and believes it'll be back on the Happy Meal menu eventually — but doesn't know when that will happen.

Trudy Munk, a mother of three from Lombard, Illinois, who was at a McDonald's with her 3-year-old niece on Thursday, said she wasn't sure if the changes would make much of a difference.

"I just feel like if you are coming to McDonalds, you're not necessarily looking for the healthiest option," she said. "I see it as a treat and I don't mind getting my kids French fries or the cheeseburgers."

There will be other tweaks: The six-piece chicken nugget Happy Meal will now come with a kids-sized fries instead of a small, lowering calories and sodium from the fries by half. And bottled water will be added as an option to the Happy Meal menu, but will cost extra. Currently, the Happy Meal menu lists milk, chocolate milk and apple juice. Soda does not cost extra.

For international restaurants, McDonald's Corp. said that at least half of the Happy Meal options available must meet its new nutritional guidelines. The company said some are adding new menu items to comply, like in Italy, where a grilled chicken sandwich was added to the Happy Meal menu.

Associated Press video journalist Carrie Antfinger in Oak Brook, Illinois, contributed to this report.

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Bannon interviewed in Mueller's Russia investigation

By MARY CLARE JALONICK and JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Steve Bannon, the combative former chief strategist for President Donald Trump, was interrogated for 20 hours over two days this week as part of special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation, according to a person familiar with the process.

The person, who declined to be named because they were not authorized to publicly discuss the investigation, said Bannon answered every question that was put to him by Mueller's team. That's in contrast

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to a Thursday interview with the House intelligence committee, where Bannon declined to answer some of lawmakers' questions, despite a subpoena.

While the exact questions for Bannon are unknown, Mueller is investigating whether there was any coordination between Trump's campaign and Russians who meddled in the 2016 election, and also whether there have been any efforts to obstruct the ongoing FBI probe into those contacts. The House panel is investigating the meddling and whether Trump's campaign was involved.

Because Bannon was one of Trump's top advisers, both Mueller and the lawmakers were expected to question him about key events during his time in the White House, including Trump's firings of former national security adviser Michael Flynn and former FBI Director James Comey.

After Bannon's roughly three-hour interview on Capitol Hill, Republicans on the House intelligence panel were weighing whether to hold him in contempt. Like his first visit to the House intelligence committee in January, Bannon declined to answer questions in the closed-door session.

According to lawmakers of both parties, Bannon would only answer 25 questions that had been pre-approved by the White House when asked about any events in the time period after President Donald Trump's election. His answer to each question was "no" and he told the committee he was not authorized to elaborate.

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

The escalating fight between Congress and the White House over the privilege issue has centered around Bannon, an outsized figure in President Donald Trump's campaign and White House and an inspiration to some conservatives as he has publicly battled the Republican establishment. He was fired from the White House last summer, and more recently had a falling out with Trump after the January publication of a book in which he sharply criticized Trump family members.

Despite his fractured relationship with Trump, Bannon has followed White House direction as the House lawmakers have sought to talk to him. At issue is whether Bannon can talk about the presidential transition, his time at the White House and communications with Trump and others since he left last summer.

Texas Rep. Mike Conaway, the Republican leading the panel's Russia probe, said Bannon would only answer the pre-approved questions about any time period past the day Trump was elected in November 2016. He said committee Republicans would discuss whether to hold Bannon in contempt with House lawyers and with House Speaker Paul Ryan, who is likely to have the final say.

"That's an ongoing conversation we'll have among an awful lot of lawyers," Conaway said after Bannon's interview.

At least one Republican on the intelligence panel said before the interview that a contempt vote would be necessary if Bannon were uncooperative. Florida Rep. Tom Rooney said Tuesday that if Bannon didn't cooperate with the panel and they didn't hold him in contempt, that would set a bad precedent.

"For not just our committee but every committee, that (subpoenas) don't mean anything, that it's just a hollow threat," Rooney said. "You can't do that."

Democrats are pushing for a contempt vote, with the top Democrat on the intelligence panel, California Rep. Adam Schiff, saying he believed Bannon's non-answers were all an attempt to draw out and block the Russia probe.

