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104 N. Main, Groton

Today
Lifetouch Photos

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

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

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Pappas places in several events at the Dakotas State Tournament

The Jackrabbit Forensics team has had a great weekend competing at the Dakotas State Tournament. Groton's own Keri Pappas placed in several events. She placed first place in Parliamentary Debate, second place was a pair with Kendrick Walton in Parliamentary Debate, third place in persuasive speaking and fourth place in extemporaneous speaking. In the team sweepstakes, SDSU placed first in Parliamentary Debate, Overall Team Sweepstakes and second in Individual Events. Pappas is pictured above, on the left hand side, wearing pink. (Photo from Facebook)

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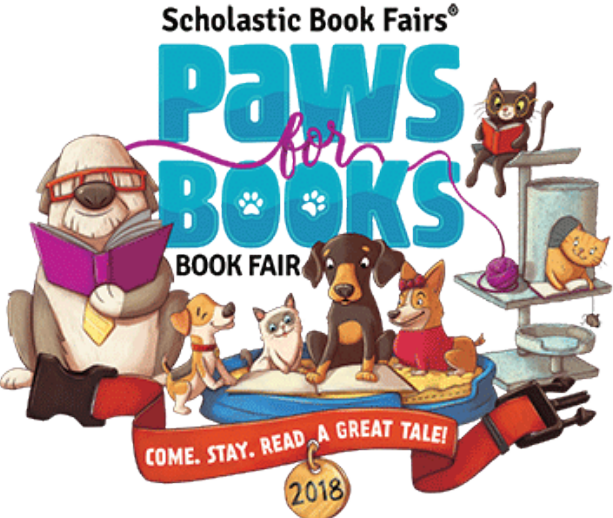


The Groton Area High School Marching Band in Orlando, Florida! According to what Desiree Yeigh posted on her Facebook page, "What an amazing group of students. They represented Groton extremely well!" These photos are came from her Facebook Page.



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Scholastic Book Fairs®
PAWS for BOOKS
BOOK FAIR
COME. STAY. READ. A GREAT TALE!
2018

"Paws for Books"
Scholastic Book Fair
When: Monday, March 5, 2018
3:30 to 7:30 p.m.
Where: Groton Area Elementary
School Library

Maintenance Supervisor Wanted:

Under the direction of the Facility Administrator, the Maintenance Supervisor oversees the daily operations of the Maintenance. Performs maintenance and repair of physical structures of buildings.

Day Shift C.N.A. Wanted

Sign-on Bonus

☆☆☆ **\$1,500 for CNAs** ☆☆☆

Contact Brynn Pickrel or Nellie Hatfield at 605-397-2365 or apply in person.

EOE/AA/M/F/V/D-Drug Free Workplace



1106 N. 2nd Street, Groton

Lady Tigers end season

Cold shooting, turnovers and a bad second quarter all contributed to the Groton Area girls finishing their basketball season with a 57-29 loss to the hands of the Tiospa Zina Wambdi.

The Tigers kept the game close in the first quarter and the game was tied three times and the Wambdi took a 15-12 first quarter lead. Groton Area made five of 13 field goals for 39 percent and Tiospa Zina made seven of 11 for 64 percent.

The Wambdi then outscored Groton Area, 20-1, for part of the second quarter as Tiospa Zina took a 35-16 lead at half time. In the second quarter, Groton made one of nine field goals for 11 percent and Tiospa Zina was six of 17 for 35 percent. In the second quarter, Groton Area had seven turnovers that resulted in 12 points for Tiospa Zina.

Tiospa Zina continued to run away with the game in the third quarter, outscoring the Tigers, 12-3, to take a 47-18 lead at the break. In the third quarter, Groton Area was one of 13 in shooting for 8 percent and the Wambdi were four of 13 for 31 percent.

Groton Area had the edge in fourth quarter scoring, 11-10. The Tigers made three of 16 field goals for 19 percent and the Wambdi were four of 11 for 36 percent.

Miranda Hanson led the Tigers with seven points, four rebounds and one steal. Harleigh Stange added six points and had three rebounds. Sam Geffre and Gracie Traphagen each had three, Eliza Wanner, Kaycie Hawkins and Ciatlynn Barse each had two points and Payton Maine and Nicole Marzahn each added a free throw.

Geffre had the lone three-pointer for Groton Area.

Groton Area had 18 turnovers compared to nine for Tiospa Zina. The Tigers made 10 of 51 shots for 20 percent and Tiospa Zina made 21 of 52 for 40 percent.

Hailey Shepherd led Tiospa Zina with 19 points followed by Aubree Bearsheart with 12, Kylee Deutsch with eight, Lexus Redthunder had seven, Jordyn LaBlanc, Gerlyn Felicia and Daylah Flute each had three points and Omany Bernard added two points. The Wambdi made eight three-pointers.

Groton Area finished its season with an 8-13 record.

In the other first round games, Redfield/Doland defeated Sisseton, 44-37, and Milbank Area defeated Webster Area, 64-44.

Next round action is Thursday where Tiospa Zina will travel to Aberdeen Roncalli and Milbank Area will travel to Redfield. The winner of those two games will advance to the Round of 16.

- Paul Kosel



Harleigh Stange was the only senior playing on the team last night. The other senior, Jessica Bjerke, did not play due to an injury she sustained at the Milbank game. (Photo by Julianna Kosel)



Gracie Traphagen
(Photo by Julianna Kosel)



Payton Maine
(Photo by Julianna Kosel)

The Life of Winifred Fawcett



The funeral for Winifred Fawcett, 97, of Groton will be 11 a.m., Friday, February 23, 2018 at the Gettysburg United Methodist Church. Rev. Jeff Adel will officiate. Burial will follow in the Gettysburg Cemetery.

Visitation will be held on Wednesday at the Groton United Methodist Church from 5-7:30 p.m. with a prayer service at 7:30 p.m. Rev. Thomas Carlson will preside.

Winifred passed away February 19, 2018 at Groton Care and Rehabilitation Center.

Winifred Lucille was born on October 2, 1920 in Clark County to Percy and Elizabeth (Smith) Bertrand. At the age of 2, she moved to Gettysburg where she attended school. After graduating in 1938, she attended Madison Normal College and obtained her teaching certificate. Winifred taught all 8 grades at several rural Potter County schools for ten years. On August 16, 1948 she was united in marriage with Orville Fawcett in Gettysburg. Winifred continued substitute teaching and also began selling Avon in 1971. She sold it for 33 years and retired at the age of 84 years. During those years, she was a librarian for the Potter County Library. Many will remember her as "Gettysburg's Informal Historian." She truly enjoyed working with the Historical Society and had won awards for her books and essays about the region.

Winifred was a member and attended the Gettysburg Methodist Church for 95 years. She also belonged to the Cunningham Extension Club and was 4-H leader for 10 years. In her free time, she loved to

work on genealogy, gardening, arts and crafts projects, reading, and collecting cardinal figurines.

Celebrating her life is her daughter, Anita (John) Lowary of Groton and her sister-in-law, Rosalie Bertrand.

Preceding her in death were her parents, her husband, three brothers, Thane (Jean) Bertrand, Allen Bertrand, Richard Bertrand and several nieces and nephews.

Casketbearers will be Ted Holzworth, Bob Potts, Larry Madsen, and Bert Van Essen.

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Today in Weather History

February 21, 1918: An amazing warm-up of 83 degrees in just 12 hours at Granville, North Dakota from Chinook winds. The temperature soared from an early morning low of 33 degrees below zero to an afternoon temperature of 50 degrees. Chinook winds are caused by the compression of Pacific air descending the Rockies. Compressing the air causes it to heat up resulting in the dramatic temperature rises.

February 21, 1969: Heavy snow along with winds of 15 to 25 mph caused blowing and drifting snow which closed many roads. Snowfall amounts of 5 to 12 inches were common across eastern South Dakota from the 20th into the 22nd. Some snowfall amounts included, 5 inches at Clear Lake and Brookings, 6 inches at Wilmot, 7 inches at Milbank, Redfield and Mitchell, 8 inches at Conde, 9 inches at Webster, Sioux Falls, and Huron.

1918 - A spectacular chinook wind at Granville, ND, caused the temperature to spurt from a morning low of 33 degrees below zero to an afternoon high of 50 degrees above zero. (David Ludlum)

1935 - Frequent duststorms occurred in eastern Colorado during the month, forcing schools to close and people to stay indoors. A fatality occurred on this date when two section cars collided on the railroad near Arriba CO, due to poor visibility. (The Weather Channel)

1936 - The temperature at Langdon, ND, climbed above zero for the first time in six weeks. Readings never got above freezing during all three winter months. (David Ludlum)

1971 - An outbreak of tornadoes hit northeastern Louisiana and northern and central Mississippi. The tornadoes claimed 121 lives, including 110 in Mississippi. Three tornadoes accounted for 118 of the deaths. There are 1600 persons injured, 900 homes were destroyed or badly damaged, and total damage was 19 million dollars. (David Ludlum)

1971 - Elk City, OK, was buried under 36 inches of snow to establish a 24 hour snowfall record for the state. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Low pressure over central California produced gale force winds along the coast, and produced thunderstorms which pelted Stockton, Oakland and San Jose with small hail. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)








1988 - A storm tracking across southern Canada produced high winds in the north central U.S., with gusted to 90 mph reported at Boulder CO. The high winds snapped trees and power lines, and ripped shingles off roofs. The Kentucky Fried Chicken Bucket was blown off their store in Havre MT. An eighteen foot fiberglass bear was blown off its stand along a store front in west Cody WY, and sailed east into downtown Cody before the owners were able to transport their wandering bear back home in a horse trailer. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing during the morning hours spread severe weather across Georgia and the Carolinas. Strong thunderstorm winds caused one death and thirteen injuries in North Carolina, and another four injuries in South Carolina. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

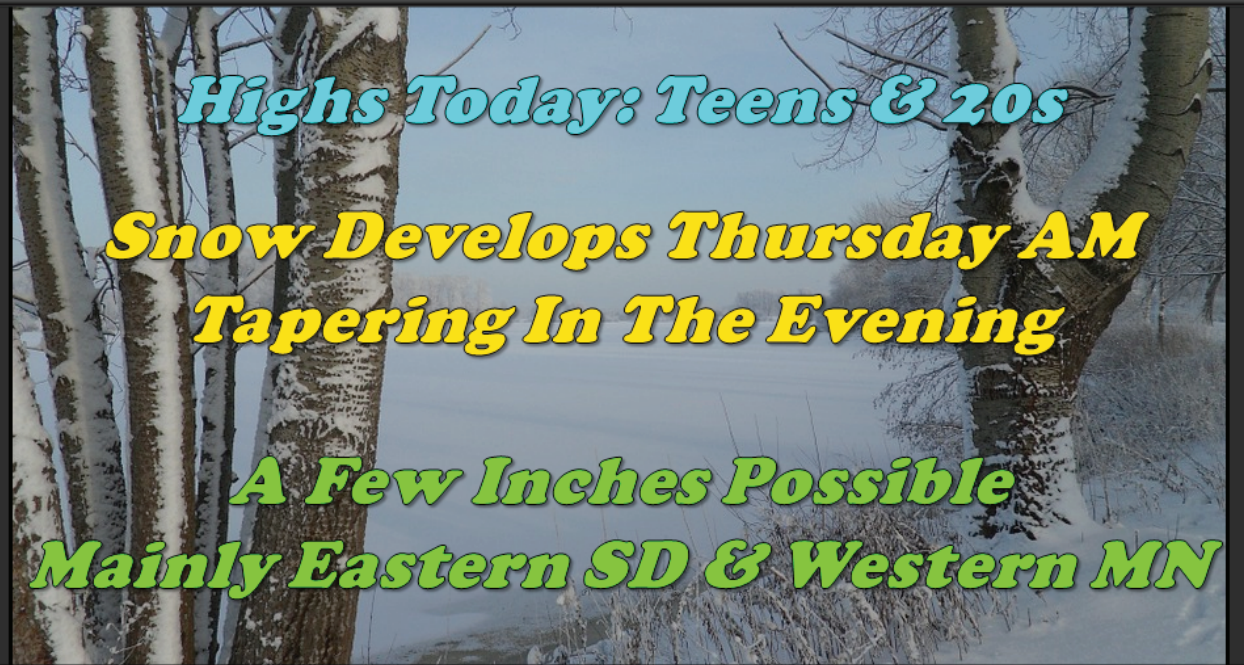
1990 - Overnight thunderstorms produced heavy rain in central Texas. Rainfall totals ranged up to 2.80 inches at Camp Verde, with 2.20 inches reported at Leakey. Thunderstorms early in the day produced high winds in southern Texas, with wind gusts to 60 mph reported at Alice. Daytime thunderstorms in eastern Texas drenched Rosenberg with four inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Wed Feb 21	Thu Feb 22	Fri Feb 23	Sat Feb 24	Sun Feb 25	Mon Feb 26	Tue Feb 27
						
15°F	25°F	25°F	28°F	28°F	28°F	31°F
2°F	11°F	9°F	10°F	8°F	12°F	20°F
SSW 8 MPH	SSE 10 MPH Precip 50%	W 6 MPH	S 9 MPH Precip 30%	W 10 MPH	SSW 9 MPH	N 10 MPH

Cold Today A Little More Snow Thursday



National Weather Service – Aberdeen, SD



weather.gov/Aberdeen



National Weather Service Aberdeen



@NWSAberdeen

Updated: 2/21/2018 4:01 AM Central

Published on: 02/21/2018 at 4:06AM

Chilly morning temperatures will lead into another cold day as readings struggle to warm thanks to recent snow cover. A weak system still looks to affect eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota with the addition of just a few more inches of light snow Thursday.

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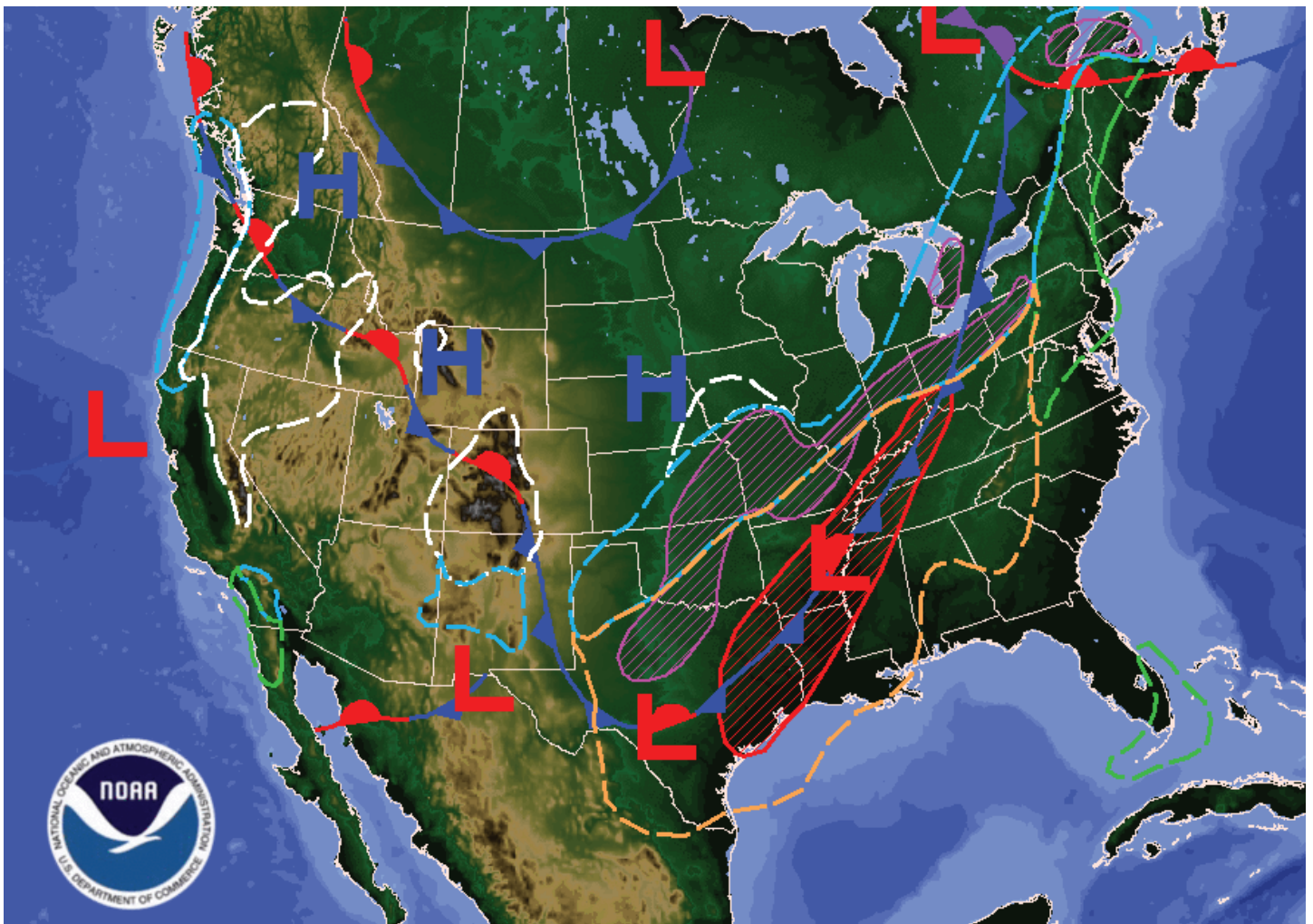
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 12.6 F at 4:30 PM
Low Outside Temp: -11.3 F at 11:27 PM
Wind Chill:
High Gust: 22.0 Mph at 2:29 PM
Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 64° in 2017
Record Low: -30° in 1918
Average High: 30°F
Average Low: 10°F
Average Precip in Feb: 0.37
Precip to date in Feb: 0.09
Average Precip to date: 0.84
Precip Year to Date: 0.09
Sunset Tonight: 6:09 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:23 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Wed, Feb 21, 2018, issued 3:52 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Gerhardt 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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"DAILY PLANNING GUIDE"

Nearly all of us have some method for planning our daily activities. With no plan to follow, our time will likely be wasted and our days meaningless. Often, however, our carefully detailed plans can be completely disrupted by an emergency or unexpected demand. In Psalm 92, however, we find a simple way to open and close each day and bring God's presence into our lives.

The Psalmist suggests that we begin the day with a "proclamation" – we are to "proclaim the love of God." If we begin each day by proclaiming the love that God has for us, it will remind us that we are safe and secure in His love and that nothing or no one can destroy us. Then, as the day unfolds and when the unexpected occurs and things seem upside down, we can know that He is holding us close to Himself and that He will protect us from that which might harm us. It is in His love that we are safe and secure. As Paul wrote, "Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." It is His love that keeps us close to Him and no one or nothing can break this bond that comes from Him.

As we end each day, we are advised to praise God for His faithfulness. Indeed, by His grace He has brought us through another day and He has proven Himself to be trustworthy. Even when tragedy strikes or the light of His presence is dim, we have the assurance that He is with us.

If "things" look bad today, we can always look back at our "yesterdays" and see God at work in our lives and praise Him for His trustworthiness and faithfulness.

