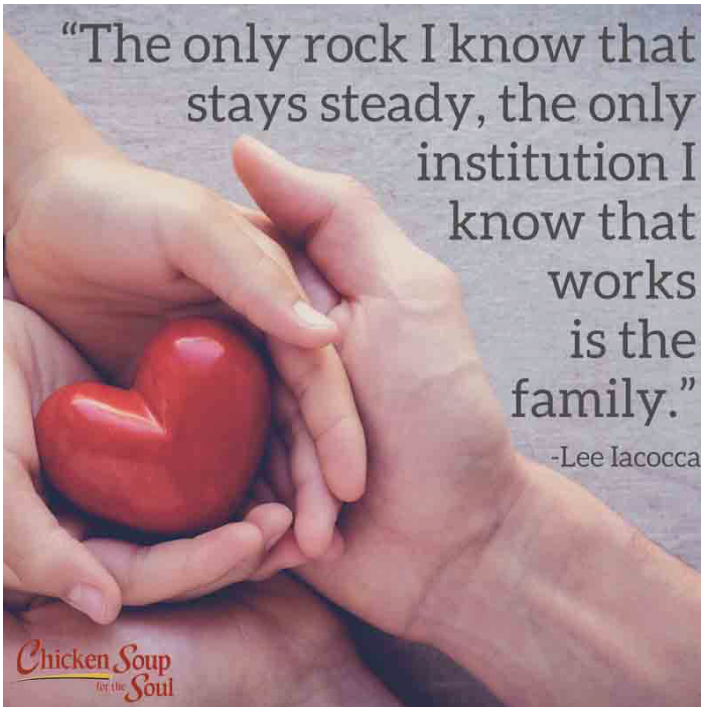


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- 1- Recycling trailers
- 1- Chicken Soup for the Soul
- 1- Groton Chiropractic Ad
- 1- No elections in Groton
- 2- Fifth Grade Volleyball Team
- 2- Help Wanted at Groton Care & Rehab
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Groton Chiropractic Clinic

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

No elections in Groton

There will be no election for either school board or city council this year.

Marty Weismantel and Kara Pharis filed petitions for the two three-year terms on the Groton Area School Board.

On the city council, David Blackmun and Burt Glover filed petitions for their two-year spot. No one filed a petition in Ward 2 being held by David McGannon. Mayor Scott Hanlon will have to appoint someone to fill the spot for a one-year term.

Today

DI Dessert Theater
Groton Elementary School, 2 p.m.

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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2018 Team members are: In back, left to right, are Sarah Schuster, Emma Kutter, Emily Overacker, Gretchen Dinger, Jeslyn Kosel and Jessica Bjerke; in the middle, left to right, are Payton Maine, Emma Bahr, Faith Traphagen, Elizabeth Flihs, Kayla Lehr and Alexa Schuring; in front are Laila Roberts and Ashley Johnson; not pictured is Alexis Geffre. (© Groton Photography)

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

GROTON
CARE & REHABILITATION CENTER
1106 N. 2nd Street, Groton

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Lana's Annals

**Lana
Greenfield
District 2
State
Representative**

Greetings to all. We had a busy week finishing up all of the House bills as we had to have them either passed or put to rest by Friday. If you were able to watch the Friday session, you probably noticed that many of us were dressed in black to honor the bills that were killed. That is the customary thing to do on cross over day!

Our Commerce committee has reviewed a lot of legislation so far, and we started delving into some of the Senate bills just to keep up. One such bill was SB119. The subject matter was comfort companions (aka pets). The bill stated that anyone who furnishes fraudulent disability documentation about needing an emotional support companion when renting accommodations is

subject to eviction and up to a \$1000 fine. It would seem that this is getting out of hand in some areas of our state. The owners of apartment buildings, for example, are seeing a barrage of damages caused by pets that are touted as emotional support. Testimony was that in addition to soiling carpets, ripping shades and curtains, and chewing woodwork, animals are often left alone for hours at a time. This causes neighbors to complain about the noises these pets are making. The committee voted unanimously to pass the bill and send it onto the floor.