"That's not how privilege works, that's how stonewalling works," Schiff said. "And we cannot take that kind of stonewalling for an answer."

Negotiations between the House and White House have been ongoing since Bannon's first interview, and several interviews have been scheduled and postponed in recent weeks. Lawmakers headed into the meeting ahead of Bannon's entrance appeared unsure if he would arrive.

Bannon is one of the committee's few remaining witnesses in its Russia probe, which Republicans on the panel have said they want to wrap up early this year.

The Senate intelligence committee is running a separate investigation into the Russian meddling. The

Senate panel hasn't yet spoken to Bannon, according to a source familiar with the probe. The person declined to be named because the interview schedule isn't public.

Russian mother grieves for son killed by US strike in Syria

By NATALIYA VASILYEVA, Associated Press

KEDROVOYE, Russia (AP) — For Russian mother Farkhanur Gavrilova, the blow came a week ago when an acquaintance called her to say that her son was killed in a U.S. airstrike in Syria that pitted Russian and U.S. combatants against each other for the first time in the Syrian war.

Gavrilova's son, 37-year-old Ruslan Gavrilov, was one of seven men in this central Russian village of 2,300 who are believed to have joined a private military company called Wagner. The company reportedly was involved in a Feb. 7 attack on U.S.-backed Kurdish fighters in Syria and suffered devastating losses in a U.S. counterstrike.

On the morning of Feb. 8, she said, her son's colleague called to say he was told by an unidentified caller that Ruslan had died in the Feb. 7 airstrike.

"He was torn to pieces," the 67-year-old said, speaking Thursday in her sparsely furnished apartment. "If he was alive — he is a plucky guy — he would have tried to call."

The Russian Foreign Ministry on Thursday for the first time acknowledged that five Russians had been killed by the U.S. strike in Syria, emphasizing they weren't on active military duty. Previously, both Russian and U.S. officials said they had no information on Russian casualties in the clash.

Russian forces are supporting the Syrian government in the fight against opposition groups, some of which are backed by the United States, and elements of both sides are fighting the last remnants of the Islamic State group in Syria. Moscow and Washington long have feared a collision between Russian and U.S. combatants in Syria and sought to prevent it by maintaining a regular communications link between the militaries.

Observers blame the Feb. 7 clash on a lack of coordination between the Russian military and private military contractors in Syria.

Along with the Russian military, thousands of Russians have also reportedly fought in Syria as private contractors. That allows the Kremlin to keep the official death toll from its Syrian military campaign low, helping to avoid negative publicity as President Vladimir Putin runs for re-election in Russia's March 18 presidential vote.

Gavrilova said she had tried to dissuade her son, who was remodeling apartments, from going to Syria but he was lured by a promise of a high pay.

"Why did they leave? Because of poverty, to make money," Gavrilova said.

Russian law forbids the hiring of mercenaries or working as one.

Putin declared victory in Syria on a visit to a Russian military base there in December, and ordered a partial pullout of troops. Many Russian politicians and commentators long have assailed the Kremlin for failing to acknowledge the Russian contractors' presence in Syria.

A push for oil assets appears to have been the top mission for Russian private contractors in Syria. The Associated Press last year obtained a copy of a contract between a Russian company and the Syrian government that would give the Russians a 25 percent cut of the proceeds from the oil fields they capture and guard.

Unlike many other military contractors with previous experience of fighting alongside Russia-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine, Gavrilova's son hadn't even done his military service.

"I thought they went there to do some odd jobs," Gavrilova said. "They did not even undergo medical tests. He called me from Krasnodar and asked: 'Mother, what is my blood type?'"

The Krasnodar region in southern Russia hosts a training base for the Wagner company on the grounds of a Russian Defense Ministry installation, according to social media evidence and testimony of the relatives. A listing for the company could not be found to seek comment.

Gavrilova and a relative of another Wagner fighter said the men from Kedrovoye all traveled to Krasno-

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dar before traveling to Syria.

Asked if she knew anyone else in the village whose family members were fighting in Syria, Gavrilova pointed at a two-story house just across the yard. Yevgeny Berdyshev, interviewed there, quoted his half brother Alexander Potapov as saying he was driven to go to Syria by "patriotic sentiment."