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for all You have done for us. May we always be aware of Your love and faithfulness. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 92:2 To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, And Your faithfulness every night,

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2018 Groton SD Community Events

- Groton Lion's Club Bingo- Wednesday Nights 6:30pm at the Groton Legion (Year Round)
- 11/18/2017-3/31/2018 Groton Lion's Club Wheel of Meat- Saturday Nights 7pm at the Groton Legion (Fall/Winter Months)
- 1/28/2018 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm
- 3/24/2018 Easter Egg Hunt (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 4/13/2018 Elementary School Carnival, 5 p.m.
- 5/5/2018 Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday in May)
- 5/28/2018 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Program at the Cemetery, Lunch to follow at the American Legion (Memorial Day)
- 6/14/2018 Transit Fundraiser (Middle Thursday in June)
- 6/15/2018 SDSU Golf at Olive Grove
- 6/16/2018 Triathlon (Saturday before Father's Day)
- 7/4/2018 Firecracker Golf Tourney (4th of July)
- 7/22/2018 Summer Fest (4th Sunday in July)
- 9/8/2018 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 10/6/2018 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 10/12/2018 Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/31/2018 Trunk or Treat (Halloween)
- 11/10/2018 Groton American Legion Post #39 Turkey Shoot (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)

- Best Ball Golf Tourney
- SDSU Golf Tourney
- Sunflower Golf Tourney
- Santa Claus Day
- Fireman's Stag
- Tour of Homes
- Crazy Dayz/Open Houses
- School Events

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Evangelist Billy Graham, who reached millions, dies at 99

By RACHEL ZOLL, Associated Press

MONTREAT, N.C. (AP) — The Rev. Billy Graham, who transformed American religious life through his preaching and activism, becoming a counselor to presidents and the most widely heard Christian evangelist in history, died Wednesday. He was 99.

Graham, who long suffered from cancer, pneumonia and other ailments, died at his home in North Carolina, spokesman Mark DeMoss told The Associated Press.

More than anyone else, Graham built evangelicalism into a force that rivaled liberal Protestantism and Roman Catholicism in the United States. His leadership summits and crusades in more than 185 countries and territories forged powerful global links among conservative Christians, and threw a lifeline to believers in the communist-controlled Eastern bloc. Dubbed "America's pastor," he was a confidant to U.S. presidents from Gen. Dwight Eisenhower to George W. Bush.

In 1983, President Reagan gave Graham the Presidential Medal of Freedom, America's highest civilian honor. When the Billy Graham Museum and Library was dedicated in 2007 in Charlotte, former Presidents George H.W. Bush, Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton attended.

"When he prays with you in the Oval Office or upstairs in the White House, you feel he's praying for you, not the president," Clinton said at the ceremony.

President Donald Trump tweeted: "The GREAT Billy Graham is dead. There was nobody like him! He will be missed by Christians and all religions. A very special man."

Beyond Graham's public appearances, he reached untold millions through his pioneering use of prime-time telecasts, network radio, daily newspaper columns, evangelistic feature films and globe-girdling satellite TV hookups. Graham's message was not complex or unique, yet he preached with a conviction that won over audiences worldwide.

"The Bible says," was his catch phrase. His unquestioning belief in Scripture turned the Gospel into a "rapier" in his hands, he said.

A tall, striking man with thick hair, stark blue eyes and a firm jaw, Graham was a commanding presence at his crusades. He would make the altar call in his powerful baritone, asking the multitudes to stand, come down the aisles and publicly make "decisions for Christ," as a choir crooned the hymn "Just As I Am."

By his final crusade in 2005 in New York City, he had preached in person to more than 210 million people worldwide. No evangelist is expected to have his level of influence again.

"William Franklin Graham Jr. can safely be regarded as the best who ever lived at what he did," said



FILE - In this June 26, 2005 file photo, the Rev. Billy Graham speaks on stage on the third and last day of his farewell American revival in the Queens borough of New York. A spokesman said on Graham has died at his home in North Carolina at age 99. (AP Photo/Henny Ray Abrams)

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William Martin, author of the Graham biography "A Prophet With Honor."

Born Nov. 7, 1918, on his family's dairy farm near Charlotte, North Carolina, Graham came from a fundamentalist background that expected true Bible-believers to stay clear of Christians with even the most minor differences over Scripture. But as his crusades drew support from a widening array of Christian churches, he came to reject that view.

He joined in a then-emerging movement called New Evangelicalism that abandoned the narrowness of fundamentalism to engage broader society. Fundamentalists at the time excoriated the preacher for his new direction, and broke with him when he agreed to work with more liberal Christians in the 1950s.

Graham stood fast. He would not reject people who were sincere and shared at least some of his beliefs, Martin said. He wanted the widest hearing possible for his salvation message.

"The ecumenical movement has broadened my viewpoint and I recognize now that God has his people in all churches," he said in the early 1950s.

In 1957, he said, "I intend to go anywhere, sponsored by anybody, to preach the Gospel of Christ."

His approach helped evangelicals gain the influence they have today. Graham's path to becoming an evangelist began taking shape at age 16, when the Presbyterian-reared farmboy committed himself to Christ at a local tent revival.

"I did not feel any special emotion," he wrote in his 1997 autobiography, "Just As I Am." "I simply felt at peace," and thereafter, "the world looked different."

After high school, he enrolled at the fundamentalist Bob Jones College, but found the school stifling, and transferred to Florida Bible Institute in Tampa. There, he practiced sermonizing in a swamp, preaching to birds and alligators before tryouts with small churches. He still wasn't convinced he should be a preacher until a soul-searching, late-night ramble on a golf course.

"I finally gave in while pacing at midnight on the 18th hole," he said. "All right, Lord,' I said, 'If you want me, you've got me.'"

Graham, who became a Southern Baptist, went on to study at Wheaton College, a prominent Christian liberal arts school in Illinois, where he met fellow student Ruth Bell, who had been raised in China where her father had been a Presbyterian medical missionary.

The two married in 1943, and he planned to become an Army chaplain. But he fell seriously ill, and by the time he recovered and could start the chaplain training program, World War II was nearly over.

Instead, he took a job organizing meetings in the U.S. and Europe with Youth for Christ, a group he helped found. He stood out then for his loud ties and suits, and a rapid delivery and swinging arms that won him the nickname "the Preaching Windmill."

A 1949 Los Angeles revival turned Graham into evangelism's rising star. Held in a tent dubbed the "Canvas Cathedral," Graham had been drawing adequate, but not spectacular crowds until one night when reporters and photographers descended. When Graham asked them why, a reporter said that legendary publisher William Randolph Hearst had ordered his papers to hype Graham. Graham said he never found out why.

The publicity gave him a national profile. Over the next decade, his massive crusades in England and New York catapulted him to international celebrity. His 12-week London campaign in 1954 defied expectations, drawing more than 2 million people and the respect of the British, many of whom had derided him before his arrival as little more than a slick salesman.

Three years later, he held a crusade in New York's Madison Square Garden that was so popular it was extended from six to 16 weeks, capped off with a rally in Times Square that packed Broadway with more than 100,000 people.

The strain of so much preaching caused the already trim Graham to lose 30 pounds by the time the event ended. It remains his longest revival meeting ever.

As his public influence grew, the preacher's stands on the social issues of his day were watched closely by supporters and critics alike. One of the most pressing was the civil rights movement. Graham was no social activist and never joined marches, which led prominent Christians such as theologian Reinhold Niebuhr to publicly condemn Graham as too moderate.

Still, Graham ended racially segregated seating at his Southern crusades in 1953, a year before the

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Supreme Court's school integration ruling, and long refused to visit South Africa while its white regime insisted on racially segregated meetings.

In a 2005 interview with The Associated Press, before his final crusade which was held in New York, Graham said he regretted that he didn't battle for civil rights more forcefully.

"I think I made a mistake when I didn't go to Selma" with many clergy who joined the historic Alabama march led by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. "I would like to have done more."

Graham more robustly took on the cause of anti-Communism, making preaching against the atheist regime part of his sermons for years.

As America's most famous religious leader, he golfed with statesmen and entertainers and dined with royalty. Graham's relationships with U.S. presidents also boosted his ministry and became a source of pride for conservative Christians who were so often caricatured as backward.

But those ties proved problematic when his close friend Richard Nixon resigned in the Watergate scandal, leaving Graham devastated and baffled. He resolved to take a lower profile in the political world, going as far as discouraging the Rev. Jerry Falwell, a founder of the Moral Majority, from mixing religion and politics.

"Evangelicals can't be closely identified with any particular party or person. We have to stand in the middle, to preach to all the people, right and left," Graham said in 1981, according to Time magazine. "I haven't been faithful to my own advice in the past. I will in the future."

Yet, in the 2012 election, with Graham mostly confined to his North Carolina home, he all but endorsed Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney. And the evangelist's ministry took out full-page ads in newspapers support a ballot referendum that would ban same-sex marriage.

His son, the Rev. Franklin Graham, who runs the ministry, said his father viewed the gay marriage question as a moral, not a political, issue. Graham's integrity was credited with salvaging the reputation of broadcast evangelism in the dark days of the late 1980s, after scandals befell TV preachers Jimmy Swaggart and Jim Bakker.

He resolved early on never to be alone with a woman other than his wife. Instead of taking a share of the "love offerings" at his crusades, as was the custom, he earned a modest salary from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

His ministry was governed by an independent board that included successful Christian businessmen and other professionals — a stark departure from the widespread evangelical practice of packing boards with relatives and yes-men.

"Why, I could make a quarter of a million dollars a year in this field or in Hollywood if I wanted to," Graham said. "The offers I've had from Hollywood studios are amazing. But I just laughed. I told them I was staying with God."

While he succeeded in preserving his reputation, he could not completely shield his family from the impact of his work. He was on the road for months at a time, leaving Ruth at their mountainside home in Montreat, North Carolina, to raise their five children: Franklin, Virginia ("Gigi"), Anne, Ruth and Nelson ("Ned").

Anne Graham Lotz has said that her mother was effectively "a single parent." Ruth sometimes grew so lonely when Billy was traveling that she slept with his tweed jacket for comfort. But she said, "I'd rather have a little of Bill than a lot of any other man."

She died in June 2007 at age 87.

"I will miss her terribly," Billy Graham said, "and look forward even more to the day I can join her in heaven."

In his later years, Graham visited communist Eastern Europe and increasingly appealed for world peace. He opened a 1983 convention of evangelists from 140 nations by urging the elimination of nuclear and biological weapons.

He told audiences in Czechoslovakia that "we must do all we can to preserve life and avoid war," although he opposed unilateral disarmament. In 1982, he went to Moscow to preach and attend a conference on world peace. During that visit, he said he saw no signs of Soviet religious persecution, a misguided at-

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tempt at diplomacy that brought scathing criticism from author Alexander Solzhenitsyn, among others.

"It's worth taking a risk for peace," Graham contended, although he was clearly stung by the controversy.

Graham's relationship with Nixon became an issue once again when tapes newly released in 2002 caught the preacher telling the president that Jews "don't know how I really feel about what they're doing to this country."

Graham apologized, saying he didn't recall ever having such feelings and asking the Jewish community to consider his actions above his words on that tape. Health problems gradually slowed Graham, but he did not cease preaching.

In 1995, his son, Franklin, was named the ministry's leader. Along with the many honors he received from the evangelical community and the Presidential Medal of Freedom, Graham received the \$1 million Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion in 1982 and the Congressional Gold Medal in 1996.

Graham will be buried by his wife at the Billy Graham Museum and Library.

"I have been asked, 'What is the secret?'" Graham had said of his preaching. "Is it showmanship, organization or what? The secret of my work is God. I would be nothing without him."

Online: Billy Graham Evangelistic Association: <http://www.billygraham.org>

Billy Graham Center archives: <http://www.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/archhp1.html>

Retired Associated Press Religion Writer Richard N. Ostling contributed to this report.

Lawmakers to weigh stricter rules for constitutional changes

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota House committee plans to debate asking voters to give the Legislature more control over amendments to the state constitution.

Constitutional changes would need approval from the voters and the Legislature to pass under the plan the House State Affairs Committee will take up Wednesday.

Right now, people who collect enough signatures to put a constitutional amendment on the ballot can ask voters to pass it without lawmakers' input or blessing.

Another measure set for debate by the panel would require constitutional amendments to encompass only one subject.

Republican Rep. Mark Mickelson has said he's not going to push to pass a different plan that would end citizens' ability to gather signatures to propose constitutional amendments.

Any of the changes would have to pass at the ballot.

Lyft application granted for convicted felon

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — The Mitchell City Council has approved a ride-hailing driver application for a man convicted of attempted murder and aiding kidnapping.

At least one council member expressed safety concerns for anyone using Joseph Novak's Lyft services. Novak told the council Tuesday night he was incarcerated for 15 years following a 1992 conviction and now works for CHS Farmers Alliance Co-op in Mitchell.

City attorney Justin Johnson told the council that Mitchell has no background check requirement in its ordinance and therefore had no recourse to deny the license application.

The Daily Republic reports Novak's application was unanimously approved.

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

Cleanup from 14 inches of snow continues in Black Hills

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Black Hills residents continue to dig out from a winter storm that dumped more than a foot of snow in some communities.

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City crews in Rapid City turned their focus on clearing residential streets Tuesday after clearing the main roads of up to 10 inches of snow. The National Weather Service says the highest snowfall total was southwest of Lead where 14 inches was recorded.

Forecasters expect temperatures to climb into the 30s by the weekend.

Tuesday's Scores

By The Associated Press

BOYS BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Central 66, Mitchell 37
Faulkton 68, Edmunds Central 61
Hill City 63, Custer 56
Lower Brule 78, Mitchell Christian 46
Marshall, Minn. 58, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 52
Pierre 55, Watertown 52
Yankton 61, Brookings 49

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Central 58, Mitchell 47
Brookings 61, Yankton 56
Marshall, Minn. 48, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 36
Pierre 50, Watertown 47
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 44, Harrisburg 35
Region 1A
First Round
Milbank 64, Webster 44
Redfield/Doland 44, Sisseton 37
Tiospa Zina Tribal 57, Groton Area 29
Region 2A
First Round
Madison 62, Flandreau Indian 16
Sioux Valley 78, Deuel 43
Region 3A
First Round
Sioux Falls Christian 45, Baltic 12
Tri-Valley 45, Garretson 42
Region 4A
First Round
Beresford 49, Elk Point-Jefferson 47
Dakota Valley 69, Tea Area 34
Vermillion 61, Canton 44
Region 5A
First Round
Parker 41, Platte-Geddes 37
Parkston 30, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 30, 2OT
Wagner 60, Bon Homme 46
Region 6A
First Round
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 49, Mobridge-Pollock 18
Region 1B
Quarterfinal

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Florence/Henry 58, Clark/Willow Lake 54
Warner 52, Langford 31
Waverly-South Shore 55, Northwestern 50
Wilmot 48, Waubay/Summit 28
Region 2B
Quarterfinal
Ipswich 56, Highmore-Harrold 43
Leola/Frederick 53, Herreid/Selby Area 49
Potter County 67, Faulkton 59
Sully Buttes 65, Sunshine Bible Academy 30
Region 3B
Quarterfinal
Castlewood 57, Wessington Springs 16
DeSmet 62, Arlington 19
Deubrook 70, Wolsey-Wessington 37
Hitchcock-Tulare 60, Lake Preston 41
Region 4B
Quarterfinal
Ethan 65, Dell Rapids St. Mary 26
Hanson 48, Colman-Egan 18
Howard 70, Chester 60
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 47, Elkton-Lake Benton 22
Region 5B
Quarterfinal
Bridgewater-Emery 50, Alcester-Hudson 41
Canistota 47, Menno 41
Freeman 55, Viborg-Hurley 34
Irene-Wakonda 54, Gayville-Volin 28
Region 6B
First Round
Marty Indian 65, Gregory 54
Scotland 59, Colome 36
Region 7B
First Round
Lyman 40, Jones County 26
Oelrichs 40, Edgemont 34
White River 79, Crazy Horse 53
Region 8B
First Round
Harding County 66, Bison 47
Newell 56, Takini 18
Tiospaye Topa 68, Wakpala 55

Some high school basketball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Mega Millions

17-19-23-24-43, Mega Ball: 14, Megaplier: 3

(seventeen, nineteen, twenty-three, twenty-four, forty-three; Mega Ball: fourteen; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$185 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$246 million

Refugee resettlement bill's legality debated before hearing

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota would suspend refugee resettlements from countries on “any federal travel ban list” under a measure awaiting a legislative hearing that critics argue would be struck down by the courts if it ever becomes law.

The bill is set to have its first hearing Wednesday before the Senate State Affairs Committee. Republican Sen. Neal Tapio’s legislation would also direct the state to refuse “chain migration” from citizens of countries on such a list. That system gives advantages to the relatives of legal immigrants.

Tapio, a congressional candidate, said a potential legal challenge would be worth fighting if the bill becomes law. He said the federal government doesn’t have the right to “make your neighborhood less safe.”

“We should fight for our wives and our daughters and our kids and our grandkids,” Tapio said. “This is about the future of our communities and the citizens that live within them.”

Libby Skarin, policy director for the American Civil Liberties Union of South Dakota, said the bill is unconstitutional and that states don’t have veto power over the federal government’s admission and resettlement of refugees.

Skarin said states’ efforts to block Syrian refugees have lost in court.

“What those cases made clear is that states cannot prevent any immigrant from living within or moving within state boundaries, and the federal government has the authority to decide where it places people through refugee resettlement programs,” she said.

The Supreme Court is to decide the legality of the latest version of President Donald Trump’s ban on travel to the United States by residents of six majority-Muslim countries. A second federal appeals court ruled against the ban last week.

The South Dakota bill would also require legislative approval for the state or contracted agencies to help with refugee resettlement or “chain migration” of people from Sudan, Syria, Somalia, Iran, Libya, Yemen and North Korea.

Taneeza Islam, an immigration lawyer and executive director of South Dakota Voices for Justice, said the bill’s sponsors don’t understand the “fundamental rights that we have in our U.S. Constitution” and didn’t think through how the proposal would be implemented.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard’s chief of staff, Tony Venhuizen, told the Argus Leader that the Republican executive opposes the bill.

Betty Oldenkamp, president and CEO of Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota, told the newspaper it would end support services that help refugees assimilate.

The organization, which oversees refugee resettlement in the state, didn’t immediately return a telephone message from The Associated Press. The federal Administration for Children and Families, which includes the Office of Refugee Resettlement, didn’t immediately comment.

Colorado couple indicted in SD elder financial abuse case

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A grand jury in South Dakota has indicted a Colorado couple on charges of financial elder abuse.

Attorney General Marty Jackley said Tuesday that 62-year-old Sandra Lee Pazen (PAY’-zen) and 63-year-

old Paul Damon Pazen, both of Fort Collins, were indicted by a Butte County grand jury.

Sandra Pazen faces one felony count of theft by exploitation with a value of between \$5,000 and \$100,000. Paul Pazen faces one felony count of receiving stolen property with a value of between \$5,000 and \$100,000, and two felony counts of grand theft.

The charge against Sandra Pazen alleges she took funds from an elderly relative in an amount within the statutory limits. Paul Pazen is accused of receiving and taking funds from an individual within the statutory limits.

Both are due in court March 16.

Groups want details on Trump's approval of Keystone pipeline

By MATTHEW BROWN, Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — Opponents of the proposed Keystone XL oil pipeline from Canada are asking a judge to force the U.S. government to turn over emails and other documents related to President Donald Trump's approval of the project.

Environmentalists who sued to stop the 1,179-mile (1,800-kilometer) pipeline said the documents could bolster their case that Trump's decision was arbitrary and should be overturned by the courts.

But U.S. Justice Department attorneys argued in court filings that the disputed documents include internal deliberations that don't have to be made public. They said the request amounts to a "fishing expedition" and should be rejected.

Formal arguments were scheduled for Wednesday before U.S. District Judge Brian Morris in Great Falls.