Another bill in the same committee was SB153. This one penalizes motels or resorts for adding erroneous charges onto the customers' bills. Some businesses of the aforementioned nature are charging a \$10.00 resort fee (use of pool, sauna, or exercise room) or a parking fee whether they are used or not. These fees often are not listed when the rooms are booked nor are they mentioned at registration time. Each misrepresentation could be classified as a Class 1 misdemeanor or even a Class 6 felony depending upon the severity of the infraction. In addition, considerable monetary fines would accompany this misrepresentation. May I insert here that, perhaps, we should all be more vigilant in observing our receipts or credit cards for errors or false charges made to our accounts.

Our local government committee heard testimony from a West River legislator and some county officials out that way regarding the condition of their roads. HB1257 was a request to be able to abandon (post "no maintenance" signs) on certain unimproved, hardly used roads. The word "abandon" does not mean "close." It was explained that there are 700+ miles of gravel or dirt paths, and it is very expensive to try to maintain them. Ranches are spread far apart, and through the years, the roads, actually at times, lead nowhere anymore. Before any reader misconstrues this bill, it does NOT extend to closure of township roads in this area.

On the floor, we heard many bills. Some were updates or clean ups so were rather blasé. HB1133, however, called for making provisions for operating a motor vehicle after consumption of a controlled drug or substance. To explain, the testifier related a story of a person who was stopped and found to be under the influence of a prescription. He went on to say that, perhaps, we should accommodate such circumstances and not arrest. I voted against the bill as most prescriptions have directions including whether the person should or should not drive while taking; also who is to say if the person was taking more than one dosage. The bill was soundly defeated 40-26. Actually, in committee it was amended and amended, (hog housed), and now it will become a vehicle bill to be used for something else, such as an appropriations bill.

HB1200 was a bill to revise certain on-sale full service restaurant alcoholic beverage license provisions and authorize municipalities and counties to be able to lease alcohol beverage licenses. I spoke against the bill. While it does not affect our rural areas, it could certainly do collateral damage to businessmen of our urban communities. Some of the cities such as Watertown, Sioux Falls, etc. have high prices placed on those who possess liquor licenses. Some are sold to businesses at a cost in excess of 250,000 dollars. That merchant would be extremely upset if he/she wanted to sell his establishment and was unable to because the new restaurant owner down the road could simply lease an alcohol license from the municipality for a yearly rate of \$2000. This bill, none-the-less, passed the House by one vote. I hope the Sen-

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ate can amend it or listen to some good testimony refuting it. It is a very unfair business bill. HJR1006 addresses proposing and submitting to the electors at the next general election an amendment to the Constitution of the State of SD, relating to amendments to the Constitution. Simplified, it states that any ballot issues should contain one subject only. This, hopefully, would be more voter friendly! People often get lost in the wording, which may have proved true in the past. HB1128, after amended, sought to reduce the percentage of state funded money given to schools for teachers from 85 per cent down to 65 per cent. The bill failed as strong testimony showed that two years ago the Blue Ribbon Task Force put the half cent sales tax increase in place for education and property tax relief. Already a plethora of bills have been set forth which changes several parts of the original components of the bill. From all of the time spent on it back then, the expenses incurred by the task force, the testimony given, and the public outcries for approval, I think it should be given the test of time. Others must have felt the same way as the bill failed. We did, however, provide some capital outlay relief for schools this year in HB1240. It raises the limit per student from 2800 dollars in 2021 to 3000 dollars.

We continue to pray for our two legislators who are struggling with continued illness. We also had a legislator lose his father this past week. We all regard each other as family and when someone hurts, we all do. With that, I will close. I hope that you will have a great week; keep crossing the days off the calendar until we see warmer weather! Rep. Lana Greenfield

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Region 1A Boys Basketball Tournament

#1 Sisseton

Score:

Date: 3/2/2018

Time: 7:00 pm

Site: #1 Seed

Score:

#4 Redfield/Doland

Score:

Date: 2/27/2018

Time: 7:00 pm

Site: #4 Seed

Score:

#5 Milbank

#2 Aberdeen Roncalli

Score:

Date: 2/27/2018

Time: 7:00 pm

Site: #2 Seed

Score:

#7 Webster Area

Score:

Date: 3/2/2018

Time: 7:00 pm

Site: High Seed

Score:

#3 Tiospa Zina

Score:

Date: 2/27/2018

Time: 7:00 pm

Site: #3 Seed

Score:

#6 Groton Area

ROUND OF 16 QUALIFIER

School	Seed Pts.
Sisseton	43.737
Aberdeen Roncalli	41.950
Tiospa Zina	41.550
Redfield/Doland	41.350
Milbank	40.250
Groton Area	40.100
Webster Area	37.300

ROUND OF 16 QUALIFIER



DI Team performs at Kiwanis

Lee Schinkel was program leader for Groton Kiwanis Club. Lee presented Groton area high school DI or Destination Imagination team members, who gave a demonstration of their competition skits.