"He would say: 'Putin is waging the right war. He's killing IS fighters . but I understand, of course, that he didn't have a choice,'" Berdyshev said.

Potapov, a 54-year-old father of two, had fought in two separatist wars in Chechnya. Yet work was hard to come by, especially because he was no longer young, had a hand injury and a criminal conviction, Berdyshev said. Potapov worked at a sawmill before he left in October last year with Gavrilov.

Starved of reliable information about Russians in Syria, the residents in Kedrovoye, 1,400 kilometers (880 miles) east of Moscow, are getting together, compiling lists of who went to Syria and exchanging any news they get from the men's associates.

Potapov's brother showed a piece of paper with six names of other locals now in Syria.

One more, Igor Kosoturov, originally from the nearby town of Asbest but linked to Kedrovoye people, is also believed to have been killed in Syria. Natalya Krylova, a local legislator in Asbest, confirmed Kosoturov's death.

Krylova, who has been friends with him for several decades, said the 45-year-old Kosoturov went to fight alongside Russia-backed rebels in eastern Ukraine in 2015 and received the town's award for a "humanitarian mission" there.

Oleg Surnin, head of a paramilitary Cossack group in Asbest, said by phone it was "evident" that Kosoturov and another Asbest resident, Stanislav Matveyev, were killed in the U.S. airstrike on Feb. 7, but he wouldn't elaborate.

The grieving families are waiting for those who survived the U.S. strike to come home and describe what happened to the others.

"At first, everyone was weeping out loud, but how long can you cry?" Gavrilova said. "It's the uncertainty that's gnawing at me."

She said she couldn't understand why Russian men ended up on a battlefield in Syria if they were not part of the Russian army.

"Why were they taken away? Why does this organization exist?" she asked.

Berdyshev is indignant about the Russian government's refusal to even acknowledge the existence of the private contractors.

"They do exist," he said. "The government sends in troops, it is responsible for its actions . They sent in the troops, they sent back the troops, but actually there are still some (Russians), and it's all secretive."

Flu shot only 36 percent effective, making bad year worse

By MIKE STOBBE, AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The flu vaccine is doing a poor job protecting older Americans and others against the bug that's causing most illnesses.

Preliminary figures released Thursday suggest the vaccine is 36 percent effective overall in preventing flu illness severe enough to send a patient to the doctor's office.

There's only been one other time in the last decade when the flu vaccine did a worse job.

Most illnesses this winter have been caused by a nasty kind of flu called Type A H3N2. The vaccine was only 25 percent effective against that type.

This kind of virus tends to cause more suffering and have been responsible for the worst recent flu seasons. But experts have wondered whether low vaccine effectiveness is another reason for the surprisingly severe season hitting the United States this winter.

Based on these numbers, the answer is yes.

"The fact that the vaccine doesn't work as well as we would like is clearly a contributing factor," said Dr. William Schaffner, a Vanderbilt University vaccine expert.

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The estimates were published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The numbers are a snapshot taken in the middle of a frantic flu season. They are based on relatively small numbers of people and they are considered preliminary. Numbers may change as the season continues and more patients are added to the study.

And experts say it's still worth getting a flu shot. It still provides some protection, it can lessen the illness's severity, keep people out of the hospital, and save lives. There are as many as 56,000 deaths connected to the flu during a bad year.

"Any type of vaccine is better than none," said Scott Hensley, a University of Pennsylvania microbiologist who has led studies that raised critical questions about the vaccine.

The effectiveness estimates come from the tracking of about 4,600 children and adult patients in five states. To make the effectiveness calculations, researchers tracked who got the flu, and who among them had been vaccinated.

The vaccine provided good protection — 67 percent effective — against another common kind of flu virus, Type A H1N1, which has not been seen much this winter. And it was 42 percent effective against Type B flu viruses.

The vaccine worked relatively well in young children, but it performed worse in older people, including seniors who are most vulnerable. Against H3N2, the vaccine was 51 percent effective in children ages 6 months to 8 years. In every other age group, the numbers were low, falling in a range that made them essentially ineffective in preventing flu, statistically speaking.