If the environmentalists prevail, the U.S. State Department would have to review an estimated 5 million pages of documents at a cost of more than \$6 million, according to a declaration filed by Jerry Drake, an agency division chief who oversees its information technology team.

That's on top of more than 4.5 million documents that were turned over in the case in December, according to the Justice Department.

President Barack Obama's administration rejected the pipeline in 2015 after it had become a flashpoint in the debate over climate change and fossil fuel use. It was revived in March 2017 under Trump, who insisted it would lead to greater energy independence.

The pipeline is sponsored by Alberta-based company TransCanada Corp., which is siding with the U.S. government in the document dispute.

An attorney for the Northern Plains Resource Council, one of the plaintiffs in the case, said the goal of the conservation group's sweeping document request was to uncover the basis of Trump's decision and see if it aligns with years of analysis on the project during the Obama years.

"You can't make one decision based upon the record, then change your mind based upon the same record," council attorney Timothy Bechtold said. "That is the definition of arbitrary and capricious."

The judge has sided with the plaintiffs once, rejecting a bid by the Trump administration in November to dismiss the lawsuits over Keystone. The administration unsuccessfully argued the courts have no authority in the matter because it concerns foreign affairs and national security.

TransCanada announced last month that it hopes to begin construction in 2019 after securing enough commitments from oil companies to ship approximately 500,000 barrels per day through the line.

If completed, the pipeline would carry oil from Canada through Montana, South Dakota and Nebraska, where it would connect to an existing pump station in Steele City, Nebraska. From there, it would continue through Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas until it reaches Gulf Coast refineries.

Follow Matthew Brown on Twitter at www.twitter.com/matthewbrownap .

Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials
By The Associated Press

Argus Leader, Sioux Falls, Feb. 15

School sentinels aren't the solution

"In the aftermath of horror, hope springs eternal. That's what we're led to believe.

"Every time America is shattered by a mass shooting, urgent calls for more restrictive gun laws become part of the national discussion, fueled by public opinion.

"Then we wait for responsible political leadership to take hold. And then we wait some more."

Those words led our Argus Leader editorial last October, following a horrific attack at a Las Vegas country music festival that killed 58 people and injured more than 500 others.

As predicted, we don't need to change the message much, even as the nation comes to grips with Wednesday's shooting rampage at a Florida high school.

An orphaned 19-year-old named Nikolas Cruz is believed to have used an AR-15 style semi-automatic rifle to take the lives of 17 people and wound 14 others, sparking renewed debate about gun control and security.

The National Rifle Association, a powerful lobbying force that spent heavily on key Republican races in 2016, has fought against legislative attempts to reduce the flow of guns. But Congress should take a hard look at closing loopholes through universal backgrounds checks for criminal history and mental health concerns.

Another possible "next step" is a restriction on high-capacity magazines, which make it easier for a shooter to fire more rounds without pausing to reload.

In South Dakota, though, these measures are not the topic of discussion. Instead, Republican state legislators called Thursday for more school districts to train and employ armed sentinels to roam school hallways in the name of greater security.

This is not the first time our state leaders have had this type of response.

In 2013, a few months after the fatal shootings of 20 elementary school children in Newton, Conn., South Dakota became one of the first states to pass a "school sentinel" law in the interest of averting tragedy.

Mirroring a request from the NRA to fight fire with fire, the measure allowed school boards to provide teachers or other staff members with guns to deter outside threats and defend school premises in the event of a "violent attack."

South Dakota is currently one of seven states with some version of a school sentinel law, with Gov. Dennis Daugaard signing the 2013 statute despite formal opposition from the state associations of teachers, school boards and administrators.

"Guns have no place in our schools, period," then-National Education Association president Dennis Van Roekel said the year the law passed, citing a national poll in which only 22 percent of NEA members favored the concept of armed teachers or staff.

Two school districts — Northwestern Area and Tri-Valley — have attended training to implement the sentinel program. Senate Majority Leader Blake Curd would like to see that number rise, saying schools with an interest in the program should "get off their butts and get it done."

Daugaard agreed that schools could consider the program but said he wasn't sure if it would reduce fatalities in a school shooting situation.

"There were law enforcement officers present at the (Florida) school at the time," Daugaard said. "So the presence of a sentinel may or may not have an impact on such an incident in South Dakota."

The sentinel law requires teachers, staff members or other volunteers to receive at least 80 hours of training in firearms proficiency, use of force, legal issues, first aid and weapons retention and storage.

Critics point to possible confusion among police officers who show up at the school in the event of a shooting. Amid the emotionally charged and chaotic scene that typically unfolds, how are they to differentiate a school sentinel from the perpetrator?

Harrisburg superintendent Jim Holbeck has more real-life knowledge of these scenarios than most. In September of 2015, a student entered the office of principal Kevin Lien and shot him in the arm before being pursued and tackled by assistant principal Ryan Rollinger and subdued.

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Holbeck, who helped coordinate the district's response on a day in which no students were harmed, sees confusion between "good guy" and "bad guy" scenarios as a recipe for disaster.

"We had 70 armed responders come to our school that day," he said in 2016. "There were a couple instances where people were in the halls and (police) ended up confronting them. I would hate to think that someone who is supposed to be carrying a gun gets confronted in a situation like that and something terrible happens. The chance for error is there."

There are questions about whether the minimum training level of 80 hours is enough to prepare a layman for the type of emergency situations that could arise - or even if no incident occurs. Could their gun fall into the wrong hands on a normal school day and put lives at risk?

If there is a shooting scenario, would that person be able to properly identify a target and fire accurately, keeping innocents out of the fray? What happens if a student decides to show off a pellet gun or makes an idle threat and a sentinel overreacts?

"Any time you add more guns, the possibility of an accident increases," said Holbeck, adding that insurance companies made it clear that they would not cover the Harrisburg district if it used sentinels because of liability concerns.

Beyond the procedural aspects of this discussion, of course, are philosophical ones. With a national debate raging over America's gun culture and whether it must be controlled, what kind of statement does it make to kids that we need an arms race to defend the sanctity of our schools?

Many South Dakota high schools have resource officers on duty, as did the high school in Florida, and greater security protocol at building entrances is sound policy that should be enforced. State legislators are also right to point out that lockdown procedures should be thoroughly reviewed.

Parents need to know that when they send their children to school each morning, the security and well-being of those kids is paramount. Keeping guns out of the hands of dangerous people is the best way to achieve that goal, not bringing more firepower into the fray.

Rapid City Journal, Feb. 18

County's mining proposal needs to be rewritten

On Valentine's Day, the Pennington County Commission voted on a shovel-ready ordinance that can only be described as a sweetheart deal for the mining industry and commissioners who'd rather not rule on projects in the Black Hills where passions run deep.

The proposed ordinance was put together by an eight-member committee that included three county government representatives, two industry representatives from the same company, and two with ties to South Dakota School of Mines & Technology, including the so-called citizens' representative.

A large crowd packed commission chambers on Wednesday to weigh in on a proposal that many felt had little regard for the public's right to be informed and heard on projects that could have substantial impacts on the Black Hills and those who live, work, play and enjoy one of the most beautiful areas in the nation.

They have good reasons to be concerned. The proposed ordinance insulates county commissioners from making decisions, severely limits those who can appeal a decision and makes permit renewals an administrative function with the power granted to the county's planning director, an advisor to the committee that drafted the proposal.

As it is currently written, the ordinance basically denies the public a role in the process while paving the way for mining and gravel companies to get their permits.

Instead of requiring Pennington County commissioners to decide on issuing mining permits — which are all controversial in today's environment — the proposal delegates the task to the Planning Commission, an unelected body whose members are appointed by county commissioners and are not well-known to the general public.

To further protect the elected officials and disenfranchise the public, only those who live within 500 feet of a proposed mining project can appeal the Planning Commission's decision to the County Commission.

How many people live within 500 feet of a mining project in the Black Hills? It is conceivable those neigh-

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bors could be the state of South Dakota, which would never appeal, the National Forest Service, which won't appeal as long as Donald Trump is president, and perhaps a private landowner or two. Also, how was it determined that only those who live within 500 feet of a project have legitimate concerns about potential detrimental effects of a project?

Mining projects can pollute the water supply and damage the environment in other ways that can hurt the livelihood of those in the tourism industry, which is the backbone of this area's economy and what sets this area apart from the rest of South Dakota. Why can only those who own property that is less two football fields away from a project appeal the decision of an unelected body?

And, finally, the renewal of permits would be reduced to an administrative task, meaning the public likely would never be informed of that process.

Where does this ordinance leave the public? Excluded — even though arguably everyone has a stake in the future of the Black Hills, the ultimate gold mine for this area.

It's also interesting but likely not coincidental that the proposal did not see the light of the day until the eve of a Feb. 27 deadline — set as the result of the expiration date of a moratorium on mining permits approved two years ago.

After hours of testimony Wednesday, the commission voted 2-2 on the ordinance. Commissioners Lloyd LaCroix and Deb Hadcock, also a member of the committee that drafted the proposal, voted to delegate their duties to others. Commissioners George Ferebee and Mark DiSanto opposed it. Commissioner Ron Buskerud, who once again attended the meeting via video conference from his second home in Arizona, was unable to vote due to technical difficulties with his internet service.

The commission now has precious few days to approve a new ordinance, which needs to be rewritten. Commissioners who can be held accountable by voters should make the decisions. More than a handful of parties should be able to appeal a decision. The permit-renewal process needs to be more rigorous and subject to public scrutiny.

The Black Hills are a treasured public resource. How it is developed shouldn't be decided by appointees no one knows or in an office in the Pennington County Administrative Building. It needs to be a public process. It's what we expect in a democracy.

Capital Journal, Pierre, Feb. 13

You get what you pay for

South Dakota is a state of modest means.

As obvious as that statement is, it bears repeating. We need to constantly remind ourselves that short of a tectonic shift in either the state or the U.S. economies, our humble home is going to remain near the bottom in state revenue collection rankings. We're an agrarian state, always have been and likely always will be. That's not a bad thing. In fact, it's a pretty good thing. We're a pretty level headed, pragmatic bunch. Though we might be a bit on the conservative side, we can still recognize when something is needed. At least we've been able to so far.

Our governors always announce with pride the fact that South Dakota has always been able to balance its budget while at the same time keeping tax rates among the lowest in the nation. If you think for one second that South Dakota taxes its citizens too much, feel to move anywhere else in the country.

Low taxes are a good thing. Indeed our tax structure is one of the state's best tools for attracting new companies and growing the state economy, which grows the tax base. Low taxes also increase the spending power South Dakotans have versus people in surrounding states even though our wages tend to be a bit lower.

That being said, low taxes present our state with a few challenges. We struggle to pay for basic services such as road maintenance, for example. Our generally conservative outlook on spending also tends to trap our state's leaders into failing to adequately pay for our state government's most valuable resource — the people who work for us.

To be clear, the folks who work for us are hardworking, thoughtful individuals who chose public service

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not to make a ton of money but to do what they love, whether its monitoring deer populations for Game, Fish and Parks or crunching numbers for the Department of Revenue. Still, if your job doesn't pay enough to feed or family or keep a roof over your head, it doesn't matter how much you love it. And every time there's a lean year, these folks' pay often is the first item on the chopping block.

For two years now, our employees have gone without even an inflation-based raise. Now, some will argue that no employee should get a raise every year just for doing their job. That argument has merit when applied to raises beyond the rate of inflation. But you see, when pay doesn't rise with inflation you're actually getting a pay cut because your take home pay purchasing power drops by a few percentage points. Making ends meet then becomes that much more difficult.

South Dakota has always paid its employees below the national averages for the positions they hold. Again, we're a state of modest means and we rely on quality of life, low taxes and a pretty stable retirement plan to attract people to work for us. But as the rate of pay in South Dakota falls further behind our neighbors, it's becoming harder to hire the best people for the jobs we need doing. A good, high-profile example of this is the state's struggle to hire and keep an administrator for the Human Services Center.

There are many more important positions in state government that have gone unfilled because quality applicants have been too hard to come by. This appears to be particularly true when it comes to the fields of accounting and auditing. Being short-handed affects the level of service we see from our government and could lead to bigger problems in the future.

We can only balance the state budget on the backs of state employees for so long before the quality of service degrades. If we continue to be unwilling to pay our employees what they're worth, we'll be deserving of the dysfunction we'll face.

As tax receipts rise we should keep that in mind.

New strikes kill 10 in rebel-held suburbs of Syrian capital

By PHILIP ISSA, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — New airstrikes and shelling of the besieged, rebel-held suburbs of the Syrian capital killed at least 10 people and wounded dozens more on Wednesday, a rescue organization and a monitoring group said, adding to a staggering casualty toll that has overwhelmed paramedics and doctors in the past few days.

Syrian government forces and Russian aircraft have shown no signs of letting up their indiscriminate aerial and artillery assault on eastern Ghouta since they stepped up strikes late Sunday as part of a seemingly new, determined push to recapture the territory which has been controlled by rebels since 2012.

At least 260 people have been killed since Sunday night, according to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights group which closely monitors the fighting through activists on the ground, including 10 in a wave of strikes on the town of Kafr Batna on Wednesday.

The Syrian Civil Defense search-and-rescue group, also known as the White Helmets, said government forces targeted the town with airstrikes, artillery fire, and barrel bombs — crude, explosives-filled oil drums dropped from helicopters at high altitudes. It reported that several other people were wounded.

The locally-run Ghouta Media Center reported strikes on Kafr Batna and other towns in the region outside Damascus.

A Syrian doctor working as an anesthesiologist at a hospital in the town of Zamalka, part of the eastern Ghouta region, said the number of casualties from the government's air blitz is overwhelming the hospitals there.

Waleed Awata said his small hospital, with just 17 beds, received 82 patients Tuesday night.

"We had to give them IVs and treat them on the floor," he told The Associated Press. He said the hospital received the bodies of four killed in Wednesday's shelling, including two women and two children.

The 44-year-old physician added that the hospital was struck by barrel bombs on Tuesday, as well as sporadic artillery fire. Like many hospitals in the area, patients have been moved into the basement, to shield them from airstrikes. No one was hurt but the hospital's generator, water tanks and several am-

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balances were damaged.

Awata said in the last two days, three of the main bakeries for eastern Ghouta were damaged and production was halted. The roads are impassable because of the severity of the bombardment and the rubble on the streets, he added.

The U.N.'s regional humanitarian coordinator for the Syria, Panos Moutziz, said he is "alarmed" by the very high number of casualties. "You cannot continue business as usual," he told the AP Wednesday.

"Ghouta is a 10-mile drive from the hospitals in Damascus and its heartbreaking to think of children, women, and elderly who are in need, unable to be evacuated, and in a situation of fear, hiding in basements and not being able to go out," he added by phone from Amman, Jordan.

The Russian military is supporting Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces and was instrumental to the all-out assault on the eastern half of Syria's largest city, Aleppo, in late 2016 to eject rebels from their enclave there.

Tens of thousands of civilians ended up fleeing their homes. Many have been unable to return. Hundreds more were killed in indiscriminate shelling and bombardment. A subsequent U.N. investigation charged that the campaign amounted to forced displacement of a population and rose to the level of a war crime.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said earlier this week eastern Aleppo could serve as a model for eastern Ghouta. He also said the Syrian government's assault on eastern Ghouta was necessary to uproot al-Qaida-linked militants from the area.

On Wednesday, Russian President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov rejected allegations that the Russian military is responsible for civilians casualties in eastern Ghouta, calling such claims "unfounded."

He was responding to U.S. and others allegations that Russia shares responsibility for the casualties in eastern Ghouta along with Syria.

Pro-government forces have been amassing since the weekend on the perimeter of the rebel-held region, a collection of towns and farmland that once provided grain and fruit to Damascus, before nearly seven years of warfare turned it into a landscape of havoc and despair.

At least 400,000 people have been killed in Syria's civil war, sparked by a violent crackdown on popular demonstrations against Assad in 2011.

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

Your daily look at late-breaking news, upcoming events and the stories that will be talked about today:

1. EVANGELIST BILLY GRAHAM DIES AT 99

Graham, the most widely heard Christian evangelist in history, died at his home in North Carolina.

2. SURVIVORS URGE STRICTER GUN LAWS

Students who survived the Florida school shooting prepare to flood the state capital, pushing to ban the assault-style rifle used to kill 17 people.

3. FRESH BLOODSHED IN DAMASCUS

New airstrikes and shelling on the besieged, rebel-held suburbs of the Syrian capital kill at least 10 people, a rescue organization and a monitoring group say.

4. 'IF YOU DON'T LEAVE, YOU ARE GOING TO JAIL'

Twenty-nine-year-old Yohannes Tesfagabr, one of tens of thousands of African migrants Israel has targeted for deportation, recounts his journey to the AP.

5. WHOSE LEGAL EXPOSURE IS WIDENING

Israeli media report that one of Benjamin Netanyahu's closest confidants has turned state witness and will incriminate the prime minister in corruption allegations.

6. LINDSEY VONN DENIED PODIUM'S TOP SPOT

The 33-year-old American skier earns bronze in the last Olympic downhill of her career.

7. LAWMAKER BESET BY GRUMBLING, JEERS

A Denver-area congressman whose district was the site of the Aurora movie theater shooting in 2012 is

booed at a town hall as people call for action after the Florida school shooting.

8. WHAT'S BITTER REMINDER OF KOREAN DIVIDE

A former seaside villa for North Korea's ruling Kim family is among North Korea-linked sites in South Korea's Olympic province that are drawing curious visitors.

9. IN LEBANON, FREE SPEECH UNDER SIEGE

A string of court cases and judicial investigations against Lebanese media figures is testing the country's reputation as a forum for ideas in a region blanketed by censorship and threats to the press.

10. WHO'S GOT ACADEMIC BRAGGING RIGHTS

Students in Massachusetts scored the best in the nation on last year's Advanced Placement exams.

Trump says more must be done to protect children

By CATHERINE LUCEY and MATTHEW DALY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As a grieving Florida community demanded action on guns, President Donald Trump on Tuesday directed the Justice Department to move to ban devices like the rapid-fire bump stocks used in last year's Las Vegas massacre. It was a small sign of movement on the gun violence issue that has long tied Washington in knots.

"We must do more to protect our children," Trump said, adding that his administration was working hard to respond to the shooting in Parkland that left 17 dead.

After past mass killings yielded little action on tighter gun controls, the White House is trying to demonstrate that it is taking the issue seriously. The president, a strong and vocal supporter of gun rights, has not endorsed more robust changes sought by gun control activists. But the White House cast the president in recent days as having been swayed by the school shooting in Florida and willing to listen to proposals.

In a tweet Tuesday night, Trump indicated he wants to strengthen the background check system, but offered no specifics.

Trump said: "Whether we are Republican or Democrat, we must now focus on strengthening Background Checks!"

Asked at a press briefing Tuesday if Trump was open to reinstating a ban on assault-type weapons, spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said White House officials "haven't closed the door on any front." She also said that the idea of raising the age limit to buy an AR-15 was "on the table for us to discuss."

Sen. Chris Murphy, a Connecticut Democrat and leading advocate for tighter gun controls, said Trump's directive suggested the president was aware of fresh energy on the issue and called it a sign that "for the first time" politicians are "scared of the political consequences of inaction on guns."

A bipartisan legislative effort to ban bump stocks last year fizzled out. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives announced in December that it was reviewing whether weapons that use bump stocks should be considered illegal machine guns under federal law.