L-R, Robin Jensen, DI parent coach; Hailey Monson, Alyssa Fordham, Julianna Kosel, Rylee Rosenau, Sage Mortenson, Kayle Jensen, and JoAnn Donley, Groton DI coordinator.

King Drops 18 for the No. 11 Wolves in Quarterfinal Win over Minnesota Duluth

Sioux Falls, S.D. – The No. 11 Northern State University men's basketball team cruised into the semifinals of the NSIC/Sanford Health Basketball Tournament with a 75-62 victory over Minnesota Duluth Saturday afternoon. The Wolves improve to 29-3 overall, while the Bulldogs dropped to 12-18 on the year.

The Wolves notched 39 points in the first and another 36 in the second, securing the 13-point victory. Duluth battled early in the first half, holding within five of the Wolves and tying things at 16-all with 12:33 to play. Northern however broke things open from there and led by as much as 14 with 3:54 left in the half.

Duluth continued to fight in the second, however the Bulldogs were unable to overcome the first half deficit. The Wolves shot 50.9 percent from the floor, 32.1 percent from the 3-point line, and 80.0 percent from the foul line in the win. They combined for 30 points in the paint, 15 points off the bench, 18 second chance points, nine points off turnovers, and six fast break points. Northern out-rebounded Duluth 37-27 in the game, notching 13 offensive grabs. The Wolves added 20 assists, eight blocks, and four steals as a team.

Gabe King led the Northern attack with 18 points, hitting 6-of-8 from the floor and 3-of-5 from the arc. He tallied four rebounds, two blocks, and one assist as well. Darin Peterka followed with 14 points of his own, shooting 50.0 percent from the floor. The senior tallied five rebounds and a team second best four assists.

Ian Smith, DJ Pollard, and Bo Fries each notched 11 points apiece, with Fries leading the team off the bench. Smith knocked down two from the 3-point line and led the Wolves with five assists and three steals. Pollard shot 50.0 percent from the floor, adding five rebounds, three assists, one steal, and one block. Fries hit 5-of-7 from the floor, and recorded four rebounds and one assist.

Carter Evans and Logan Doyle combined for the final ten points for the Wolves. Doyle grabbed a team leading seven rebounds, and shot perfect from the field and the foul line. The senior also tallied a team leading three blocks and added one assist. Evans notched four rebounds and four assists of his own, while adding two blocks and shooting 75.0 percent from the floor.

Northern returns to action on Monday at 12 p.m. from the Sanford Pentagon. They will face the winner of the Saturday match-up between Minnesota State and Minot State.