That includes people 65 and older, a group that tends to suffer the highest hospitalization and death rates during H3N2 seasons. If the preliminary numbers hold, it will mean that in five of the last eight flu seasons, vaccine was essentially ineffective in seniors.

It points to a need for better flu vaccines, said Dr. Anne Schuchat, the CDC's acting director.

"The vaccines that we have today are not the ones that we'd like to have in 10 years," she said.

Scientists think part of the reason for that has to do with when people are born and what kind of flu viruses they're first exposed to in life. Most seniors were first exposed to H1N1 viruses and their bodies seem to handle them better, but H3N2 viruses — which didn't spread broadly in the United States until the late 1960s — seem to be harder for their bodies to deal with.

But some researchers say part of the problem is tied to how 85 percent of the nation's flu vaccine doses are made. Manufacturers grow flu viruses in chicken eggs. But the viruses can mutate in the eggs, and researchers are finding vaccine from the egg-grown viruses is not a good match to the H3N2 flu bugs in people.

Some research suggests that newer vaccines, using newer production methods, seem to work better against recently circulating H3N2 strains, but not enough people in the effectiveness study got those kinds of shots to compare performance.

Court received 1.17 million war crimes claims from Afghans

By KATHY GANNON, Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Since the International Criminal Court began collecting material three months ago for a possible war crimes case involving Afghanistan, it has gotten a staggering 1.17 million statements from Afghans who say they were victims.

The statements include accounts of alleged atrocities not only by groups like the Taliban and the Islamic State, but also involving Afghan Security Forces and government-affiliated warlords, the U.S.-led coalition, and foreign and domestic spy agencies, said Abdul Wadood Pedram of the Human Rights and Eradication of Violence Organization.

Based in part on the many statements, ICC judges in The Hague would then have to decide whether to seek a war crimes investigation. It's uncertain when that decision will be made.

The statements were collected between Nov. 20, 2017, and Jan. 31, 2018, by organizations based in Europe and Afghanistan and sent to the ICC, Pedram said. Because one statement might include multiple

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victims and one organization might represent thousands of victim statements, the number of Afghans seeking justice from the ICC could be several million.

"It is shocking there are so many," Pedram said, noting that in some instances, whole villages were represented. "It shows how the justice system in Afghanistan is not bringing justice for the victims and their families."

The ICC did not give details about the victims or those providing the information.

"I have the names of the organizations, but because of the security issues, we don't want to name them because they will be targeted," said Pedram, whose group is based in Kabul.

Many of the representations include statements involving multiple victims, which could be the result of suicide bombings, targeted killings or airstrikes, he said.

Among those alleging war crimes is a man who asked The Associated Press to be identified only by his first name, Shoaib, because he fears for his safety.

Shoaib said his father, Naimatullah, was on a bus in Dawalat Yar district in Afghanistan's central Ghor Province in 2014 when a band of gunmen stopped it and two other buses, forced the passengers off and told them to hand over their identity cards. The 14 Shiites among them were separated from the rest and killed, one by one, he said.

The slayings outraged the country. A Taliban commander was soon arrested and brought before the media, but no news about a trial or punishment was ever reported, said Shoaib, who is in his 20s.

Displaying a photo of the man he believes killed his father, Shoaib said he doesn't go to the authorities for information about the incident because the commander had connections with the police and the local government administration.

Shoaib is still afraid.

"Please don't say where I live, or show my face," he implored a reporter. "What if they find me? There is no protection in Afghanistan," he said.

"Everybody knows that they have connection in the government," he added. "I think in Afghanistan, if you have money, then you can give it to anyone, anywhere, to do anything."

Several powerful warlords, many of whom came to power after the collapse of the Taliban in 2001 following the U.S.-led intervention, are among those alleged to have carried out war crimes, said Pedram, who also is cautious about releasing any names.

After receiving death threats last year, Pedram fled Kabul briefly and now keeps a lower profile, no longer speaking to local media.

"The warlords are all here. You have to be very careful," he said. "In the morning, I kiss my little son goodbye, I kiss my wife goodbye because I don't know what will happen to me and when, or if I will see them again."