Under the Obama administration, the ATF had concluded that bump stocks did not violate federal law. But the acting director of the ATF told lawmakers in December that the ATF and Justice Department would not have initiated the review if a ban "wasn't a possibility at the end."

The Justice Department had not made any announcement regarding its review when Trump on Tuesday signed a memorandum directing the agency to complete the review as soon as possible and propose a rule "banning all devices that turn legal weapons into machine guns."

Reacting to Trump's memo, the department said in a statement that it "understands this is a priority for the president and has acted quickly to move through the rulemaking process. We look forward to the results of that process as soon as it is duly completed."

A day earlier, Trump sent another signal he had been swayed by the Parkland shooting and the dramatic calls for action in its aftermath. A White House statement said Trump was looking at a bill that would strengthen federal gun background checks. On Wednesday, he will host parents, teachers and students at the White House for a "listening session" that will include people impacted by mass shootings in Parkland, Columbine, Colorado and Newtown, Connecticut.

The president was moved by a visit Friday with Florida victims in the hospital and is trying to work on solutions, said a person familiar with his thinking who sought anonymity to discuss internal conversations.

Among the steps sought by gun control advocates: closing loopholes that permit loose private sales on the internet and at gun shows, banning assault-type weapons and passing laws to enable family members, guardians or police to ask judges to strip gun rights temporarily from people who show warning signs of violence.

The Parkland shooting also has prompted the Republican-controlled Florida Legislature to take a fresh look at gun control legislation, although so far GOP leaders are refusing to endorse calls to ban assault rifles. Still, the discussion of some types of gun control legislation is a dramatic turnaround for Florida, which has earned the nickname the "Gunshine State" for its gun policies.

The federal background check bill was developed in response to a mass shooting last November in which a gunman slaughtered more than two dozen people at a Texas church. It 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.

The GOP-controlled House paired the background checks bill with a measure 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.

Murphy said any attempt to combine background checks with concealed-carry provisions would significantly jeopardize the chances of passing bipartisan reform of the background checks system.

Associated Press writer Gary Fineout contributed from Tallahassee, Florida.

Only on AP: Migrant recounts forced deportation from Israel

By **RODNEY MUHUMUZA, Associated Press**

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP) — Inside the immigration office in Tel Aviv, Yohannes Tesfagabr considered his options. He could not dare return to his native Eritrea, a country he risked his life to flee in 2010. He also hoped to avoid the fate of compatriots who languished in a notorious desert jail for illegally staying in Israel.

So in an emotional confrontation with immigration officials one day last November, the 29-year-old sous chef accepted what Israeli authorities were offering: \$3,500 in cash and a one-way ticket to Uganda or Rwanda.

Two weeks later he was on a flight to Uganda, together with five other Eritrean migrants he did not know. "They told me, 'If you don't leave you are going to jail,'" Tesfagabr recalled. "It's forced. They tell you to say you are going voluntarily, but it is not voluntary. They force you to deport yourself."

His case highlights the predicament of tens of thousands of Africans in Israel who face jail if they do not accept an offer, allegedly without further assurances of safety, to relocate to an unnamed African country. Both Uganda and Rwanda, widely presumed to be the likely destinations, have denied the existence of any agreement with Israel's government even though scores of migrants are believed to have already settled in the East African countries.

Tesfagabr said his group of Eritreans was not taken through the official immigration desk when they arrived in Uganda. Instead, they were ushered in via the cargo area, herded by a Ugandan official who stayed quiet most of the time. They were bundled into two taxis and driven to a hotel in the capital, Kampala. Their passports were confiscated by a man who spoke Tigrinya, a language widely spoken in Eritrea, and who Tesfagabr believes had been hired as a translator. Hours later, the undocumented Eritreans were dismissed from the hotel.

The five other men who traveled with Tesfagabr on a Nov. 16 EgyptAir flight to Uganda declined to talk to The Associated Press because of safety concerns. But Tesfagabr, although similarly worried, said he

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wanted to speak out because he felt he had been harshly treated during Israel's efforts to remove him from a country he had grown to love.

"My Hebrew is four times better than my English," he said one recent evening at a Kampala restaurant patronized by Eritreans.

Tesfagabr, a village boy from Eritrea's highland area of Debarwa who felt hopeless after being forcefully conscripted into the army, arrived in Israel in 2012, the victim of alleged traffickers in Sudan who took him to Egypt and helped him cross a border point in the Sinai after his family was made to pay a \$3,900 ransom. He remembered his days in captivity as some of the worst of his life. To force his parents to pay for his freedom, his captors beat him and staged mock executions. At least two of his compatriots were killed in a shootout with Egyptian soldiers in the Sinai, he said.

But after crossing into Israel, Tesfagabr benefited from random acts of kindness, including from an Israeli man who bought him food and new clothes. In Rehovot, the city south of Tel Aviv where he settled, he found a satisfying job as a sous chef in a bistro. He had an apartment and a bank account, but he had to get his visa renewed every two months and sometimes he was required to report back after five days.

When two compatriots with whom he shared an apartment were jailed for overstaying their visas, Tesfagabr knew his days were numbered and seriously began thinking about leaving Israel.

"They take you like a dog, like a donkey," he said, talking about migrants taken to the Holot detention center in the Negev desert. "They do what they want. They don't have any law for us ... Because I know if I go over there, I can't be a human being after."

This month Israeli authorities began distributing deportation notices to some 40,000 African migrants, who have until April 1 to comply. Nearly all are from Eritrea and Sudan, countries with questionable human rights records. Thousands had entered the country until 2014, when Israel completed a massive border fence.

The deportation plan has sparked outrage in Israel, where groups of pilots, doctors, writers, rabbis and Holocaust survivors have appealed to have it halted. They say the deportations are unethical and would damage Israel's image as a refuge for Jewish migrants.

Israel contends that most of the migrants are job seekers and cites complaints that they have transformed working-class neighborhoods of southern Tel Aviv into unrecognizable slums. Israeli authorities say women, children and families are exempt from the deportation order.

This month thousands of African asylum seekers protested outside the Rwandan Embassy in Israel, calling the deportations racist and urging Rwanda's government not to cooperate. They claim they have no rights in Uganda and Rwanda and quickly are forced to flee toward Europe through war-torn countries like Libya.

Okello Oryem, Uganda's deputy minister of international affairs, described reports of a deal to take in migrants from Israel as "fake news," and in a statement Rwanda's government insisted it "has never signed any secret deal with Israel regarding the relocation of African migrants."

Mossi Raz, an Israeli lawmaker who recently traveled to Rwanda and Uganda in a delegation of opposition politicians to investigate the allegations of an official deal with those countries, said his group concluded that the arrangement "does not ensure the safety and well-being of the refugees."

Raz said the delegation met with two migrants who are believed to be among the few remaining in Rwanda. He said others who were sent from Israel to Rwanda, believed to be in the hundreds or even thousands, were taken to a hotel in the capital, Kigali, for two days and then transferred to Uganda, forced to pay for their travel. He was unsure whether the transfer to Uganda was carried out via official channels.

The two migrants he met, who had been in Rwanda for two and three years respectively, were unable to work and scraped by on the remainder of the money they had received from Israel, he said.

"The refugees will arrive in these countries and will not receive refugee status, their documents will be taken from them and they will be left with nothing," Raz said. "Rwanda is only participating in this agreement because of the money it will receive from Israel. Senior government officials in Rwanda claimed that such an agreement does not exist and so there is nothing to discuss. We believe such an agreement does exist."

This month the speaker of Uganda's national assembly urged the government to explain the alleged

deportations. It remains unclear when that will happen. Musa Ecweru, Uganda's top refugee official, did not respond to a request for comment. The U.N. migration agency's office in Uganda told the AP it had not been contacted by the government and knew only "bits and pieces" about the alleged deportations from media reports.

Tesfagabr, the Eritrean migrant, is now jobless, without a passport and dependent on his savings to pay the rent. The soft-spoken man said he feels like a prisoner and dreams of relocating to Europe. To relax, he sometimes plays soccer with his friends, fellow Eritreans with a similarly uncertain future.

"I want to start a new life," he said, fiddling with his phone.

Associated Press writers Ignatius Ssuuna in Kigali, Rwanda and Tia Goldenberg in Jerusalem contributed.

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Colorado congressman booed as people demand action on guns

By **NICHOLAS RICCARDI, Associated Press**

GREENWOOD VILLAGE, Colo. (AP) — Grumbling and jeers met the request for a moment of silence for the 17 people killed last week in the Florida school shooting.

"Let's do something for them!" one man yelled at the beginning of Republican Rep. Mike Coffman's town hall Tuesday night. Another participant cried out, "We're done with thoughts and prayers!"

Coffman's swing district in the Denver suburbs is all too familiar with mass shootings. A few miles to the northeast of the high school that hosted Tuesday's town hall is the location of the Aurora theater massacre, where 13 people were shot to death in 2012. A few miles to the southwest of the town hall site, just across the district line, is Columbine High School, the site of the 1999 school shooting that killed 12.

In a district that voted for Democrats Barack Obama in 2012 and Hillary Clinton in 2016, Coffman has been a perennial political target for Democrats. He is in his fifth term, but Democrats have not made gun control a centerpiece of their campaigns for votes though the electorate is evenly split between Democrats, Republicans and those unaffiliated.

That could change this year. The raw emotions at Coffman's town hall shows how guns have become a volatile issue in an already hyper-charged midterm election, stoking passions that will be difficult for Democrats to contain, and difficult for embattled Republicans like Coffman to defend against.

Patti Seno, 53, broke into tears as she recounted how her husband, a firefighter, was on the scene of the Columbine shooting and an attack at a nearby school in 2013 that killed one student. Her son had planned to see a midnight showing of the new Batman movie the night that the gunman attacked the audience in Aurora. Yet, she told Coffman, she hadn't spoken out until watching students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High in Parkland, Florida, campaign for new gun laws.

"I am ashamed, as it took children to shake me from my comfort zone to come forward to say enough is enough," said Seno, a Democrat. "An avalanche is coming to Washington, sir, and it is going to be led by our children."

Coffman has received \$34,000 in contributions from the National Rifle Association, more than any other Colorado member of Congress. Gun control activists, sometimes accompanied by family members of those killed in Aurora, have pushed him for years to back more restrictions. Yet even after the Aurora shooting in 2012, Democrats did not mention gun control in their campaign against Coffman. It barely came up in 2014, either, after two Democratic state legislators were recalled for passing new state gun restrictions.

"The West is different," said Josh Penry, a veteran GOP strategist and Coffman adviser. "There's this basic understanding that Congress passing a lot of laws isn't going to stop evil people from committing evil acts."

Still, two days after the Florida shooting, a potential Democratic challenger to Coffman, Jason Crow — like Coffman, a combat veteran — demanded that Coffman return his NRA donations. That cheered Laura Chapin, a Democratic strategist who's been active in gun issues.

"The massacres are getting bigger and worse," Chapin said. "It would be smart of Democrats to go after Mike Coffman's hypocrisy."

Sharp questions about guns dominated the hourlong town hall. Coffman said he was willing to discuss "reasonable restrictions within the parameters of the Second Amendment," a statement that drew fierce boos from the crowd. He repeatedly declined to back an assault-weapons ban but said he'd consider "red flag" laws that would allow the temporary confiscation of firearms from those judged to be a threat to themselves or others.

He spent much of his time defending some of his previous votes, including for a bill last year to require states to accept concealed-carry permits from other, less-regulated states and another for a bill rolling back an Obama administration rule confiscating guns from people judged not competent enough to manage their Social Security benefits. Coffman contended it was a civil rights issue and noted the American Civil Liberties Union and disability rights groups supported the rollback, a statement that also drew hearty boos.

"I cannot understand how somebody who represented the district that has the Aurora theater in it can say this is a bad idea," Alex Tillman, 48, who works in risk management, told Coffman.

Coffman said was going to meet with school safety and law enforcement officials and suggested the government beef up school security — another statement that infuriated the audience. Asked what he would do if he found his personal principles conflicting with the desires of his constituents, Coffman drew more boos when he said he thought they matched pretty well.

"The angriest voices show up, I get that," Coffman said. "I respect the views of the people here and it's helpful to me, but often times it's not the views of the totality of the district."

Florida shooting survivors in capital, demand action on guns

By **BRENDAN FARRINGTON, JOSH REPLOGLE and TAMARA LUSH, Associated Press**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — Students who survived the Florida school shooting prepared to flood the Capitol Wednesday pushing to ban the assault-style rifle used to kill 17 people, vowing to make changes in the November election if they can't persuade lawmakers to change laws before their legislative session ends.

About 100 Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School students arrived at a Tallahassee high school to extended applause late Tuesday after a 400-mile (640-kilometer) trip on three buses. They told the 500 students and parents waiting for them that they are fighting to protect all students.

"We're what's making the change. We're going to talk to these politicians tomorrow. We're going to talk to them the day after that. We're going to keep talking, we're going to keep pushing until something is done because people are dying and this can't happen anymore," said Alfonso Calderon, a 16-year-old junior. "You guys are what we're trying to protect."

Despite their enthusiasm and determination, the students and their supporters aren't likely to get what they really want: a ban on AR-15s and similar semi-automatic rifles. Republican lawmakers are talking more seriously about some restrictions, but not a total ban.

Instead, they're discussing treating assault-style rifles like the one suspected gunman Nikolas Cruz is accused of using in the Valentine's Day attack more like handguns than long guns. That could mean raising the minimum age to purchase the weapon to 21, creating a waiting period and making it more difficult for people who exhibit signs of mental illness from buying the weapon even without a diagnosis.

Democrats attempted to get a bill to ban assault rifles and large-capacity magazines heard on the House floor on Tuesday. Republicans, who dominate the chamber, easily dismissed it. Students who were at the Capitol ahead of their classmates who arrived late Tuesday found Republicans steered the conversation away from gun restrictions.

Rachel Catania, 15, a sophomore at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland said she got a lot of non-answers from the politicians she spoke with Tuesday.

"I know it's going to be hard, but I know we can do it," she said. "We're not going to be the school that got shot, we're going to be the school that got shot and made something happen. A change is going to happen."

The students on the seven-hour bus ride checked their phones, watching videos and reading comments on social media about the shooting, some of which accused them of being liberal pawns.

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As the grieving Florida students demanded action on guns, President Donald Trump on Tuesday directed the Justice Department to move to ban devices like the rapid-fire bump stocks used in last year's Las Vegas massacre. It was a small sign of movement on the gun violence issue that has long tied Washington in knots.

"We must do more to protect our children," said Trump, a strong and vocal supporter of gun rights. He added that his administration was working hard to respond to the Florida rampage.

The students planned to hold a rally Wednesday to put more pressure on the Legislature.

"I really think they are going to hear us out," said Chris Grady, a high school senior aboard the bus.

The Feb. 14 attack initially appeared to overcome the resistance of some in the state's political leadership, which has rebuffed gun restrictions since Republicans took control of both the governor's office and the Legislature in 1999. However, many members of the party still have strong resistance to any gun-control measures.

The Parkland students also plan to meet Wednesday with top legislative leaders, including House Speaker Richard Corcoran and Senate President Joe Negron.

Florida has a reputation for expanding gun rights. Negron sponsored a 2011 bill that Republican Gov. Rick Scott signed into law that banned cities and counties from regulating gun and ammunition sales.

Scott organized three committees to look at school safety, mental health and gun safety issues that met Tuesday and vowed to make changes to better protect students. While Scott told reporters several times that "everything is on the table," he did not answer whether his proposal would include any bans on any type of weapons.

Instead, Scott said he is interested in making it harder for people who are temporarily committed to obtain a gun. He also pledged to increase spending on school safety programs and on mental health treatment.

Authorities said Cruz, 19, had a string of run-ins with school authorities that ended with his expulsion. Police were repeatedly called to his house throughout his childhood. His lawyers said there were many warning signs that he was mentally unstable and potentially violent. Yet he legally purchased a semi-automatic rifle.

Stoneman Douglas senior Diego Pfeiffer was realistic about what change would happen before the Legislature goes home March 9, but said anything is a good first step.

"The best case scenario is we move a step forward and that's all we're asking here. We're asking to help save student lives," he said. "Whether it's funding or mental health or gun safety or any of that sort of stuff — I am pro any of that."

But he also said if change doesn't come in the Legislature, he noted he's now 18 and he has the power of his vote.

"You're our senators and you're our representatives for now. If you don't help us make a change soon, you will be left in the dust," he said. "I'm happily going to vote for anybody who's going to be on our side, the side of children's lives. How can you say no to that?"

Lush reported from St. Petersburg, Florida. Associated Press writers Gary Fineout in Tallahassee and Sadie Gurman in Washington contributed to this report.

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

State Department says NKorea passed up meeting with Pence

By JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Vice President Mike Pence was all set to hold a history-making meeting with North Korean officials during the Winter Olympics in South Korea, but Kim Jong Un's government canceled at the last minute, the Trump administration said Tuesday.

A potential meeting between Pence and the North Koreans had been the most highly anticipated moment of the vice president's visit to Pyeongchang, South Korea, where he led the U.S delegation to the opening ceremonies. Ahead of Pence's visit, Trump officials had insisted they'd requested no meeting with North

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Korea, but notably left open the possibility one could occur.

There was no indication that a meeting had indeed been planned — and then canceled on short notice — until Tuesday, more than a week after Pence returned to the United States. The State Department said that Pence had been “ready to take this opportunity” but would have used it to insist Pyongyang abandon its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs.

“At the last minute, DPRK officials decided not to go forward with the meeting,” said State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert, using an acronym for the North’s formal name, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. “We regret their failure to seize this opportunity.”

That seemed to contradict North Korea’s own claim that it had no interest in meeting with Pence while he was in Pyeongchang.

“We have no intention to meet with the U.S. side during the stay in South Korea,” a Foreign Ministry official was quoted as saying by the North’s official news agency on Feb. 8, the day Pence arrived in South Korea. “We are not going to use such a sports festival as the Winter Olympics as a political lever. There is no need to do so.”

A Trump administration official said the U.S. had expected the meeting to occur Feb. 10, the last day of Pence’s three-day visit to the Olympic Games. The administration did not say exactly how much notice it received from North Korea that the meeting had been called off, nor where the meeting would have taken place or under what conditions.

Nor was it immediately clear whether North Korea scheduled the meeting before the vice president arrived in South Korea or after he had already arrived. The day before landing in Pyeongchang, Pence told reporters that “we haven’t requested a meeting with North Korea.”

“But if I have any contact with them — in any context — over the next two days, my message will be the same as it was here today: North Korea needs to once and for all abandon its nuclear and ballistic missile ambitions,” Pence said.

A potential high-level interaction between the U.S. and North Korea, which would have broken years of estrangement between the two countries, loomed prominently over the Winter Games, where North Korea made a last-minute move to send its athletes to compete on a combined team with South Korea, the host of the games.

Since taking office, the Trump administration has been working to increase economic pressure on the North to abandon its nuclear programs while also threatening military action, insisting at the same time that a diplomatic solution would be preferable for all sides. Yet for months the Trump administration had offered inconsistent messages about what conditions would be needed for a tete-a-tete — such as whether North Korea would have to agree that its nuclear program was on the table before the United States would be willing to sit down.

Pence’s office, acknowledging the scrapped meeting on Tuesday, said North Korea had “dangled a meeting” in hopes that doing so would entice the vice president to ease up on the North. Pence’s office suggested that North Korea later bailed because it became clear he would hold firm on the U.S. stance if a meeting did occur.

Pence’s chief of staff, Nick Ayers, said that the planned meeting — first reported by The Washington Post — would have included an “uncompromising message” delivered by Pence about the “maximum pressure campaign” the Trump administration is waging to try to deter North Korea from proceeding with its nuclear program.