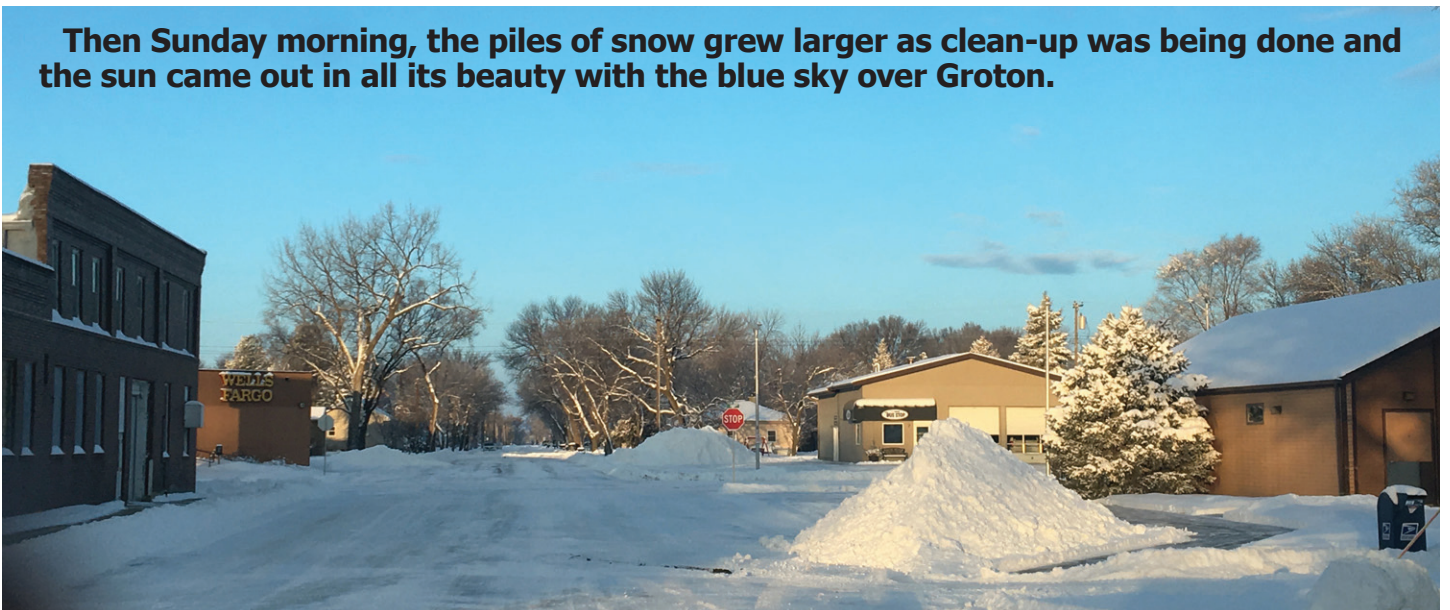
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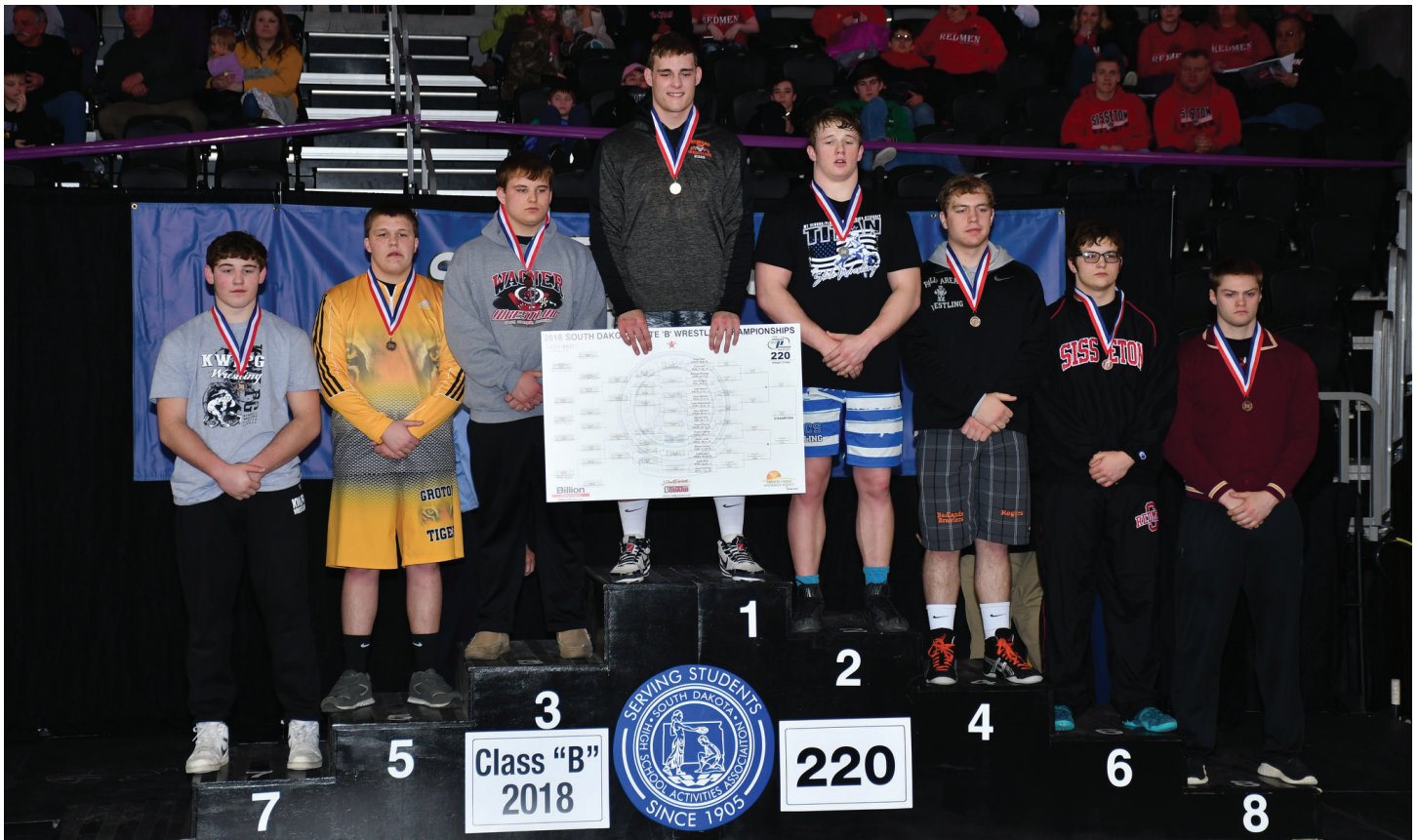
And the heavens opened up and dropped six inches of snow in the Groton Area on Saturday. Visibility was reduced to a few blocks at times due to the heavy snowfall.