Established in 2002, the ICC is the world's first permanent court set up to prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. The ICC can only investigate any crimes in Afghanistan after May 2003, when the country ratified the Rome Statute, the treaty that established the court.

Former President Bill Clinton signed the treaty, but President George W. Bush renounced the signature, citing fears that Americans would be unfairly prosecuted for political reasons.

In November, when ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda sought judicial authorization to begin the investigation, she said the court had been looking into possible war crimes in Afghanistan since 2006.

Bensouda said in November that "there is a reasonable basis to believe" that crimes against humanity and war crimes were committed by the Taliban as well as the Haqqani network. She also said there was evidence that the Afghan National Security Forces, Afghan National Police and its spy agency, known as the NDS, committed war crimes.

Bensouda also said evidence existed of war crimes committed "by members of the United States armed forces on the territory of Afghanistan, and by members of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in secret detention facilities in Afghanistan," as well as in countries that had signed on to the Rome Statute. The secret detention facilities were operated mostly between 2003 and 2004, she said.

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It was the first time that Bensouda has targeted Americans for alleged war crimes. Bensouda said an investigation under the auspices of the international tribunal could break through what she called “near total impunity” in Afghanistan.

The prosecutor’s formal application to the court set up a possible showdown with Washington. While the U.S. is not a member state of the ICC, its citizens can be charged with crimes committed in countries that are members.

At the time of Bensouda’s announcement, a Pentagon spokesman said the U.S. Defense Department does not accept that such an investigation of U.S. personnel is warranted. The U.S. State Department has said it opposes the court’s involvement in Afghanistan.

Another Afghan who went to the ICC is Hussain Razaee, whose fiancée, Najiba, was among 30 people killed in July when a Taliban suicide attacker rammed a car bomb into a bus carrying employees from the Ministry of Mines.

For months, Razaee said he contemplated suicide. He had spent two years convincing Najiba’s parents to allow them to marry, and they had finally agreed. Unlike most Afghan couples, theirs was not to be an arranged marriage.

“I lost the person I loved,” he said.

Razaee said he went to the ICC because he wants those responsible to be punished, even if a peace deal with the Taliban is reached.

“I am pursuing this because I want the ICC to record these cases so that if there is a peace agreement, the Taliban leaders will be required to identify the people behind the killings,” Razaee said.

“I don’t trust the international community to bring any of these warlords or Taliban to justice, but if an international legal body rules according to the law, then the government could be forced to enforce it,” he said.

Associated Press writer Michael Corder in The Hague contributed.

A talkative Kareem Abdul-Jabbar reflects on becoming himself

By JOHN ROGERS, Associated Press

NEWPORT BEACH, Calif. (AP) — Kareem Abdul-Jabbar has been a best-selling author, civil-rights activist, actor, historian and one of the greatest basketball players who ever lived.

One thing Abdul-Jabbar has never been — at least not in public — is chatty.

“I’m not known for being a blabbermouth, you know?” the soft-spoken Abdul-Jabbar concedes with a smile, something else he was never particularly known for during his playing days. But, he adds, still smiling, his public can expect to see that change — and soon.

This fall Abdul-Jabbar will embark on a cross-country tour as part of “Becoming Kareem,” a stage show in which he’ll discuss his life, answer audience questions and talk about the key mentors he says helped him achieve his goals. Among them: civil rights heroes Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, his legendary college coach and lifelong friend John Wooden, and fellow superstar athletes Muhammad Ali and Wilt Chamberlain.

The tour was inspired by the 2017 best-seller “Becoming Kareem,” a memoir of his years from childhood to age 24.

Inspirational, poignant, funny and occasionally heartbreaking, it recounts the coming of age of a bright and hardworking but painfully introverted kid, one who was always the tallest in class.

And although he didn’t realize it until looking closely at a class photo taken in the third grade, he was often the only black kid in class, a circumstance that in later years would expose him to repeated episodes of ugly racism, no matter his fame or success, that would leave deep emotional scars that sometimes took decades to heal.

So he kept his game face on, both on and off the court, and persevered through setbacks and successes.