“Perhaps that’s why they walked away from a meeting, or perhaps they were never sincere about sitting down,” Ayers said.

Pyeongyang sent its nominal head of state, Kim Yong Nam, the highest-level visitor to the South from the North in recent memory. It also sent Kim Jong Un’s sister, Kim Yo Jong. Ostensibly, Pence would have met with one or both of those significant North Korean figures.

Pence’s guest for the Olympic Opening Ceremonies was Fred Warmbier, the father of Otto Warmbier, the U.S. student who died in 2017 shortly after he was released from North Korean detention. Pence also

announced in the run-up to his visit that the Trump administration was preparing to unveil a particularly tough round of sanctions punishing the North for its nuclear weapons program.

Pence's trip came after President Donald Trump days earlier hosted a group of North Korean defectors in the Oval Office, including Ji Seong-ho, whom the president had referenced in his State of the Union address. The White House cast that meeting as part of the Trump administration's "maximum pressure" campaign to counter the North Korean nuclear program. The plan centers around rallying the international community to further isolate North Korea both diplomatically and economically.

Associated Press writer Zeke Miller and AP Pyongyang bureau chief Eric Talmadge, on assignment in Pyongyang, contributed to this report.

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

Vonn 3rd in last Olympic DH; her pal Goggia of Italy wins

By HOWARD FENDRICH, AP Sports Writer

JEONGSEON, South Korea (AP) — Lindsey Vonn knew that the bronze medal she earned Wednesday came in her final Olympic downhill, the signature event of her singular career. She knew that, but she didn't have an easy time processing it.

That's why the words "probably" and "most likely" kept slipping into her sentences. Why she marked the occasion by posing with dozens of folks for a group photo near the finish line. Why she engaged in a series of warm, lengthy hugs — with her sisters; with U.S. coaches; with the winner, her good friend Sofia Goggia of Italy; with the runner-up, Ragnhild Mowinckel of Norway. With, seemingly, anyone she could grab ahold of.

"I wish I could keep going. I wish this wasn't my last Olympics, but it is," Vonn said, looking down at the snow underfoot and shaking her head, "so I'm trying to accept that and deal with the emotions of that and enjoy the ride."

Goggia finished in 1 minute, 39.22 seconds, just 0.09 seconds faster than Mowinckel. Vonn was 0.47 seconds off Goggia's pace.

"I came here ... with one goal: to beat Lindsey," Goggia said.

Yes, for years now, Vonn has been the standard by which all other female ski racers are judged — and judge themselves. And as much as ski racing has meant to Vonn, and as much as Vonn has meant to her sport, she knows that this is, indeed, goodbye.

She is 33, the oldest woman to ever win an Alpine medal at a Winter Games. Vonn's total of three includes downhill gold and super-G bronze at Vancouver in 2010.

The American wasn't at Sochi in 2014, instead "on the couch, watching," she said, after two operations to repair torn ligaments in her right knee. She's endured a lengthy list of injuries .

"It's taken its toll. And that's why I can't keep ski racing, you know?" she said with a sigh. "I think my injuries made me stronger. I do. Because I wouldn't be the same person that I am today. When you're young, you ski and you win and you don't appreciate things. I've been in the fence so many times. I know so many doctors on a first-name basis that it's ridiculous."

All of the rehabbing, all of the recoveries — all worth it.

"Every single meal she's eaten for the last two years is to build up to this moment. Every single gym workout. You don't realize the amount of every single thing she's done every day for the last eight years has been for this day and that 2 minutes," said Vonn's sister, Karin Kildow. "The emotion of it is kind of overwhelming."

Afterward, competitors spoke glowingly about Vonn's influence and legacy.

Fifth-place finisher Alice McKennis of the U.S. praised Vonn's "day-to-day perseverance."

Goggia, who got advice from Vonn over coffee in Colorado a few months ago, said: "She is the greatest. And she had a wonderful career — and she is still 'having,' because it's not over."

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It is not. Vonn will compete again Thursday, taking on U.S. teammate Mikaela Shiffrin in the Alpine combined. And then comes the return to the World Cup circuit and Vonn's pursuit of Ingemar Stenmark's record of 86 race wins.

"She has 140 podiums. Me? I have 20. She has 81 victories. I have four. Five, with this," Goggia said with a laugh. "But she's unbelievable."

Under a bright sun and on a course that was not very steep, Goggia was better than anyone at a hill where she beat Vonn in two World Cup races last March. This time, Goggia was not great at the outset, nearly fell backward while landing a jump midway through, then was terrific on the final third of the course. When her run ended, she shrugged.

"I knew I had a competitive time, but I didn't know if it would be enough for gold," Goggia said. "You've seen me more excited after a third-place World Cup finish."

Vonn went two racers later, the seventh starter overall, and kept losing ground throughout.

"I just saw the middle part of the run, where I was standing. It was just a little tentative, a little uncharacteristic, not quite charging," coach Chris Knight said.

Knight thought that knowing this would be the close of Vonn's Olympic downhill career informed her performance.

"Realistically speaking, it has to play on your mind," he said. "You've got one chance."

When Vonn crossed the line, she put her head back, spread her arms wide, then jutted an index finger toward her pal. Goggia exhaled.

"We saw each other and she pointed at me, like, You again!" Goggia said.

Vonn looked skyward and blew kisses in the air, a tribute to her grandfather, who passed away last year.

"I wanted desperately to win for him today," she said. "I wish he was here. I wish he could have watched me. But I think he still is."

If a screenwriter might have opted to let Vonn leave the scene with a medal of a different hue, she sounded at peace with the result.

The time spent in hospitals, the wait to get back on this stage, helped make the meaning clear.

"Today," she said, "bronze, to me, feels like gold."

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

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

Gold drought about to end: Russians 1-2 after short program

By **BARRY WILNER, AP Sports Writer**

GANGNEUNG, South Korea (AP) — Friends, rivals, and soon, medalists.

The only question is: Which Russian teen figure skating star will end the nation's gold medal drought?

Alina Zagitova or Evgenia Medvedeva will almost certainly take gold in one of the Winter Games marquee events after they went 1-2 in the women's short program Wednesday with the highest scores ever. The 15-year-old Zagitova and the 18-year-old Medvedeva train with the same coach, hang out together and set world records just minutes apart.

With a dominating lead over the field, their friendly competition is the main drama left when the women compete in the free skate Friday. With all of Russia waiting for the first gold medal of the Pyeongchang Olympics, you'd think their relationship could become frayed, but only on the ice.

"We can talk about anything to each other," the 18-year-old Medvedeva said, "and when we take the ice it's sport and we must fight. Every competition I feel like (is) a little war."

Added Zagitova, 15: "We are friends first and rivals second, because you have to have competitiveness in sport."

Medvedeva had not lost a competition in two years until she was beaten by Zagitova at the European Championships in Moscow. That set the stage for a showdown with a glaring spotlight — as the Russian

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fans are hoping for a high-profile success at this Olympics where the nation is officially banned because of a doping scandal.

The youngsters responded with world records. Yet neither thought they had done their best.

"I'm satisfied with my performance today. It was not my best, but it was OK," said Medvedeva, who held the record for a few minutes with a score of 81.61. "All the battle is still ahead."

A group of Russian fans swayed together in the stands and chanted her name when that number was posted.

Three skaters later came her training comrade, who put down a more difficult program, including a triple lutz-triple loop combination that outdid Medvedeva's flip-toe loop combo.

So, another world record, 82.92.

And again the Russian fans rocked back and forth, this time chanting Zagitova's name.

"Well done to her," Medvedeva said. "She did everything she could."

Not exactly, Zagitova said.

"A few imperfections," she explained.

Oh really?

"I'm happy I was able to cope with my nerves and skate well, set a world record," she added, "but I've still got something to work towards and I can't afford to relax."

Medvedeva had set the previous record for a short program in the team event last week, when her team won silver. Zagitova handled the free skate.

Russia had never won Olympic gold for women until Adelina Sotnikova took home the medal in Sochi. The nation could have two straight after the free skate.

Canada's Kaetlyn Osmond and Gabrielle Daleman, second and third respectively at last year's worlds, had varying success.

Osmond, in her best performance of the season, nailed everything with speed and precision to wind up third with 78.87 points. Daleman looked confused and made a gesture with her hands as if to say "What happened?" after going down on the second half of a combination jump. She was seventh Wednesday.

"I left nothing out on the table and I'm really glad I could do that," said Osmond, the 2017 world silver medalist.

Italy's Carolina Kostner, the bronze medalist at Sochi and, at 31 the veteran in this field, struggled and wound up just ahead of Daleman.

It was not a strong showing for the Americans, each of whom had a major mistake.

Nine days after becoming the first U.S. woman and third overall to land a triple axel in the Olympics, Mirai Nagasu came down on two feet on the jump, then fell to the ice. While the rest of her program was clean, Nagasu's chances for an individual medal to go with her team bronze were damaged. Nagasu, 24 and the fourth-place finisher at the Vancouver Games, earned 66.93 points, a season's best, but was ninth.

"Sometimes it isn't the right day, and today was one of those days," Nagasu said. "This isn't a sport where mistakes are forgiven. You only get one shot."

U.S. champion Bradie Tennell went first among the 30 skaters, hardly an advantageous position. She led for 2 hours, 40 minutes until the upper echelon began skating and Japan's Kaori Sakamoto passed Tennell. A fall on the back end of a combination jump — Tennell had been virtually perfect with her jumps in her breakthrough season — was costly.

"It was definitely unexpected. I don't remember the last time I made a mistake in my short program, especially on the jumps," Tennell said. "But things happen. We're all human. We all make mistakes. You just have to get up and keep going. I'm definitely a fighter. I do not give up."

Tennell ended up 11th, one spot behind Karen Chen, the 2017 American champ. Chen put a hand down on her triple lutz and couldn't finish a combination jump.

"I've been nailing that every day in practice and I expected myself to, and to not be able to do that was a huge disappointment," she said. "For sure, I was a little flustered after that. But I sold my program the best I could, got the most points I could and I'm proud of that."

The United States' worst top placement in a women's Olympic event since the games resumed in 1948 after World War II is sixth. Getting that high will be a huge challenge.

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

Trump urges ban on gun devices like bump stocks

By CATHERINE LUCEY and MATTHEW DALY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As a grieving Florida community demanded action on guns, President Donald Trump on Tuesday directed the Justice Department to move to ban devices like the rapid-fire bump stocks used in last year's Las Vegas massacre. It was a small sign of movement on the gun violence issue that has long tied Washington in knots.

"We must do more to protect our children," Trump said, adding that his administration was working hard to respond to the shooting in Parkland that left 17 dead.

After past mass killings yielded little action on tighter gun controls, the White House is trying to demonstrate that it is taking the issue seriously. The president, a strong and vocal supporter of gun rights, has not endorsed more robust changes sought by gun control activists. But the White House cast the president in recent days as having been swayed by the school shooting in Florida and willing to listen to proposals.

In a tweet Tuesday night, Trump indicated he wants to strengthen the background check system, but offered no specifics.

Trump said: "Whether we are Republican or Democrat, we must now focus on strengthening Background Checks!"

Asked at a press briefing Tuesday if Trump was open to reinstating a ban on assault-type weapons, spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said White House officials "haven't closed the door on any front." She also said that the idea of raising the age limit to buy an AR-15 was "on the table for us to discuss."

Sen. Chris Murphy, a Connecticut Democrat and leading advocate for tighter gun controls, said Trump's directive suggested the president was aware of fresh energy on the issue and called it a sign that "for the first time" politicians are "scared of the political consequences of inaction on guns."

A bipartisan legislative effort to ban bump stocks last year fizzled out. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives announced in December that it was reviewing whether weapons using bump stocks should be considered illegal machine guns under federal law.

Under the Obama administration, the ATF had concluded that bump stocks did not violate federal law. But the acting director of the ATF told lawmakers in December that the ATF and Justice Department would not have initiated the review if a ban "wasn't a possibility at the end."

The Justice Department had not made any announcement regarding its review when Trump on Tuesday signed a memorandum directing the agency to complete the review as soon as possible and propose a rule "banning all devices that turn legal weapons into machine guns."

Reacting to Trump's memo, the department said in a statement that it "understands this is a priority for the president and has acted quickly to move through the rulemaking process. We look forward to the results of that process as soon as it is duly completed."

A day earlier, Trump sent another signal he had been swayed by the Parkland shooting and the dramatic calls for action in its aftermath. A White House statement said Trump was looking at a bill that would strengthen federal gun background checks. On Wednesday, he will host parents, teachers and students at the White House for a "listening session" that will include people impacted by mass shootings in Parkland, Columbine, Colorado and Newtown, Connecticut.

The president was moved by a visit Friday with Florida victims in the hospital and is trying to work on solutions, said a person familiar with his thinking who sought anonymity to discuss internal conversations.

Among the steps sought by gun control advocates: closing loopholes that permit loose private sales on the internet and at gun shows, banning assault-type weapons and to passing laws to enable family members, guardians or police to ask judges to strip gun rights temporarily from people who show warn-

ing signs of violence.

The Parkland shooting also has prompted the Republican-controlled Florida Legislature to take a fresh look at gun control legislation, although so far GOP leaders are refusing to endorse calls to ban assault rifles. Still, the discussion of some types of gun control legislation is a dramatic turnaround for Florida, which has earned the nickname the "Gunshine State" for its gun policies.

The federal background check bill was developed in response to a mass shooting last November in which a gunman slaughtered more than two dozen people at a Texas church. It 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.

The GOP-controlled House paired the background checks bill with a measure 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.

Murphy said any attempt to combine background checks with concealed-carry provisions would significantly jeopardize the chances of passing bipartisan reform of the background checks system.

Associated Press writer Gary Fineout contributed from Tallahassee, Florida.

Florida survivors, lawmakers on collision course over guns

By **BRENDAN FARRINGTON, JOSH REPLOGLE and TAMARA LUSH, Associated Press**

PARKLAND, Fla. (AP) — Students who survived the Florida school shooting began a journey Tuesday to the state Capitol to urge lawmakers to prevent another massacre, but within hours the gun-friendly Legislature had effectively halted any possibility of banning assault-style rifles like the one used in the attack.

The legislative action further energized the teens as they prepared to confront legislators who have quashed gun-control efforts for decades in a state where 1.3 million people have concealed carry permits.

"They're voting to have shootings continually happen. These people who voted down the bill haven't experienced what we did. I want to say to them, 'It could be you,'" 16-year-old Noah Kaufman said as he made the 400-mile (640-kilometer) trip to Tallahassee.

Three buses carried 100 students who, in the aftermath of the attack that killed 17 people, want to revive the gun-control movement. The teens carried sleeping bags and pillows and hugged their parents as they departed, many wearing burgundy T-shirts in their school colors.

They spent the seven-hour ride checking their phones, watching videos and reading comments on social media about the shooting, some of which accused them of being liberal pawns.

About 500 Leon High School students and parents applauded as the students got off the bus from Broward County.

Stoneman Douglas senior Diego Pfeiffer thanked his Tallahassee counterparts as a group of Broward County students stood behind him on the school steps.

"This isn't about school shootings. This isn't about violence anymore. This is about hope. This is about moving forward," Pfeiffer told the crowd.

As the grieving Florida students demanded action on guns, President Donald Trump on Tuesday directed the Justice Department to move to ban devices like the rapid-fire bump stocks used in last year's Las Vegas massacre. It was a small sign of movement on the gun violence issue that has long tied Washington in knots.

"We must do more to protect our children," said Trump, a strong and vocal supporter of gun rights. He added that his administration was working hard to respond to the Florida rampage.

Meanwhile at the Florida Statehouse, a Democratic representative asked for a procedural move that would have allowed the Republican-controlled House to consider a ban on large-capacity magazines and

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assault-style rifles such as the AR-15 that was wielded by the suspect, Nikolas Cruz.

The bill had been assigned to three committees but was not scheduled for a hearing. The House quickly nixed the Democratic motion. The vote broke down along party lines, and Republicans criticized Democrats for forcing the vote.

Because the committees will not meet again before the legislative session ends March 9, the move essentially extinguishes hope that lawmakers would vote on any sweeping measures to restrict assault rifles, although other proposals could still be considered.

"No one in the world with the slightest little hint of a soul isn't moved by this tragedy," Republican strategist Rick Wilson said. "The discussion has to be a longer, bigger and broader discussion."

Lizzie Eaton, a junior at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, spent the day lobbying senators of both parties and concluded that lawmakers were "just not listening to us."

The vote was "heartbreaking," she said. "But we're not going to stop."

The students planned to hold a rally Wednesday to put more pressure on the Legislature.

"I really think they are going to hear us out," said Chris Grady, a high school senior aboard the bus.

The Feb. 14 attack initially appeared to overcome the resistance of some in the state's political leadership, which has rebuffed gun restrictions since Republicans took control of both the governor's office and the Legislature in 1999. However, many members of the party still have strong resistance to any gun-control measures.

Republican leaders in the House and Senate say they will consider raising age restrictions for gun purchases and temporarily revoking someone's guns if that person is deemed a threat to others. Gov. Rick Scott, also a Republican, convened groups assigned to propose measures for protecting schools from gun violence.

Lawmakers will probably say that getting a new bill passed is nearly impossible with only two and a half weeks left in the legislative session. Some lawmakers who are thinking of running on a statewide ticket are mindful of their sensitive positions, since gun owners make up huge voting blocs in some parts of the state, especially the Panhandle.

Wilson said he knows the students "want something to happen," and they need "a moment to come and make their case."

But, he said, "the thought that you get to wave a wand and change the law is something that is probably going to collide with reality."

The Parkland students also plan to meet Wednesday with top legislative leaders, including House Speaker Richard Corcoran and Senate President Joe Negron.

Florida has a reputation for expanding gun rights. Negron sponsored a 2011 bill that Scott signed into law that banned cities and counties from regulating gun and ammunition sales.

Authorities said Cruz, 19, had a string of run-ins with school authorities that ended with his expulsion. Police were repeatedly called to his house throughout his childhood. His lawyers said there were many warning signs that he was mentally unstable and potentially violent. Yet he legally purchased a semi-automatic rifle.

The Senate is also considering boosting spending on mental health programs for schools and giving law-enforcement greater power to involuntarily hold someone considered a danger to themselves. The chamber will also look at a proposal to deputize a teacher or someone else at school so they are authorized to have a gun.

Kyle Kashuv, a 16-year-old student at the high school, said he was pro-gun prior to the shooting.

"I had no issue with anyone having a gun of any caliber," said Kashuv, as he rode in the bus to Tallahassee. "I was all for it. But after the situation, I realized we have some issues in our society and it has to be addressed.

The fact that someone who was so steadfast in support of gun rights now acknowledges the need for changes "really shows how important what we're doing is," he said.

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This story corrects the first name of the shooting suspect to Nikolas from Nickolas.

Farrington reported from Tallahassee, Florida. Associated Press writers Gary Fineout in Tallahassee and Sadie Gurman in Washington contributed to this report.

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

Luxury property ad blitz heralds Trump son's visit to India

By MUNEZA NAQVI, Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — "Trump has arrived. Have you?" shout the barrage of glossy front-page advertisements in almost every major Indian newspaper.

The ads, which have run repeatedly in the past few days, herald the arrival not of the American president but of his eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., who is in New Delhi to sell luxury apartments and lavish attention on wealthy Indians who have already bought units in a Trump-branded development outside the Indian capital.