Then Sunday morning, the piles of snow grew larger as clean-up was being done and the sun came out in all its beauty with the blue sky over Groton.



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220: Wyatt Locke (22-13) placed 5th and scored 9.00 team points

Champ. Round 1 - Wyatt Locke (Groton Area) 22-13 won by decision over Preston Worth (Potter County) 31-11 (Dec 6-3)

Quarterfinal - Kaeden Metz (Sisseton) 28-10 won by decision over Wyatt Locke (Groton Area) 22-13 (Dec 3-2)

Cons. Round 2 - Wyatt Locke (Groton Area) 22-13 won by decision over Caleb Maciejewski (Hot Springs) 26-25 (Dec 3-2)

Cons. Round 3 - Wyatt Locke (Groton Area) 22-13 won in sudden victory - 1 over Tristen Bent (Webster) 24-21 (SV-1 3-1)

Cons. Semi - Jace Johnson (Wagner) 32-13 won in sudden victory - 1 over Wyatt Locke (Groton Area) 22-13 (SV-1 5-1)

5th Place Match - Wyatt Locke (Groton Area) 22-13 won in sudden victory - 1 over Kaeden Metz (Sisseton) 28-10 (SV-1 3-1)

(Photo courtesy of South Dakota Public Broadcasting)

B-220

1st Place - Evan Kizer of Howard

2nd Place - Jesse Hastings of Mt. Vernon/Plankinton/Corsica-Stickney

3rd Place - Jace Johnson of Wagner

4th Place - Jory Rodgers of Philip

5th Place - Wyatt Locke of Groton Area

6th Place - Kaeden Metz of Sisseton

7th Place - Tyler Resick of Kimball/White Lake/Platte-Geddes

8th Place - Tristen Bent of Webster

113: Dragr Monson (17-11) scored 3.00 team points.