“I did the book because I thought that the process that I went through could be very useful for young people right now,” Abdul-Jabbar told The Associated Press during a wide-ranging interview this week at

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the offices of the Skyhook Foundation, the charitable nonprofit he created several years ago to provide educational opportunities for elementary school children, the same group he targeted his book for.

After its publication, sports broadcaster Roy Firestone, a longtime friend, suggested he share those experiences directly with live audiences, telling him his words would not only resonate with young people today but provide a chance for Abdul-Jabbar to clear up some lingering misconceptions dating to his playing days. The clipped, seemingly curt answers he often gave during postgame interviews, for example, frequently came across not as shy but as surly, especially coming from someone who stood an intimidatingly tall 7 feet, 2 inches.

"And that was very unfortunate," Abdul-Jabbar says softly now. "I think it kept me from a head coaching job and commercials and stuff because people wanted to assume the worst."

Not that he hasn't had a storied life and career before and after basketball.

Abdul-Jabbar played on six NBA championship teams, was an assistant coach for two others, won a record six MVP awards and is the leading scorer in NBA history with 38,387 points, a mark that's never been seriously challenged in the 29 years since he retired.

He's written more than a dozen books ranging from children's adventure novels to histories of prominent African-Americans to crime novels featuring the adventures of none other than Mycroft Holmes, older brother of Sherlock.

"I enjoyed Sherlock Holmes from when I was a kid," he recalls, adding with a robust laugh that until high school he actually believed the master detective was a real person. Learning he was Arthur Conan Doyle's creation, he concluded the author gave short shrift to Mycroft and set out to fix that a few years ago. His second Holmes book came out last year, and he's working on another.

"That and this tour will hopefully keep me pretty busy," he said as he sat in a chair in his spacious office.

It's an office filled with memorabilia commemorating not only his basketball career but his African-American roots and his work as a civil-rights advocate. Sitting near NAACP Image Awards are dozens of basketballs, many autographed by members of the Showtime-era Los Angeles Lakers teams he helped lead to five championships in the 1980s. On the walls are posters of him launching his signature skyhook shot over the likes of Charles Barkley and guarding Bill Walton.

The sounds of jazz, the beloved soundtrack of Abdul-Jabbar's life, play softly through the office until he silences them to talk. (His father, Ferdinand Lewis Alcindor, whose name he shared before changing his in his early 20s upon his conversion to Islam, was not only a New York City police officer but a talented jazz musician.)

If not as shy as he once was, Abdul-Jabbar is still somewhat guarded in conversation, although he can be playfully funny as well.

Yes, he confirms with a grin, it's true that after President Donald Trump sent him a name-calling note for criticizing Trump, he crumpled it into a ball and skyhooked it into a wastebasket.

Although he suffered from leukemia that's now in remission and underwent quadruple bypass surgery three years ago, Abdul-Jabbar looks little different than he did during his playing days, appearing trim and athletic in Tommy Hilfiger jeans and an open-necked shirt.

"Well, you know, seeing how there is no alternative — I'll take it," he says of turning 70 last year. "But I don't know about that 'life begins at 40' stuff. What happened at 40 is I started getting old.

"There is something wrong with that scenario," he adds, laughing again.

AP Interview: Putin foe Khodorkovsky doesn't want presidency

By **FRANCESCA EBEL** and **ANGELA CHARLTON**, Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Russian oligarch-turned-dissident Mikhail Khodorkovsky says he's not interested in replacing Vladimir Putin as president — but he might line up behind TV star Ksenia Sobchak in next month's presidential election.

In a wide-ranging interview Thursday with The Associated Press, Khodorkovsky said that politically-driven U.S. and EU sanctions against Russia aren't working, and warned that Putin's relations with the U.S. aren't

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likely to get better anytime soon.

After 10 years in prison seen as punishment for his political ambitions, Khodorkovsky remains deeply angry at Putin and ready to finance alternative leaders. Speaking from his London exile, he said that what he really wants for Russia is a whole new political system.

"Unfortunately no person who wants to come and replace Putin is the solution," he said, arguing instead for gradual reforms toward parliamentary democracy.