The newspaper ads promise that buyers who order apartments in the development by Thursday will get "a conversation and dinner" with Trump Jr. a day later.

President Trump has pledged to avoid any new foreign business deals during his term in office to avoid potential ethical conflicts. While the projects that Trump Jr. is promoting in India were inked before his father was elected, ethics experts have long seen the use of the Trump name to promote even existing business ventures as tricky territory.

The distinction between old and new projects can be hazy, they note, and new deals can be shoehorned into old.

Several foreign deals touted over the past year by the Trump sons have "stretched the definition of what ventures were previously in the works," said Scott H. Amey, general counsel for the non-partisan Project on Government Oversight in Washington.

"The president should be putting the public's interest before his business interests. That can't happen if his son is flying around the world trying to trade on the fact that his father is sitting in the Oval Office."

This isn't the first time that President Trump's sons have raised ethical concerns as they promote their eponymous brand across the world.

Early last year Trump Jr. and his brother Eric opened a Trump-branded golf club in Dubai.

The brothers, who now lead the Trump Organization, watched as fireworks lit the sky over the Trump International Golf Club to mark the event.

On Tuesday morning, Donald Trump Jr. posed for photos in New Delhi with Indian developers building complexes in four cities. Among the business partners accompanying him was Kalpesh Mehta who heads Tribeca, the firm described as the main Indian partner for Trump-brand real estate projects.

Mehta came to notice soon after President Trump's November election victory, when pictures of him and two other Trump Indian real estate partners with the president-elect in New York made a big splash in Indian and American media.

Later in the week, Trump Jr. is scheduled to give a speech about Indo-Pacific relations at a New Delhi business summit, sharing the stage with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Trump Jr. may be raising another set of ethics concerns by offering his thoughts on international relations, said Lawrence Noble, senior director of the nonprofit Campaign Legal Center in Washington.

"The assumption is he has his father's ear," Noble said. "By talking about international relations and sharing the stage with government officials, he's acting as an informal ambassador for the U.S. at the same time he's selling properties in India. It just blurs the lines even more."

Trump Jr. is on a private visit and the State Department has not interacted with him regarding his meetings or his speech, spokesman Heather Nauert said from Washington. "Mr. Trump's comments during the

trip reflect his personal views and not necessarily those of the U.S. government.”

In Gurgaon, the sprawling and ever-growing New Delhi satellite city where a new Trump Towers will eventually rise, the construction site is just mountains of dirt and unruly shrubbery, one of many residential projects yet to be built. Buyers can hope to move into their swanky homes sometime in 2023.

For miles upon miles, the landscape is little more than tin-roofed huts for construction laborers and tiny makeshift food shacks to keep them fed.

And while there’s almost nothing at the Trump construction site, a handful of burly guards enthusiastically insisted on keeping journalists out of the area.

The Trump Organization has licensing agreements with all its Indian business partners, who build the properties and acquire the Trump name in exchange for a fee. The organization has five projects in India, making it the brand’s largest market outside the United States. A luxury complex is already open in the central city of Pune, with other developments in varying stages of construction in the coastal cities of Mumbai and Kolkata, and two in Gurgaon.

The apartments are expensive, though not outrageously so in the overheated real estate world of the Indian rich. Still, in a country of 1.3 billion, where many people can barely afford \$100 a month to rent a shack in a crowded shantytown, apartments in the Trump Towers complex in Gurgaon run between \$775,000 and \$1.5 million.

The rest of the details of Donald Trump Jr.’s itinerary are hazy despite repeated emails to the Trump Organization and its Indian partner Tribeca. However, local media have reported that he is slated to visit other Trump projects across India.

On Wednesday he is expected to be in the eastern city of Kolkata to promote luxury housing bearing his family name there. On Thursday he is reported to be in India’s business capital, Mumbai, where he is to quaff champagne with the city’s elite at a reception hosted by the Lodha Group, the real estate company that is building the golden-hued Trump Tower there.

Trump Jr.’s visit so far has been very different from his sister Ivanka Trump’s high-visibility visit to India in November, when she led the U.S. contingent at a global business conference. The city of Hyderabad filled up potholes and cleared away beggars ahead of her visit. Modi flew to Hyderabad for the conference and hosted her for dinner at a historic palace turned hotel. Television stations broadcast her speech live.

In contrast, Trump Jr.’s visit seems all about keeping the spotlight on business.

AP Writers Stephen Braun and Matthew Lee contributed to this report from Washington.

15-year-old shot 5 times protecting classmates from gunfire

PARKLAND, Fla. (AP) — A 15-year-old student who was shot five times during last week’s massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School is credited with saving the lives of at least 20 other students.

A fundraising site says Anthony Borges was shot in both legs and his back while attempting to close and lock a classroom door last Wednesday. Seventeen people were killed.

Borges’ friend Carlos Rodriguez told ABC’s “Good Morning America” that the two rushed to hide in a nearby classroom when they first heard gunshots. He says no one knew what to do, but that Borges “took the initiative to just save his other classmates.”

Borges’ father Royer Borges says his son called him while lying on the ground after being shot. The father asked him to stay on the line, but at one point, he couldn’t hear the teenager’s voice anymore.

“He told me later ‘I had to drop the phone because I thought he was coming in and I wanted to pretend I was asleep so he wouldn’t continue shooting,’” Borges told CNN’s Spanish language service.

Anthony Borges and his family are originally from Venezuela. His father says the boy is well-known among local sports clubs for his soccer skills, playing forward and training with Barcelona’s youth academy near Fort Lauderdale.

Moved by the Florida student’s actions, U.S. soccer player Landon Donovan rallied his soccer fans to donate to help the teenager’s family.

"One of our own was a hero last week and needs our help," Donovan wrote on his Twitter account. Borges' GoFundMe had raised more than \$446,000 as of Tuesday afternoon from nearly 14,000 donations. The legitimacy of the fundraising page was confirmed by the Broward County Sheriff's Office.

The hospital says it can't release any details on his condition. It says only that he and three other injured victims from the shooting recovering at Broward Health hospitals are all in "fair condition." The Sheriff's Office says that he "has a long road ahead with more surgeries needed."

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders thanked Anthony Borges on Tuesday for the "courage" shown during the shooting attack.

"We are all rooting for you," she said.

Attorney admits he lied to Mueller's federal agents

By CHAD DAY and ERIC TUCKER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A 33-year-old attorney fired last year by a prominent international law firm became the fourth person to plead guilty in special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation, admitting Tuesday that he lied to federal investigators about his contacts with a Trump campaign official.

Alex van der Zwaan, who worked at the law firm Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom, admitted in Washington's federal court Tuesday to making false statements about his interactions with former Trump campaign aide Rick Gates. His plea deal may allow him to avoid prison.

Van der Zwaan's plea comes on the heels of an extraordinary indictment from Mueller last week that charged 13 Russian individuals and three Russian companies in a hidden but robust social media effort that provoked on-the-ground rallies and sought to meddle in the 2016 U.S. presidential election by denigrating Democrat Hillary Clinton and boosting the successful campaign of Republican Donald Trump.

But the charge against the attorney, who is also the son-in-law of a Russian billionaire, does not involve election meddling or relate to the Trump campaign's operations. Instead, it stems from the special counsel's investigation into Paul Manafort, Trump's former campaign chair, and Gates, who is a longtime business associate of Manafort.

Gates and Manafort were indicted last year on charges that they conspired to launder millions of dollars and directed a covert Washington lobbying campaign on behalf of pro-Russian Ukrainian interests. Both men have pleaded not guilty.

On Tuesday, van der Zwaan, a Dutch citizen who authorities say lives in London, admitted to lying to federal investigators while they questioned him about the production of a report that Manafort and Gates are accused of secretly funding by funneling \$4 million through an offshore account.

The report, authored by Skadden Arps, focused on the trial of former Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, a political foe of former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, whose political party was a client of Gates and Manafort.

The false statements van der Zwaan admitted to making involved the timing of his last communication with Gates and a person, described as "Person A," who was a longtime business associate of Manafort and Gates in Ukraine.

According to court papers attached to his plea agreement, the conversations, including some using encrypted applications, occurred in September 2016 and involved possible criminal charges being brought in Ukraine against a former Ukrainian official, Manafort and "Law Firm A," an apparent reference to Skadden Arps.

The Nov. 3, 2017, questioning of van der Zwaan occurred just days after Manafort's indictment and, according to court papers, while prosecutors still were investigating potential violations of the Foreign Agents Registration Act.

The charge against van der Zwaan carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison, though sentencing guideline ranges discussed in court placed the more likely punishment from zero to six months.

In addition to the false statements, court papers reveal that in late July or early August of 2012, van der Zwaan, without authorization, gave an advance draft of the Tymoshenko report to a public relations

firm working for the Ukrainian Ministry of Justice. In September 2012, he also provided Gates with talking points for use in a public relations campaign.

On Tuesday, Skadden Arps released a statement saying it had fired van der Zwaan last year, and it "has been cooperating with authorities in connection with this matter."

"The conduct to which Alex has pled guilty is contrary to our values, policies and expectations," the firm added.

Last year, van der Zwaan married the daughter of Ukrainian-Russian billionaire German Khan, according to the Russian editions of Forbes and Tatler magazines.

Khan, who was born in Kiev, shares control of one of Russia's biggest financial and industrial investment conglomerates, Alfa Group, with fellow billionaires Mikhail Fridman and Alexei Kuzmichev. Forbes estimates Khan is worth about \$10 billion.

Khan and his partners are suing BuzzFeed News over its publication of a dossier of allegations about ties between Trump and Russia. The dossier, which is a collection of memoranda authored by former British spy Christopher Steele, makes several claims about Alfa Group that the partners say are false and defamatory.

Buzzfeed is fighting the lawsuit. The dossier has become a political lightning rod because Steele's work was funded in part by Clinton's campaign and the Democratic National Committee. Parts of Steele's work were also used in obtaining a secret warrant to monitor Carter Page, a former Trump campaign foreign policy adviser.

Associated Press writers Jeff Horwitz and Desmond Butler in Washington and Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow contributed to this report.

Read van der Zwaan's plea agreement: <http://apne.ws/3H8TtLg>

Urged on by Trump, GOP to fight Pennsylvania's district map

By MARC LEVY, Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — Encouraged by President Donald Trump, Republicans vowed Tuesday to fight Pennsylvania's new court-imposed map of congressional districts as dozens of candidates assessed their chances under newly formed districts and the odds that a federal court could block them.

Republican members of Congress and Pennsylvania Republican lawmakers planned to sue in federal court as early as Wednesday in a bid to block a map expected to improve Democrats' chances at erasing the GOP's U.S. House majority.

The new map substantially overhauls a GOP-drawn congressional map that has helped produce a predominantly Republican delegation and was widely viewed as among the nation's most gerrymandered.

With control of the U.S. House on the line in November, Trump urged Republicans to challenge the new map of Pennsylvania's 18 congressional districts all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, if necessary.

"Your Original was correct! Don't let the Dems take elections away from you so that they can raise taxes & waste money!" Trump tweeted.

Lawyers for the Democratic voters who successfully challenged Pennsylvania's congressional districts as unconstitutionally gerrymandered said Tuesday that Republicans have no legal or factual basis to sue.

In a statement, the Philadelphia-based Public Interest Law Center said the new court-ordered districts are non-partisan, more compact and competitive, and Republicans should stop holding onto the gerrymandered districts they drew in 2011.

The Democratic-majority state Supreme Court met its deadline Monday to issue the new boundaries after it threw out the 6-year-old map last month. The Republican-controlled Legislature and Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf did not produce a consensus replacement map in the three weeks allotted by the court.

Independent analysts said the court-ordered map should improve Democratic prospects while still favoring Republicans as a whole. An analysis conducted through PlanScore.org concluded the court's redrawn map eliminates "much of the partisan skew" favoring Republicans on the old Republican-drawn map,

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although not all of it.

Democrats cheered the new map, while Republicans blasted it and it left dozens of candidates reconsidering their future.

Chief among them is Republican Rep. Ryan Costello, whose suburban Philadelphia district was narrowly won by Democrat Hillary Clinton in 2016. Costello is in more dire straits now that the court added the heavily Democratic city of Reading to his district and ironed out geographic contortions that were designed to capture more Republican voters.

On Tuesday, Costello could not yet say if he will run in his district if the court-ordered congressional map survives a federal court challenge.

But Costello lashed out at the state Supreme Court, saying the justices' map was politically motivated, their map-making process was politically corrupt and that state lawmakers should consider impeaching them.

"I'm all riled up," Costello said.

Pennsylvania's state House Republican majority leader, Dave Reed, now lives in the same district as Rep. Glenn Thompson, a fellow Republican, rather than the district of the congressman he had hoped to succeed, retiring Republican Rep. Bill Shuster. Reed said he did not know what he would do.

Joe Peters, a former top state drug prosecutor and Scranton police officer, had been running to succeed a fellow Republican, Rep. Lou Barletta, who is campaigning for U.S. Senate.

Peters now finds his rural northeastern Pennsylvania home in the same district as Republican Rep. Tom Marino. That prompted Peters to start thinking about moving into one of two nearby districts that don't have a Republican incumbent, while trying to gauge whether a federal lawsuit will undo the new districts.

"It's a combination of a game of chicken and a game of chess," Peters said.

The new map is to be in effect for the May 15 primary. The first day for candidates to start circulating petitions is next Tuesday, but petitions weren't available yet and neither was complete information about which municipalities and precincts are in each new district.

The map removes the heart of one district from Philadelphia, where a crowd of Democratic candidates had assembled to replace the retiring Democratic Rep. Bob Brady, and moves it to suburban Montgomery County. That leaves many of those candidates in the same districts as Democratic Reps. Dwight Evans and Brendan Boyle.

The new map also threw a curveball into the March 13 special election in southwestern Pennsylvania. The court's map puts each candidate's home in a district with a Pittsburgh-area incumbent, making it possible that Democrat Conor Lamb and Republican Rick Saccone would circulate petitions for the primary in one district while they run in another district for the special election.

Louisville must vacate basketball title, NCAA denies appeal

By GARY B. GRAVES, AP Sports Writer

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Louisville officials are not happy with the NCAA's decision that mandates the school vacate its 2013 men's basketball championship in the wake of an embarrassing sex scandal, and interim President Greg Postel did not hide his disappointment.

It's the first time a Division 1 men's basketball program has been stripped of a national title. While acknowledging the scandal was unacceptable, Postel believes the school's cooperation with the NCAA should have counted for more than it did.

But Tuesday Louisville announced that an NCAA appeals panel had upheld sanctions against the men's program. As a result, the Cardinals have to vacate not only the championship, but 122 other victories and return about \$600,000 in conference revenue from the 2012-15 NCAA Tournaments.

"I cannot say this strongly enough: We believe the NCAA is simply wrong," Postel said Tuesday. "We disagree with the NCAA ruling for reasons we clearly stated in our appeal. And we made a strong case — based on NCAA precedent - that supported our argument."

Louisville may have presented a strong case, but the NCAA had its own convictions.

The decision by the governing body's Infraction Appeals Committee ruled that the NCAA has the author-

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ity to take away championships for what it considers major rule violations. In the eight-page decision, the NCAA also refuted Louisville's position that the governing body exceeded its boundaries and didn't follow its own precedent established in other cases.

Louisville now must forfeit its third NCAA title, victories and income from 2011-15, part of the timeframe during which the violations occurred. The decision is the culmination of the NCAA's investigation that followed allegations in a 2015 book by escort Katina Powell that former Cardinals basketball staffer Andre McGee hired her and other dancers to strip and have sex with recruits.

Former coach Rick Pitino repeatedly denied knowing about the activities described in Powell's book, but the blemish on the program will never be forgotten — not after Tuesday's sanctions.

Besides taking down the red-and-white banner that hung beside the American flag and two other title flags in the Cardinals' downtown arena, Louisville must erase wins before and after that championship along with other records.

That process started almost immediately. Basketball spokesman Kenny Klein confirmed by Tuesday evening that both the 2013 title and 2012 Final Four banners were removed from the rafters at the KFC Yum! Center.

Postel doesn't feel the punishment fits the violations.

"From Day One, the university has admitted that the actions of the former operations director and any others involved under previous leadership were offensive and inexcusable," Postel said in his statement. "That is why we apologized immediately, cooperated fully with the NCAA, self-imposed penalties that were appropriate to the offenses and made significant changes to ensure incidents like this never happen again.

"Under the NCAA's own rules, this cooperation should have been a factor in the severity of the punishment. Instead, it was ignored."

Interim athletic director Vince Tyra said the NCAA process was "unusual" compared to a federal organization such as OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration), where he said guidelines are more black-and-white.

"With the NCAA, there are bylaws which seem to be guidelines and then there's great discretion on the guidelines," Tyra said. "It's very difficult to follow and set precedent. That was certainly an unusual experience."

The school's own investigation into the allegation revealed that violations occurred and resulted in a self-imposed postseason ban nearly two years ago. Louisville later imposed scholarship and recruiting restrictions in an effort to mitigate further NCAA discipline.

While the NCAA accepted Louisville's actions, it went further with harsher sanctions last June that included:

- A five-game suspension of Pitino, who was fired in October following Louisville's acknowledgement that it was being investigated in a federal bribery probe of college basketball. That measure included a show-cause penalty for Pitino, whom the NCAA criticized for failing to monitor McGee and ignoring multiple red flags;

- Four years' probation, along with the vacation of those wins and appearances in the 2012 and 2013 Final Fours;

- Show-cause penalties for McGee, who is no longer coaching;

- Postel estimates the return of about \$600,000 in NCAA Tournament revenue.

"This dark cloud has hung over our heads for more than two years, and it has had a negative impact on our athletics program, our fans and the entire university family," Postel said. "While we disagree with the NCAA's decision, it is time for the university to close this chapter and move forward with a stronger commitment to excellence on and off the court."

Interim coach David Padgett said he talked to his team about the announcement and texted several former players from that title squad, reminding them of their achievement.

"This doesn't change what you did. You won 16 games in a row, you went 35-5 and cut down the nets in Atlanta," Padgett said he told former Cardinals. "You don't need a banner to know you're a national champion."

The NCAA's decision can't erase what actually happened, but it does remove some of the tangible reminders at Louisville.

And with the ongoing corruption investigation, more changes could be looming on the horizon.

More AP college basketball: <http://collegebasketball.ap.org> and http://www.twitter.com/AP_Top25

Government bombing of Damascus suburbs kills more than 100

By PHILIP ISSA and BASSEM MROUE, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Government forces bombed the northeastern suburbs of the Syrian capital for a second straight day on Tuesday, killing more than 100 people and raising the specter of a full-scale offensive that could spell catastrophe for the nearly 400,000 residents trapped under siege.

Rescuers raced to reach survivors in the devastated Damascus suburbs known as eastern Ghouta as warplanes and helicopter gunships circled overhead, bombing hospitals, apartment blocks, markets and other civilian targets. The suburbs are the last major stronghold for rebels in the capital region.

At least 250 civilians were killed during the 48 hours of unrelenting onslaught that began Monday, including 58 children, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group. Another 1,000 people were wounded, it said.

"We no longer have the words to describe children's suffering and our outrage," the U.N. children's agency said in a terse statement about the carnage.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov appeared to endorse the unrestrained assault, which he said was backed by the Russian air force. "In keeping with the existing agreements, the fight against terrorism cannot be restricted by anything," he said.

Russia has been an unwavering ally of Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces and was instrumental to the all-out assault in late 2016 that ejected rebels from their enclave in eastern Aleppo, Syria's largest city before the war — an outcome that Lavrov said could serve as a model for eastern Ghouta.