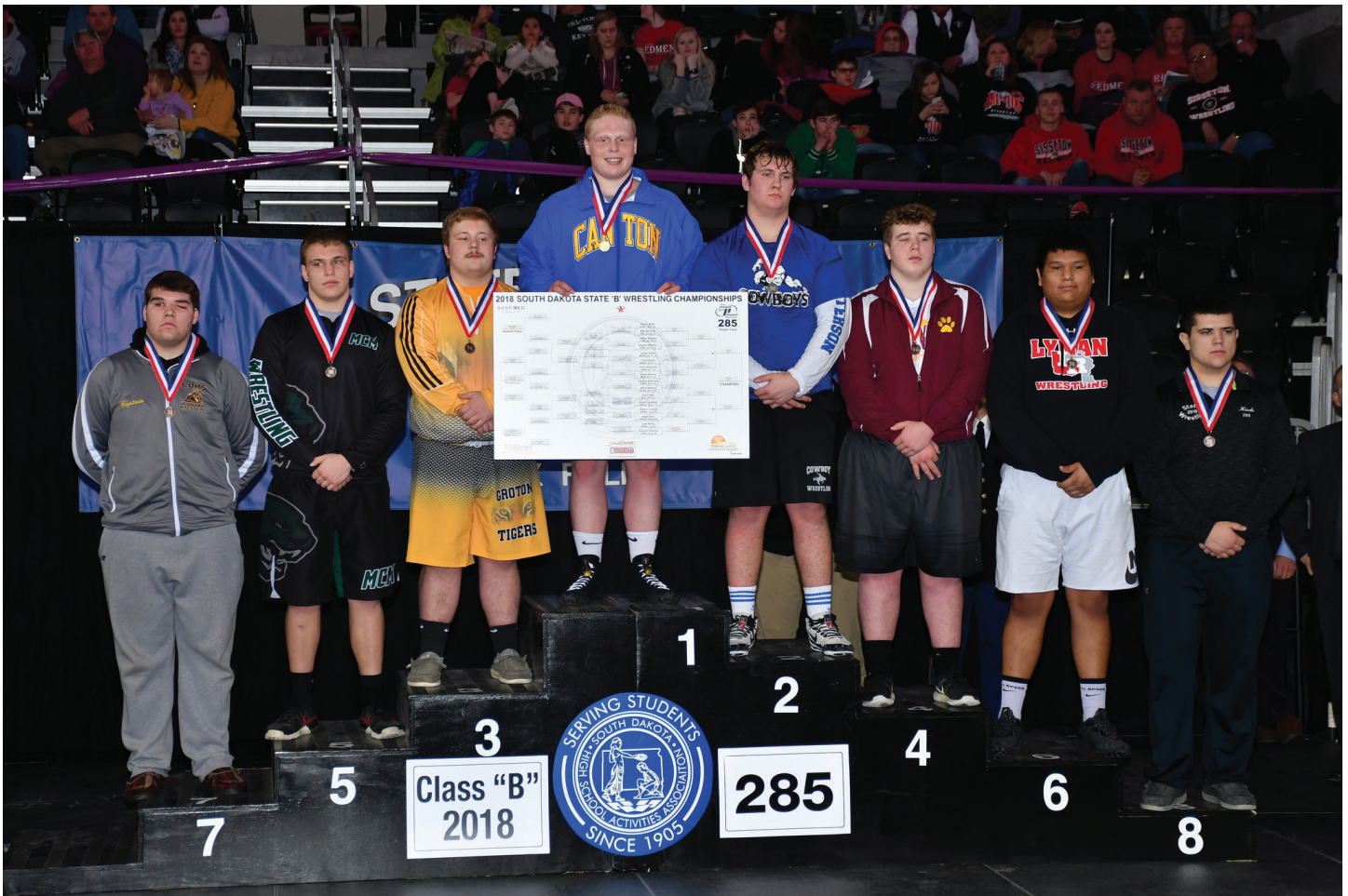
Champ. Round 1 - Blair Blasius (Philip) 34-9 won by decision over Dragr Monson (Groton Area) 17-11 (Dec 10-5)

Cons. Round 1 - Dragr Monson (Groton Area) 17-11 won by fall over Hunter Witte (Flandreau) 16-24 (Fall 0:30)

Cons. Round 2 - Jacob Steiger (Mobridge-Pollock) 43-12 won by fall over Dragr Monson (Groton Area) 17-11 (Fall 2:34)

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(Photo courtesy of South Dakota Public Broadcasting)

285: Brandyn Anderson (32-4) placed 3rd and scored 20 team points

Champ. Round 1 - Brandyn Anderson (Groton Area) 32-4 won by fall over Micah DeBoer (Bon Homme/Scotland/Avon) 28-22 (Fall 0:47)

Quarterfinal - Brandyn Anderson (Groton Area) 32-4 won by decision over Chase Sigdestad (Webster) 30-14 (Dec 7-0)

Semifinal - Braydon Peterson (Lemmon/McIntosh) 52-2 won by decision over Brandyn Anderson (Groton Area) 32-4 (Dec 5-2)

Cons. Semi - Brandyn Anderson (Groton Area) 32-4 won by fall over Jadeon Biggers (Lyman) 37-18 (Fall 2:02)

3rd Place Match - Brandyn Anderson (Groton Area) 32-4 won by fall over Chase Sigdestad (Webster) 30-14 (Fall 1:22)