Khodorkovsky is barred from running in the March 18 presidential vote because of his criminal record, and says it's "not an election" anyway because everyone knows the outcome. Still, he's urging people to get off their couches and vote.

Khodorkovsky hinted he's leaning toward choosing Sobchak, but urged her to clarify her positions first. Her candidacy is seen by many as a superficial effort to inject some sense of opposition and glamour into the largely tension-free race.

"I don't know if I will vote for her or cross everyone out and write 'I'm sick of Putin,'" Khodorkovsky said.

Many Russians see the former billionaire as a reviled robber baron, and others see him as increasingly isolated and irrelevant. But his money speaks, funding opposition activity.

Khodorkovsky doesn't see opposition leader Alexei Navalny as the solution, accusing him of trying to be a "good czar" instead of reforming Russia's political system. Navalny is also barred from challenging Putin in the March election.

Since Putin's re-election is already guaranteed, opposition forces in Russia are focusing instead on what happens when his six-year term expires. Khodorkovsky, once Russia's richest man, was believed to harbor ambitions for 2024.

Asked Thursday if he would run in 2024, Khodorkovsky said, "I am against anyone running to replace Putin. I think it's a doomed position."

Khodorkovsky predicted that Putin's next term would bring new decline to Russia and more tense relations with the U.S. "For him and for those he represents, America is only good as an enemy," he said.

However he doesn't think Putin organized hacking interference to ensure Donald Trump's election: "America is a powerful democratic system and no czar even with loyal hacker armies is capable of deforming such a system."

Khodorkovsky argued that sector-wide sanctions against Russia aren't working because they are only fueling Putin's argument that Russians' problems are caused by the West.

Khodorkovsky has been living in exile since he was pardoned in December 2013. His Open Russia group provides legal support for victims of rights abuse and runs media projects.

Shares keep gaining as tech, industrial companies rise

By ELAINE KURTENBACH, AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Shares were higher in Japan and Australia, with all other Asian markets closed Friday for the lunar new year holiday.

KEEPING SCORE: Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index climbed 1.1 percent to 21,699.71 and the S&P ASX 200 in Australia added 0.1 percent to 5,914.60.

JAPAN CENTRAL BANK: As expected, the government proposed reappointing Haruhiko Kuroda as governor of the Bank of Japan. The decision underscores the government's commitment to its strategy of using huge monetary stimulus to support growth and fend off deflation. The appointment requires approval by parliament, which is certain since the ruling Liberal Democrats hold control of the legislature.

WALL STREET ADVANCE: Technology companies climbed Thursday as stocks rose for the fifth day in a row. After a brief dip late in the morning, the Standard & Poor's 500 index rallied to gain 1.2 percent to 2,731.20. The Dow Jones industrial average rose 1.2 percent, to 25,200.37. The Nasdaq composite was up 1.6 percent, to 7,256.43 and the Russell 2000 index of smaller companies rose 1 percent to 1,537.20.

U.S. INFLATION: The Labor Department said U.S. wholesale prices rose 0.4 percent in January, mainly due to a jump in energy prices. It was the biggest increase since November.

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ENERGY: U.S. crude oil turned higher in afternoon trading after a slump in the morning. It rose 74 cents, or 1.2 percent, to \$61.34 a barrel in New York. Brent crude, used to price international oils, lost 3 cents to \$64.33 a barrel in London.

CURRENCIES: The dollar was flat at 106.12 yen while the euro rose to \$1.2540 from \$1.2506.

AP Markets Writer Marley Jay contributed. He can be reached at <http://twitter.com/MarleyJayAP> . His work can be found at <https://apnews.com/search/marley%20jayt> .

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, Feb. 16, the 47th day of 2018. There are 318 days left in the year. This is the Chinese New Year of the Dog.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 16, 1968, the nation's first 911 emergency telephone system was inaugurated in Haleyville, Alabama, as the speaker of the Alabama House, Rankin Fite, placed a call from the mayor's office in City Hall to a red telephone at the police station (also located in City Hall) that was answered by U.S. Rep. Tom Beville.

On this date:

In 1804, Lt. Stephen Decatur led a successful raid into Tripoli Harbor to burn the U.S. Navy frigate Philadelphia, which had fallen into the hands of pirates during the First Barbary War.