Pro-government forces have been amassing since the weekend on the perimeter of the rebel-held region, a collection of towns and farmland that once provided grain and fruit to the capital before nearly five years of warfare turned it into a landscape of havoc and despair.

The towns of eastern Ghouta were among the first to organize into self-governing collectives and shake off government rule after popular demonstrations against Assad swept through the country in 2011, eventually leading to civil war. They are also among the last to resist Assad's determined campaign to bring every last rebellious corner of the country to heel. Assad and his allies maintain they are fighting a war on terrorism.

Monther Fares, spokesman for the Ahrar al-Sham rebel faction operating in eastern Ghouta, said densely populated residential areas were bearing the brunt of the attacks, a hallmark tactic of the government and its allies to devastate civilian areas and infrastructure before launching a final ground assault.

The battle for rebel-held east Aleppo culminated in the evacuation of tens of thousands of civilians from their homes, with many unable to return. A subsequent U.N. investigation charged that the campaign amounted to forced displacement of a population and rose to the level of a war crime.

That outcome could still be a while coming in eastern Ghouta, which is considerably larger than east Aleppo.

It is also divided between two rebel factions that deeply distrust each other, as well as a small presence of al-Qaida-linked fighters and a handful of other militias that could lead to the fragmentation of the enclave, according to Aron Lund, a fellow at the New York-based Century Foundation. That, at least, could spare civilians some of the devastation of an all-out ground assault.

"It's perhaps more likely that government offensives develop into a patchwork of partial surrenders, cease-fires, interim deals and carve-ups that won't end the conflict but change the way the enclave looks and functions ... on the road to final defeat," Lund said.

At least 10 hospitals in eastern Ghouta were damaged by airstrikes or shelling since Sunday night, according to Ahmad al-Dbis, the security manager for the Union of Medical Care and Relief Organizations,

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which runs hospitals and clinics in Syria. Ten medical staff and rescue workers were among the dead.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said in a statement that it was receiving "distressing reports" of dozens killed and wounded every day in eastern Ghouta, with "families trapped, with no safe place to hide from shelling."

Nasr al-Hariri, who heads the committee representing the Syrian opposition at the U.N., said the opposition was ready to facilitate the withdrawal of al-Qaida-linked fighters from eastern Ghouta to halt the assault.

But a spokesman for Failaq al-Rahman, one of the largest militant groups in eastern Ghouta, charged that Russia had obstructed an initiative to eject the al-Qaida fighters in November, to keep a pretext for an assault.

"Russia was going along to buy time and give Assad an opportunity to pursue the military solution," said spokesman Wael Olwan, who confirmed intensive contacts with the Russians in November.

Russia was supposed to guarantee security and aid access to eastern Ghouta as part of an agreement it reached with the rebels in August. But the Syrian government blocked all but a handful of aid convoys, plunging the region into a spiraling humanitarian crisis. Child malnutrition rates are in the double digits, according to the United Nations, and patients are dying of treatable illnesses and wounds while waiting for medical evacuations.

As the death toll climbed in eastern Ghouta, the rebels retaliated on Tuesday by hitting some Damascus neighborhoods with mortar shells, killing eight people, including three children, and wounding 15 others, according to the state news agency SANA.

"It's a bloody day," said Abdelrahman Shahin, a 31-year-old Damascus resident who was walking on the street when a shell landed on a nearby taxi, killing the driver and a passenger.

"They both died," he said, visibly shaken. "The driver was out for his livelihood. His family will be waiting for him."

Syrian state TV later reported live from the streets of Damascus to show what it called the people's "steadfastness" in the face of the shelling. The TV reporter said residents expressed hope that the Syrian army would retake eastern Ghouta.

In northern Syria, meanwhile, pro-government gunmen crossed into the Kurdish enclave of Afrin in an agreement with the main Kurdish militia there to defend against a Turkish offensive intended to uproot the main Kurdish militia from the area.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said the pro-government fighters had been warned to stay out of Afrin, where Syrian state television showed they were immediately targeted by Turkish shelling.

"Unfortunately, these kinds of terror organizations, as you know, make decisions and take wrongful steps. Of course it is impossible for us to allow this. They will pay a heavy price," Erdogan said.

Despite the warning, video taken inside Afrin late Tuesday showed the pro-government gunmen rallying with Kurdish militiamen underneath an arch welcoming visitors to the area, as they chanted Syrian unity slogans and waved the national flag and the flag of the Kurdish People's Protection Units, or YPG.

Ankara considers the YPG a "terrorist group" linked to the Kurdish insurgency within Turkey's borders. On Jan. 20, it launched a major air and ground offensive, pounding the Afrin enclave with airstrikes and artillery on a daily basis.

Turkey has threatened Syrian troops not to help YPG fighters, warning that it will fight its backers.

Associated Press writers Zeina Karam in Beirut; Suzan Fraser in Ankara, Turkey; Jamey Keaten in Geneva; Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow, and Albert Aji in Damascus, Syria, contributed to this report.

AP Explains: Syria's starved, rebellious suburb under attack

By ZEINA KARAM, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — The airstrikes came at a rate of one a minute, with horrible results: civilians fleeing collapsing buildings, children trapped under slabs of concrete, paramedics grimly rushing the bloodied victims away on stretchers. At least 100 people were killed in one day.

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The government's assault on the rebel-controlled suburbs east of the Syrian capital, Damascus, has been a long time coming. Monday's carnage, which continued throughout Tuesday, was the deadliest in eastern Ghouta in three years.

Starved and battered by the government for years, the rebellious area has eluded President Bashar Assad's control despite being encircled and sporadically bombarded since 2013. Now, it appears the Syrian government and its Russian backers have decided to retake the territory at any cost.

Much like rebel-held eastern Aleppo in late 2016, eastern Ghouta is set to become a blood-soaked war theater as Assad tries to bomb it into submission. Tens of thousands of people live there, along with thousands of hard-line fighters, some of whom will probably fight to the end.

Here's a look at the battle for those suburbs.

WHAT IS GHOUTA?

Ghouta is an informal name for the suburbs of the Syrian capital, Damascus, that form around the Barada River, and towns in its eastern reaches, including Douma, Kfar Batna and Saqba. The residents of eastern Ghouta were among the first to rise up against Bashar Assad's rule in 2011. The area was taken over by rebels a year later as the unrest turned into an armed insurgency, then full-blown civil war.

They held on ferociously, determined to preserve the rebel position closest to the capital, denting the narrative of an Assad victory in key places. Today it is the last major opposition enclave in the area, completely surrounded by areas firmly under government control.

Historically an agricultural area, it has been partially besieged by the government since 2013 and completely since mid-2017. The rebel-held suburbs endured a devastating sarin gas attack in 2013 that killed hundreds of people. Over the years, residential buildings, hospitals, schools, warehouses have all been destroyed.

According to the U.N., there are 393,000 residents in eastern Ghouta, many of them internally displaced from other parts of the country, accounting for 94 percent of all Syrians living under siege today.

U.N. aid convoys rarely make it inside, and the lack of access has led to severe food shortages, starvation and malnutrition as well as a sharp rise in food prices.

WHY HAS EASTERN GHOUTA ELUDED ASSAD FOR SO LONG?

Thousands of battle-hardened militants are entrenched in eastern Ghouta, including the powerful Army of Islam group based in Douma, and the ultra-conservative Ahrar al-Sham and Faylaq al-Rahman groups. Haya'at Tahrir al-Sham, a rebel coalition affiliated with al-Qaida, also has a presence in the area.

Despite its proximity to Assad's seat of power in Damascus, Syrian troops stretched thin by the scale of the rebellion overlooked eastern Ghouta for the first years of the civil war while they focused on recapturing areas deemed more crucial for the government's survival, including Homs, Aleppo and areas near the border with Lebanon.

The militants of eastern Ghouta had years to dig in, amassing an abundant reserve of weapons and ammunition from supply lines that stretched to the Syrian desert. From there, the rebels frequently lob mortar shells into Damascus neighborhoods, including dozens of shells on Tuesday that killed eight civilians and wounded many others. Because the region is a farming area — and once the source of most of the capital's sugar, rice, fruits and vegetables — the militants were able to grow their own food, diminishing the need for supply lines. They've also built a labyrinth of secret underground tunnels beyond the reach of airstrikes. Some supplies get in this way, but utilities have been decimated.

WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

With Russia and Iran's help, Assad has turned the war decisively in his favor, recapturing key areas of the country from rebels and Islamic State militants.

The renewed assault on eastern Ghouta is part of a broader escalation on several fronts in recent weeks as Assad and his allies step up their efforts to finish off remaining pockets of resistance — including Idlib

province in the north, which houses many evacuees from Aleppo.

The government has recently sent Brig. Gen. Suheil al-Hassan, also known among his troops as "Tiger," to eastern Ghouta to lead the effort. He has led elite forces to many victories against insurgents since the conflict began, including in Aleppo and most recently in Deir el-Zour against Islamic State militants.

For Assad, victory in eastern Ghouta would remove a long-standing threat and nuisance, going a long way toward ending the seven-year rebellion against him.

Preventive treatment for peanut allergies succeeds in study

By MARILYNN MARCHIONE, AP Chief Medical Writer

The first treatment to help prevent serious allergic reactions to peanuts may be on the way. A company said Tuesday that its daily capsules of peanut powder helped children build tolerance in a major study.

Millions of children are allergic to peanuts, and some may have life-threatening reactions if accidentally exposed to them. Doctors have been testing daily doses of peanut, contained in a capsule and sprinkled over food, as a way to prevent that by gradually getting them used to very small amounts.

California-based Aimmune Therapeutics said 67 percent of kids who had its experimental treatment were able to tolerate the equivalent of roughly two peanuts at the end of the study, compared to only 4 percent of others given a dummy powder.

But a big warning: Don't try this at home.

"It's potentially dangerous," said Dr. Stacie Jones, a University of Arkansas allergy specialist. "This is investigational. It has to be done in a very safe setting" to make sure kids can be treated fast for any bad reactions that occur, she said.

Jones helped lead the study, consults for the company, and will give the results at an allergy conference next month. The results have not yet been reviewed by independent experts.

The study involved nearly 500 kids ages 4 to 17 with allergies so severe that they had reactions to as little as a tenth of a peanut. They were given either capsules of peanut or a dummy powder in gradually increasing amounts for six months, then continued on that final level for another six months. Neither the participants nor their doctors knew who was getting what until the study ended.

About 20 percent of kids getting the peanut powder dropped out of the study, 12 percent due to reactions or other problems. The product showed "overall good safety," Jones said.

"It's exciting," said Dr. Stacy Dorris of Vanderbilt University who had no role in the study.

"This is a way to potentially protect people who are allergic from having a severe or even fatal reaction. But it's not a cure ... we don't know what would happen if they stop or discontinue" treatment, she said.

Dorris said she would consider trying it for her 8-year-old daughter who has a peanut allergy, but said the study's drop-out rate shows that "this is not for everybody. Some people are going to have too many side effects for them to be able to take this daily dose."

Dr. Andrew Bird, an allergy specialist at UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, also consults for the company and had patients in the study. The treatment doesn't allow kids to eat peanuts as if they had no allergy, but research suggests that being able to tolerate at least one peanut should protect 95 percent of them from having a reaction if they are exposed to peanuts, he said.

That would be a relief to Cathy Heald, a Dallas mom whose 10-year-old son, Charlie, was in the study.

"We had to teach him that he has to ask about everything he eats from a very early age," she said. "He's described it as living in a cage, watching other people get to eat what they want."

Charlie was assigned to the group given fake peanut powder but has been able to get the real thing since the study ended, she said.

Aimmune plans to seek U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval for the treatment later this year and in Europe early next year.

The company's chief executive has said he expects the first six months of treatment to cost \$5,000 to \$10,000, and \$300 to \$400 a month after that.

The thinking about peanut allergies has changed in recent years, and experts now think early exposure

helps prevent them from forming. Last year, the National Institutes of Health issued new advice, saying most babies should get peanut-containing foods starting around 6 months, in age-appropriate forms like watered-down peanut butter or peanut puffs — not whole peanuts because those are a choking hazard.

Marilynn Marchione can be followed on Twitter: @MMarchioneAP

School shooting videos could scar kids _ or galvanize them

By JASON DEAREN, ALLEN G. BREED and TAMARA LUSH, Associated Press

PARKLAND, Fla. (AP) — When two teenagers slaughtered 12 students and a teacher at Columbine High School in Colorado 19 years ago, young people across the country learned the news the old-fashioned way: largely on television and in newspapers. It took days, if not weeks, to process the information and discover the full, horrific story.

When a gunman killed 17 people at a Florida high school last week, youngsters around the globe watched the terrifying images and accounts unfold almost in real time. By the end of the day on Feb. 14, children with social media knew the name of the suspect, learned which classrooms the students were in and, in some cases, saw videos of the dead.

"My school is being shot up and I am locked inside. I'm f----- scared right now," wrote one teen on Twitter.

The tragedy at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High appears to be the first major school shooting of the social media age in which students shared the shocking images in near-real time with young people elsewhere.

Experts say the images have the potential to scar kids watching from afar, potentially triggering post-traumatic stress and perhaps numbing them to the violence and causing them to fall into apathy. But the scenes might also galvanize a generation and lead young people to press for change on the political level.

Amy Kohli, a junior at South Broward High School who watched the videos posted from inside Stoneman Douglas, said she believes they helped bring urgency and perspective.

"It becomes so personal because you think 'It could've been me,'" the 16-year-old said, standing amid other gun safety demonstrators in front of the federal courthouse in Fort Lauderdale.

She added: "It can allow people to see. If they see the blood, they see the real story. What actually happened in reality. Maybe, maybe it'll help."

Already, young people are demanding action. On Tuesday, 100 Stoneman Douglas students headed for Florida's capital to urge lawmakers to prevent a repeat of the massacre. Also Tuesday, dozens of students at a high school in Boca Raton walked out of class. On Monday, teens protested at the White House and in Los Angeles, and a student march on Washington to press for tighter gun control is planned for next month.

Seventeen-year-old Nicole Burmeister, who attends a high school a 20-minute drive from Stoneman Douglas, said students in a group chat she is on started posting the videos as the news was unfolding. She struggled with whether watching the footage was the right thing to do.

"They showed the gunshots one right after the other, and then the kids screaming and everything. That one I could sort of watch, but then the next one they showed a body, someone's body on the ground in a puddle of blood," she said. "It felt wrong to watch that."

Still, she said: "I understand people kind of have to take videos like this to shock people. Like really show them how gruesome and how disgusting — the evil that went on this way."

Carina Viera, a senior at Stoneman Douglas, wasn't in one of the attacked classrooms but saw a graphic video posted by another student. She and her friends scrutinized it, wondering if one of the victims was a friend. The person wasn't. She wondered whether seeing the horror on a phone screen was a good thing overall.

"There's also the danger of letting people get too used to it," she said. "People also sharing on Snapchat with those captions like with emojis. It makes it seem like, not a joke, but makes it seem a lot less serious than it actually is."

Elisabeth Middleton, an adolescent psychologist in Austin, Texas, who is on the board of the Texas

Psychological Association, said there are obvious psychological downsides to exposing youngsters to this. "It is too much too soon for these kinds of kids. At this age, they're not prepared to deal with these kinds of events," she said. "On the other hand, it gives them something to bond around. It's great that they're speaking out and trying to hold the political candidates accountable."

Middleton saw a teenage patient in the days after the shooting, and they talked about her feelings after seeing the story on social media and the news.

"She feels like it could happen and you just have to kind of accept that. And I don't think that's something that kids have thought until recently. That it could happen to them. There's kind of a numbness to it," Middleton said, adding that social media can exacerbate that feeling for a lot of kids.

Associated Press writer Jennifer Kay contributed to this report from Miami.

Netanyahu confidant identified as scandals mount

By JOSEF FEDERMAN, Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, already reeling from a damaging police report into alleged corruption, faced yet another scandal on Tuesday — with allegations that a longtime confidant attempted to bribe a judge in exchange for dropping a corruption case against the Israeli leader's wife.

Netanyahu quickly denounced the allegations. But they presented an embarrassing new headache for him as a growing list of members of his inner circle gets swept up in scandals.

The latest case surrounds Nir Hefetz, a longtime media adviser to Netanyahu and his family.

Hefetz is suspected of suggesting, through a middleman, to Judge Hila Gerstel in 2015 that she could be appointed attorney general if she dismissed a pending case against Sara Netanyahu's excessive household spending. Hefetz and the middleman are being held in police custody.

The offer never materialized, and Israel's current attorney general recommended last fall indicting Mrs. Netanyahu in the case.

But Israeli media, including columnist Ben Caspit, who broke the story, said the judge was shocked by the offer. Police said Tuesday she had given testimony as part of their investigation.

The Haaretz daily said Gerstel had spoken about the incident at the time to her colleague Esther Hayut, who is now the Supreme Court's chief justice. Media reports said that Hayut is expected to be questioned by police.

Netanyahu said the latest suspicions were a continuation of a wider media witch hunt against him and his family.

"I never consulted Nir Hefetz on this matter, he never proposed anything to me on this issue, and you know what? I don't believe that he suggested this possibility with anyone," Netanyahu said in a statement posted on Facebook on Tuesday, calling the claims "total madness."

Earlier on Tuesday, Hefetz was identified as a central suspect in another case. Police said Hefetz and Shlomo Filber, the former director of the Communications Ministry under Netanyahu, are suspected of promoting regulation worth hundreds of millions of dollars to Israel's Bezeq telecom company. In return, Bezeq's popular news site, Walla, allegedly provided favorable coverage of Netanyahu and his family.

Bezeq's controlling shareholder Shaul Elovitch is also in custody, along with his wife, son and other top Bezeq executives. Former journalists at the Walla news site have attested to being pressured to refrain from negative reporting of Netanyahu.

The prime minister, who held the communications portfolio until last year, has not yet been named as a suspect in either of this week's cases, though he may soon be questioned.

But the cases gave new fuel to opposition calls for Netanyahu to step aside as he fights a growing list of corruption scandals. Netanyahu dismissed the investigations as "delusional, fabricated claims" that are part of an "orchestrated campaign" against him and vowed to "continue to lead the state of Israel responsibly, discreetly and with great dedication."

Yair Lapid, leader of the opposition Yesh Atid Party, said that if Netanyahu doesn't want to resign, he

should at least declare himself "incapacitated," allowing a caretaker prime minister to be appointed.

"Israel deserves a full-time prime minister who is not engaged in anything else. Let him choose whatever path is convenient for him," Lapid said.

"Netanyahu has become a liability for the citizens of Israel," added Avi Gabbay, leader of the opposition Labor Party. "Every day that he stays in office is damage to the country."

The latest probes come days after police announced that there was sufficient evidence to indict Netanyahu for bribery, fraud and breach of trust in two separate cases.

Attorney General Avihai Mandelblit, a Netanyahu appointee, will make the final decision on whether to file charges — a process that is expected to take several months.

Netanyahu is accused of receiving lavish gifts from Hollywood mogul Arnon Milchan and Australian billionaire James Packer. In return, police say Netanyahu operated on Milchan's behalf on U.S. visa matters, legislated a tax break and connected him with an Indian businessman.

In the second case, Netanyahu is accused of offering a newspaper publisher legislation that would weaken his paper's main rival in return for more favorable coverage.

Netanyahu has long accused the Israeli press corps of being biased against him and has taken steps to counter it by promoting more sympathetic outlets.