B-285

1st Place - Payton Smith of Canton

2nd Place - Braydon Peterson of Lemmon/McIntosh

3rd Place - Brandyn Anderson of Groton Area

4th Place - Chase Sigdestad of Webster

5th Place - Tanner Grocott of McCook Central/Montrose

6th Place - Jadeon Biggers of Lyman

7th Place - Brigham Williams of Lead-Deadwood

8th Place - Micah DeBoer of Bon Homme/Scotland/Avon

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Today in Weather History

February 25, 1987: Six to thirty inches of snow fell on this date in 1987 across much of western and central South Dakota. Three to six inches of snow fell in the northeast part of South Dakota. Some of the most significant snowfall amounts reported were 30 inches at Phillip, 26 inches at Murdo and Timber Lake, with 15 inches at Rapid City. Numerous accidents occurred in the western and central sections of the state. Many roads were closed including interstate 90 for most of the 27th. Slippery roads were a major factor in the vehicle injuries of three women on Highway 12, six and one-half miles east of Ipswich in the late afternoon of the 27th. The storm began on the 24th and lasted into the 28th.

February 25, 2000: Unusual February severe thunderstorms produced nickel to quarter size hail in Lyman and Hand counties on this date in 2000.








1934: An outbreak of six tornadoes killed nineteen in Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia. Hardest hit was Bowden, GA and Shady Grove, AL. One home in Lauderdale County, Mississippi was picked up, thrown 400 feet and blown to bits. Six family members were killed in the house.

1991: Black rain fell over southeastern Turkey for 10-hours, causing panic among people. The black rain was the result of soot from burning oil fields in Kuwait.

2010: A strong nor'easter spread significant snow and windy conditions across the Middle Atlantic region from Thursday, February 25th into Friday, February 26th. An area of low pressure developed off the Carolina coast late Wednesday night February 24th and then strengthened as it tracked northward to near Long Island, New York by Thursday evening. As low pressure aloft deepened over the Mid-Atlantic coast Thursday night into Friday, the surface low retrograded and moved westward into northern New Jersey and southern New York. By Saturday, February 27th, the low pushed into southern New England and gradually weakened over the weekend. Strong wind gusts were measured throughout the Middle Atlantic region as a result of this coastal storm. Some of the highest wind gusts recorded include 62 mph measured at Cape May, New Jersey; 52 mph at the Atlantic City Marina; 51 mph at the Mount Pocono Airport and Lewes, Delaware; and 50 mph at Dover Air Force Base. Wind gusts of 40 mph or greater were also recorded at Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Allentown. Considerable blowing and drifting snow resulted, especially from the Poconos eastward into northern New Jersey. Snow drifts as high as 3 to 5 feet were seen across portions of Warren and Sussex counties in New Jersey. Total accumulations of 20 inches or more were recorded from Morris and Sussex counties in New Jersey westward into Monroe County Pennsylvania. A band of 12 to 18 inches of snow accumulation was measured from Warren and Morris counties in New Jersey westward to Lehigh County Pennsylvania. In addition to snow that accumulated during the daytime on Thursday, many locations across the region experienced a heavier burst of snow with gusty winds Thursday night into early Friday thanks to additional moisture that wrapped around the low-pressure system. Some areas saw snowfall rates of 1 to 2 inches per hour, especially from northern New Jersey and into the Poconos. Central Park ended the month with a total of 36.9 inches of snow, making this the snowiest month since records began in 1869.

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Sun Feb 25	Mon Feb 26	Tue Feb 27	Wed Feb 28	Thu Mar 1	Fri Mar 2	Sat Mar 3
						
30°F	34°F	31°F	28°F	29°F	32°F	34°F
9°F	10°F	9°F	12°F	12°F	18°F	26°F
SW 16 MPH	S 10 MPH	NNW 5 MPH	WSW 5 MPH	NNW 7 MPH	SE 15 MPH	SE 16 MPH Precip 20%

Breezy Today Highs Around Freezing



NWS Aberdeen,

Updated: 2/25/2018 4:46 AM Central

Published on: 02/25/2018 at 4:49AM

Temperatures will warm to around the freezing mark today thanks to a west wind. This may blow some of the new snow onto road surfaces and create pockets of ice, but otherwise we are looking at a decent day to remove the snow.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 20.1 F at 2:47 PM

Low Outside Temp: -9.5 F at 4:18 AM

Wind Chill:

High Gust: 15.0 Mph at 3:16 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 70° in 1958