In 1862, the Civil War Battle of Fort Donelson in Tennessee ended as some 12,000 Confederate soldiers surrendered; Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's victory earned him the moniker "Unconditional Surrender Grant."

In 1868, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks was organized in New York City.

In 1918, Lithuania proclaimed its independence from the Russian Empire. (Lithuania, which was occupied by the Soviet Union, then Nazi Germany, then the Soviet Union again during World War II, renewed its independence in 1990).

In 1923, the burial chamber of King Tutankhamen's recently unearthed tomb was unsealed in Egypt by English archaeologist Howard Carter.

In 1937, Du Pont research chemist Dr. Wallace H. Carothers, inventor of nylon, received a patent for the synthetic fiber, described as "linear condensation polymers."

In 1945, American troops landed on the island of Corregidor in the Philippines during World War II.

In 1959, Fidel Castro became premier of Cuba a month and a-half after the overthrow of Fulgencio Batista.

In 1961, the United States launched the Explorer 9 satellite.

In 1977, Janani Luwum, the Anglican archbishop of Uganda, died in what Ugandan authorities said was an automobile accident, although it's generally believed that he was shot to death by agents of Idi Amin.

In 1988, seven people were shot to death during an office rampage in Sunnyvale, California, by a man obsessed with a co-worker who was wounded in the attack. (The gunman is on death row.)

In 1998, a China Airlines Airbus A300 trying to land in fog near Taipei, Taiwan, crashed, killing all 196 people on board, plus seven on the ground.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush, on a six-day tour of Africa, made his first stop in Benin before flying on to Tanzania. John McCain, the presumed Republican presidential nominee, picked up a total of 50 GOP national convention delegates from Michigan and Louisiana. A car plowed into a group of street-racing fans obscured by a cloud of tire smoke on an isolated Maryland highway, killing eight people in the early morning darkness.

Five years ago: Gunmen attacked a camp for a construction company in rural northern Nigeria, killing a guard and kidnapping seven workers from Lebanon, Britain, Greece and Italy; the kidnappers later claimed to have killed the hostages. Billy Hunter was ousted as executive director of the National Basketball Players Association by NBA players. Tony Sheridan, 72, a British singer who performed with the Beatles during

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their early years in Germany, died in Hamburg.

One year ago: In the first full-length news conference of his presidency, Donald Trump denounced what he called the "criminal" leaks that took down his top national security adviser, Michael Flynn. President Trump named Alexander Acosta as his new choice for labor secretary, a day after Andrew Puzder abruptly withdrew. Immigrants around the U.S. stayed home from work and school to demonstrate how important they were to America's economy, and many businesses closed in solidarity. A California man pleaded guilty in federal court in Riverside to providing the high-powered rifles used to kill 14 people in the 2015 San Bernardino terror attack (sentencing is expected later this year).

Today's Birthdays: Jazz/pop singer-actress Peggy King is 88. Actor Jeremy Bulloch is 73. Actor William Katt is 67. Rhythm-and-blues singer James Ingram is 66. Actor LeVar Burton is 61. Actor-rapper Ice-T is 60. Actress Lisa Loring is 60. International Tennis Hall of Famer John McEnroe is 59. Rock musician Andy Taylor is 57. Rock musician Dave Lombardo (Slayer) is 53. Actress Sarah Clarke is 47. Olympic gold medal runner Cathy Freeman is 45. Actor Mahershala Ali is 44. Singer Sam Salter is 43. Electronic dance music artist Bassnectar is 40. Rapper Lupe Fiasco is 36. Actress Chloe Wepper is 32. Pop-rock singer Ryan Follese (FAHL'-eh-say) (Hot Chelle (SHEL) Rae) is 31. Rock musician Danielle Haim (HYM) is 29. Actress Elizabeth Olsen is 29. Actor Mike Weinberg is 25.

Thought for Today: "There are two ways to slice easily through life; to believe everything or to doubt everything. Both ways save us from thinking." — Alfred Korzybski (kohr-ZHIB'-skee), Polish-American linguist (1879-1950).