Netanyahu's backers have also lashed out at police, accusing them of an overzealous campaign to topple him.

Israel's police chief, Roni Alsheikh, said Tuesday that the police recommendations were coordinated with the attorney general and were handled in a professional manner.

"Our main objective is to remain neutral and professional," he said in a speech to visiting Jewish American leaders. "We keep out of the media conversation, neither right nor left, but only on the side of the law."

Associated Press writer Ilan Ben Zion contributed to this report.

Stylish Queen Elizabeth II makes first Fashion Week visit

By GREGORY KATZ, Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Queen Elizabeth II has always dressed with style and flair — but Tuesday marked her first visit to the showy catwalks of London Fashion Week.

The monarch squeezed in the front row, chatting with American Vogue editor Anna Wintour — who wore her trademark sunglasses — and presented an award recognizing British design excellence.

It was an unusual outing for the 91-year-old monarch, who seemed totally at ease at the type of event usually frequented by stars like Kate Moss and Sienna Miller.

She was elegant in a Angela Kelly duck egg blue tweed dress and jacket detailed with tiny aquamarine Swarovski crystals set off by formal black gloves.

Elizabeth carried a matching handbag — of course — and wore her mostly white hair swept back.

The queen didn't bother with the statement stiletto heels favored by many of the younger fashionistas, opting for sensible dark low-heeled court shoes for the awards presentation.

"As a tribute to the industry, and as my legacy to all those who have contributed to British fashion, I would like to present this award for new, young talent," she said.

The royal family has often hosted Fashion Week receptions for top designers and journalists, but the new award — and the queen's personal visit — have added a new dimension to its support for the industry.

The lucky recipient was Richard Quinn, a recent fashion graduate of Central Saint Martins who started his own label in 2016 and has quickly earned recognition as part of the next wave of talented young British designers.

The London-based Quinn received the first Queen Elizabeth II Award for British Design. The British Fashion Council chose him for the prize.

His provocative show included a model wearing what looked to be a decorated green motorcycle helmet with a dark visor along with black and white polka dot leggings and a gauzy top with different size dots.

The queen, who has maintained an active schedule even as her 96-year-old husband Prince Philip has stepped back from public life, took to the catwalk to address the crowd and praise Britain's fashion heritage.

"From the tweed of the Hebrides to Nottingham lace, and of course Carnaby Street, our fashion industry has been renowned for outstanding craftsmanship for many years, and continues to produce world-class textiles and cutting edge, practical designs," she said.

She also toured showrooms before presenting the award on the final day of fashion week, which brought hundreds of designers, buyers and journalists to London for a series of catwalk displays highlighted by Christopher Bailey's farewell show at Burberry.

The queen's visit followed a Buckingham Palace fashion reception hosted Monday night by Catherine, the Duchess of Cambridge — who is expecting her third child in April — and Sophie, the Countess of Wessex.

The gala was attended by Wintour, model Naomi Campbell, designer Stella McCartney and other luminaries of the fashion scene.

Insiders: Russia troll farm even zanier than indictment says

By RAPHAEL SATTER and NATALIYA VASILYEVA, Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — A Clinton-Obama sex tape using body doubles. A Facebook page promoting Texas independence riddled with grammatical mistakes. Islamic State anthems blasting out during the nightshift.

The U.S. indictment centered on a Russian troll farm only scratches the surface of the St. Petersburg agency that allegedly produced online content to sway the 2016 presidential election — and glosses over how unconvincing some of its stunts could be.

Many of the more eye-popping accounts of the Internet Research Agency's activities have come from former staff members. One, Alan Baskaev, told the independent Russian television channel Rain last year that the agency made a video that looked like a U.S. soldier shooting a Quran and had even hired two actors in an abortive bid to fake a sex tape of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton.

"No one would buy it, clearly," Baskaev told the broadcaster, laughing.

The Associated Press couldn't confirm Baskaev's sex tape story, but a video of a purported U.S. soldier in desert camouflage firing an assault-style weapon at a Quran was posted to an American gun forum in September 2015.

The fakery was screamingly obvious: The soldier's uniform was misshapen and out of date. His helmet resembled the headwear a cyclist might wear and the English he spoke was so heavily accented it was almost indecipherable.

The BBC's Russian service identified the man in 2016 as a bartender in St. Petersburg, a friend of someone who worked at the troll factory.

The Quran video and others like it were ignominious flops. The New York Times Magazine in 2015 identified other fake videos, including footage meant to spark panic about a chemical plant explosion in Louisiana supposedly caused by the Islamic State group. Another showed a phony shooting in Atlanta, Georgia that carried echoes of Michael Brown's fatal 2014 encounter with police in Ferguson, Missouri.

The indictment that charged 13 Russians with meddling in the presidential race makes no mention of them, but the amateurish videos continued through the election. Last year The Daily Beast said it had identified "Williams and Calvin" — a rap duo purportedly from Atlanta that appeared in YouTube videos — as operatives of the Russian troll operation. Speaking in a thick Nigerian accent, the man who went by Williams slammed Hillary Clinton as a racist and said, "This is time for change."

"Let our vote go for Trump, because this man is a businessman, he's not a politician," he continued. "Any businessman cannot be a racist."

The cringe-inducing quality of such videos and other pieces of the trolls' work is another aspect of the alleged interference left out of the indictment — and much of the attendant media coverage.

The agency did manage to organize rallies in the U.S., but turnout appears to have been microscopic. Even online, the trolls struggled with their command of English. One of the Internet Research Agency's most popular Facebook pages, the secessionist-minded Heart of Texas, was packed with malapropisms.

"Hillary Clinton behind bars is a dream of thousands of Americans and may the god this dream come true," reads one of the Facebook posts that journalist Casey Michael eventually collected. "Texas is a heaven of Earth, a land give to us by Lord himself!" reads another.

The nonsensical quality of the work would be no surprise to former troll farm employee Baskaev. He described a slap-dash operation whose internet connections frequently failed and whose fake profiles repeatedly got spiked by Facebook administrators.

When the managers had gone home, the 20-somethings working the night shift at the troll farm ran amok, he said, playing Islamic State anthems over the sound system and jokingly saluting each other with the Ukrainian nationalist greeting, "Glory to Ukraine!"

The indictment alleges that the troll farm sent operatives to the United States. Baskaev said the same to Rain last year, but added that he doubted any of them accomplished much in the U.S.

"They probably just went out boozing and partying," he said.

Joint Korea hockey team ends historic Olympic run

By **KIM TONG-HYUNG and HYUNG-JIN KIM, Associated Press**

GANGNEUNG, South Korea (AP) — They cheered. They cried. They hugged. They watched as fans by the thousands shouted, "We are one." Unification flags for the two Koreas, longtime rivals and sometimes bitter enemies, flapped across the Olympic arena.

And now they go back home, quite possibly never to see each other again.

The Korean women's hockey team, which included players from both North and South, ended its historic Olympic run on Tuesday with a fifth straight loss but a host of unforgettable feel-good sparks.

Team Korea was defeated by Sweden 6-1 in a seventh-place match in the Pyeongchang Games on Tuesday, a healthy crowd again on hand to cheer them on.

The team lost by a combined score of 28-2 in its games and was rarely competitive. Yet the repeated defeats were, for many, insignificant. Instead, this notion dominated discussion: the significance of the Koreas' first-ever joint Olympic squad taking the ice smack in the middle of an abrupt, now ongoing reconciliation between the rival Koreas.

"They are an amazing group," said the team's Canadian coach, Sarah Murray, who wept while hugging some of her squad.

"I could have never imagined our players being this competitive in the Olympics," Murray said after the game. "So when I was standing there I was just so proud of them, just watching them skate around and salute the fans."

South Korean forward Kim Heewon wiped away tears as she and teammates waved to cheering fans during a standing ovation. Some spectators wept as Korean players — North and South — stood in a circle at the center of the rink and hit the ice with their sticks in a post-game ceremony before leaving the rink.

"It's been a special opportunity to get to know those girls, and we'll miss having them around," said player Randi Heesoo Griffin of Cary, North Carolina, whose mother is South Korean.

The two governments bar their citizens from visiting each other's country and exchanging phone calls, letters and emails. Griffin said she understood that when it came to staying in touch, "there's some barriers to that, obviously."

"I mean, none of them have Facebook, so might be hard," Griffin said. "But there were definitely bonds that were formed. And I think if we end up playing against each other again, South Korea vs. North Korea, there's definitely going to be some hugs and some smiles."

The team was formed just days before the Pyeongchang Games began during an eleventh-hour push by the two Koreas to improve ties after a year of spiking nuclear tensions that triggered fears of a war on the Korean Peninsula.

The team's makeup was a key part of agreements the Koreas struck to cooperate in the Olympics, which eventually provided a breather from a nuclear standoff involving the North, the South and the United States.

Despite initial worries about their teamwork, North and South Korean players were seen getting along

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with each other. There were many small moments of warm relations that seemed to improve as the games went on.

During Tuesday's classification round game against Sweden, the Korean team played with newfound pace and more confidence against a team they were earlier routed by 8-0 in a preliminary-round match. On Sunday, they lost 2-0 to Switzerland, which beat them 8-0 in their landmark debut match. The Korean team lost 4-1 to Japan its final preliminary-round match.

The Koreas' improving performances were likely because players gradually got over nervousness and pressures from the spotlight.

Every minor interaction between North and South Korean players was in the news because it was so extraordinary. They took selfies, visited a beach and created a dictionary to overcome the North-South dialect divide.

"We have really enjoyed working with the North's players and coaches and we really do want to help them in the future," Murray said. She said a possible "exchange game" has been discussed to maintain the connection.

"They want to get better, they want to keep learning from us and we want to help them," she said. "And there are things that we can learn from them, too."

The team's formation raised hopes that Olympics-related warming gestures could transcend beyond sports and contribute to easing nuclear tensions.

But it is unclear if the good mood will last after the Olympics end, particularly since Seoul and Washington are set to kick off delayed springtime military drills that Pyongyang views as a rehearsal for invasion.

Joo Moon-sook, a 43-year-old who attended the game Tuesday with her husband and 12-year-old daughter, said the joint team's Olympic appearance has helped soften South Koreans' hawkish views on North Korean people after years of animosity.

"It's an educational experience for children, letting them see for themselves that North Koreans aren't scary and bad people, but part of who we are as a nation," Joo said. "I can't forget the first game — the moment they stepped onto the ice. I was choking with tears."

For now, the team will remain in South Korea until the closing ceremony — not practicing, but continuing video meetings until the weekend and, presumably, going over good memories. For South Korean goalie Shin So Jung, the opportunity to experience such a moment from the inside — and appreciate it while it was happening — was unforgettable.

"Our win-loss record isn't good, but I hope we brought them joy and heartfelt moments," Shin said. "I don't think I will experience anything like this again. So many people came here to see us and cheer for us. I hope their love for us lasts."

Hyung-jin Kim and Kim Tong-hyung are Seoul-based correspondents for The Associated Press. Follow them on Twitter at @hyungjin1972 and @KimTongHyung.

Trump endorses Romney's Senate bid _ and Romney accepts

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is endorsing Mitt Romney in Utah's Senate race, another sign that the two Republicans are burying the hatchet after a fraught relationship.

The GOP's presidential nominee in 2012, Romney announced last week he would seek the nomination to replace retiring Sen. Orrin Hatch. In a tweet Monday night, Trump wrote, "He will make a great Senator and worthy successor to @OrrinHatch, and has my full support and endorsement!" Romney quickly accepted the endorsement via Twitter.

Trump has not always been so positive about Romney the political candidate. In 2016 Trump said the former Massachusetts governor had "choked like a dog" during his failed 2012 bid against President Barack Obama.

For his part, Romney gave a scathing critique of then-candidate Trump during the GOP primary that year, calling him a "phony" who was unfit for office. More recently, Romney criticized Trump's response to last

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year's deadly white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, and last month called Trump's use of an obscenity to describe African countries as inconsistent with American history and values.

Members of both political parties have suggested that Romney, if elected to the Senate, would continue to call out Trump if he believed the president warranted criticism. However, Romney did not mention Trump or his scandal-plagued administration in his campaign announcement on Friday, focusing instead on how his adopted state of Utah could be a model for better government in Washington.

Asked Friday if he would seek or accept Trump's endorsement, Romney demurred but said they had talked on the phone two or three times in recent months and had a cordial and respectful relationship.

Within minutes of Trump's tweet Monday night, Romney sent one of his own: "Thank you Mr. President for the support. I hope that over the course of the campaign I also earn the support and endorsement of the people of Utah."

Retailers, technology lead early gains for US stocks

By ALEX VEIGA, AP Business Writer

U.S. stocks moved higher in early trading Wednesday, recouping some of the market's losses from a day earlier. Technology stocks accounted for much of the gain. Banks and retailers also rose. Energy stocks lagged as crude oil prices headed lower. Investors had their eye on the latest company earnings.

KEEPING SCORE: The Standard & Poor's 500 index rose 13 points, or 0.5 percent, to 2,729 as of 9:53 a.m. Eastern Time. The Dow Jones industrial average gained 97 points, or 0.4 percent, to 25,061. The Nasdaq added 39 points, or 0.6 percent, to 7,273. The Russell 2000 index of smaller-company stocks picked up 4 points, or 0.3 percent, to 1,534.

TECH BUMP: Gains in several technology companies helped lift the market in early trading. PayPal picked up 88 cents, or 1.1 percent, to \$77.94.

IN GEAR: Advance Auto Parts jumped 12.3 percent after reporting better earnings than analysts were expecting. The stock added \$12.94 to \$118.29.

ROOM TO GROW: Extra Space Storage climbed 5.3 percent after its results also came in ahead of forecasts. The stock rose \$4.30 to \$85.05.

ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. crude slid 35 cents to \$61.44 per barrel in New York. Brent crude, used to price international oils, shed 4 cents to \$65.21 per barrel in London.

BOND YIELDS: Bond prices rose. The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 2.88 percent from 2.89 percent late Tuesday.

CURRENCIES: The dollar rose to \$107.51 yen from 107.30 yen on Tuesday. The euro slipped to \$1.2328 from \$1.2336.

MARKETS OVERSEAS: Major indexes in Europe were mostly lower. Germany's DAX slipped 0.3 percent, while France's CAC 40 was flat. Britain's FTSE 100 added 0.3 percent. In Asia, Japan's Nikkei 225 index climbed 0.2 percent and Hong Kong's Hang Seng gained 1.8 percent. Australia's S&P ASX 200 edged 0.1 percent higher. The Kospi in South Korea added 0.6 percent. India's Sensex gained 0.3 percent. Shares in Southeast Asia were mixed.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Feb. 21, the 52nd day of 2018. There are 313 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 21, 1965, black Muslim leader and civil rights activist Malcolm X, 39, was shot to death inside Harlem's Audubon Ballroom in New York by assassins identified as members of the Nation of Islam. (Three men were convicted of murder and imprisoned; all were eventually paroled.)

On this date:

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In 1437, James I, King of Scots, 42, was assassinated in Perth by a group of conspirators led by Walter, Earl of Atholl; his 6-year-old son succeeded him as James II.

In 1513, Pope Julius II, who commissioned Michelangelo to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, died nearly four months after the project was completed.

In 1613, Mikhail Romanov, 16, was unanimously chosen by Russia's national assembly to be czar, beginning a dynasty that would last three centuries.

In 1885, the Washington Monument was dedicated.

In 1916, the World War I Battle of Verdun began in France as German forces attacked; the French were able to prevail after 10 months of fighting.

In 1945, during the World War II Battle of Iwo Jima, the escort carrier USS Bismarck Sea was sunk by kamikazes with the loss of 318 men.

In 1947, inventor Edwin H. Land publicly demonstrated his Polaroid Land camera, which used self-developing film to produce a black & white photograph in 60 seconds.

In 1958, the USS Gudgeon (SS-567) became the first American submarine to complete a round-the-world cruise, eight months after departing from Pearl Harbor in Hawaii.

In 1972, President Richard M. Nixon began his historic visit to China as he and his wife, Pat, arrived in Beijing.

In 1975, former Attorney General John N. Mitchell and former White House aides H.R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman were sentenced to 2 1/2 to 8 years in prison for their roles in the Watergate cover-up (each ended up serving a year and a-half).

In 1986, Larry Wu-tai Chin, the first American found guilty of spying for China, killed himself in his Virginia jail cell.

In 1992, Kristi Yamaguchi (yah-mah-GOO'-chee) of the United States won the gold medal in ladies' figure skating at the Albertville Olympics; Midori Ito (mee-doh-ree ee-toh) of Japan won the silver, Nancy Kerrigan of the U.S., the bronze.

Ten years ago: Serb rioters broke into the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade and set fire to an office during protests against Western support for an independent Kosovo. President George W. Bush concluded his six-day African tour in Liberia, where he offered help to lift the country from years of ruinous fighting. A Venezuelan plane crashed in the Andes, killing all 46 on board. Author Robin Moore, who wrote "The French Connection" and "The Green Berets," died in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, at age 82. Former Arizona Gov. Evan Mecham (MEE'-kuhm), who was removed in a 1988 impeachment trial, died in Phoenix at age 83.

Five years ago: Drew Peterson, the Chicago-area police officer who gained notoriety after his much-younger fourth wife, Stacy Peterson, vanished in 2007, was sentenced to 38 years in prison for murdering his third wife, Kathleen Savio.

One year ago: President Donald Trump condemned recent threats against Jewish community centers in the U.S. as "painful reminders" of lingering prejudice and evil; the president also denounced "bigotry, intolerance and hatred in all of its very ugly forms" during his first visit to the new Smithsonian black history museum. Conservative writer Milo Yiannopoulos (MY'-loh yuh-NAH'-poh-lihs) resigned as an editor for Breitbart News, apologizing for comments he'd made in video clips in which he appeared to defend sexual relationships between men and boys as young as 13.

Today's Birthdays: Former Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe (moo-GAH'-bay) is 94. Fashion designer Hubert de Givenchy is 91. Movie director Bob Rafelson is 85. Actor Gary Lockwood is 81. Actor-director Richard Beymer is 79. Actor Peter McEnery is 78. U.S. Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., is 78. Film/music company executive David Geffen is 75. Actress Tyne Daly is 72. Actor Anthony Daniels is 72. Tricia Nixon Cox is 72. Former Sen. Olympia J. Snowe, R-Maine, is 71. Rock musician Jerry Harrison (The Heads) is 69. Actress Christine Ebersole is 65. Actor William Petersen is 65. Actor Kelsey Grammer is 63. Country singer Mary Chapin Carpenter is 60. Actor Kim Coates is 60. Actor Jack Coleman is 60. Actor Christopher Atkins is 57. Rock singer Ranking Roger is 57. Actor William Baldwin is 55. Rock musician Michael Ward is 51. Actress Aunjanue Ellis is 49. Blues musician Corey Harris is 49. Country singer Eric Heatherly is 48. Rock musician Eric Wilson is 48. Rock musician Tad Kinchla (Blues Traveler) is 45. Singer Rhiannon Giddens (Carolina Chocolate

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Drops) is 41. Actor Tituss Burgess is 39. Actress Jennifer Love Hewitt is 39. Comedian-actor Jordan Peele is 39. Actor Brendan Sexton III is 38. Singer Charlotte Church is 32. Actress Ashley Greene is 31. Actress Ellen Page is 31. Actor Corbin Bleu is 29. Actress Hayley Orrantia is 24. Actress Sophie Turner is 22.

Thought for Today: "In scandal, as in robbery, the receiver is always as bad as the thief." — Lord Chesterfield, English author and statesman (1694-1773).