Record Low: -29° in 1919

Average High: 31°F

Average Low: 12°F

Average Precip in Feb: 0.47

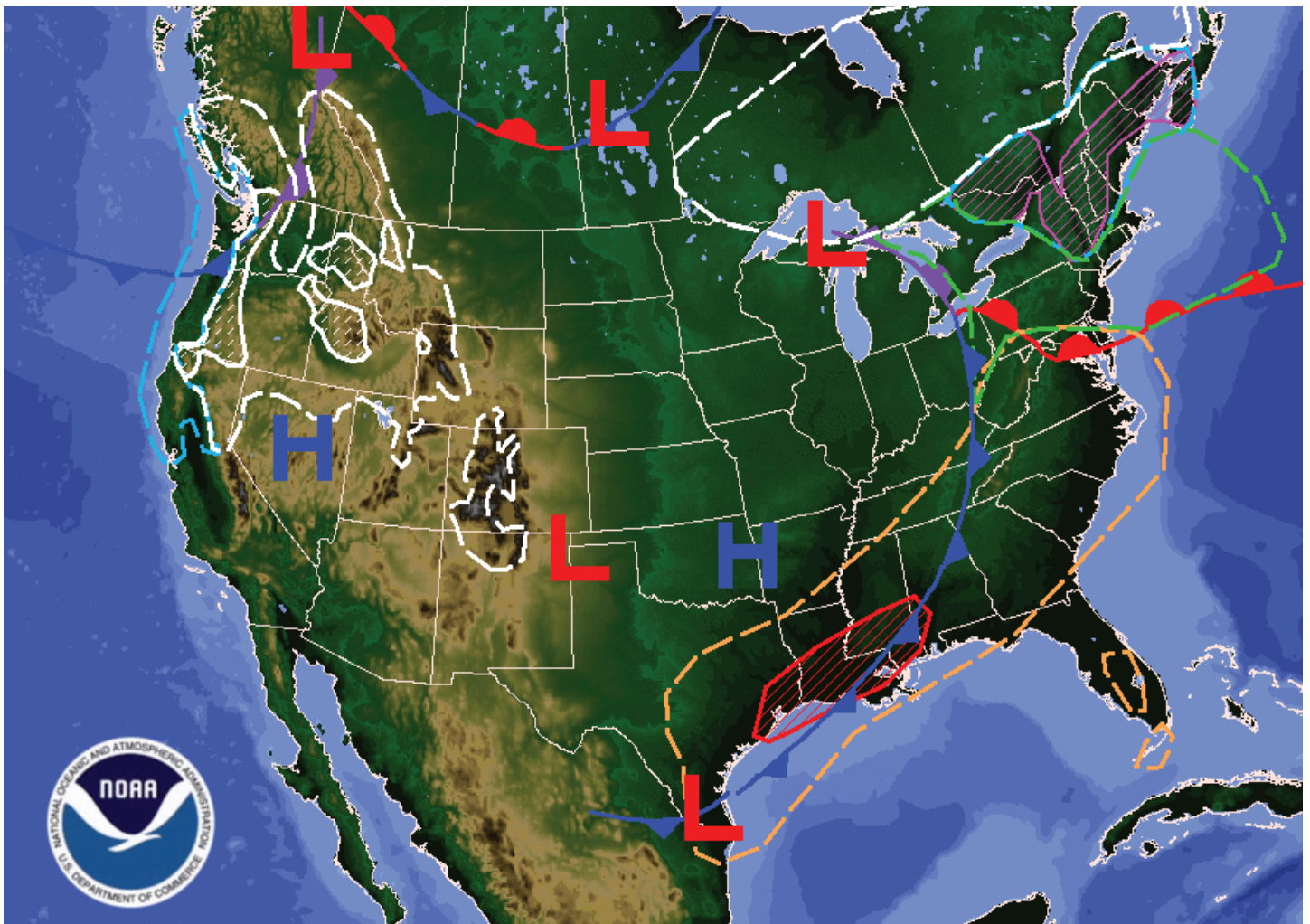
Precip to date in Feb: 0.25

Average Precip to date: 0.94

Precip Year to Date: 0.25

Sunset Tonight: 6:15 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:17 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Sun, Feb 25, 2018, issued 4:13 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Oravec with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain

Rain and T'Storms

Rain and Snow

Snow

Flash Flooding Possible (hatched)

Severe T'Storms Possible (hatched)

Freezing Rain Possible (hatched)

Heavy Snow Possible (hatched)

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A REASON TO BE GLAD

The word glad in Scripture carries with it the idea of happiness and joyfulness, pleasure and freedom. In God's Word, however, there is a source for this gladness: it is the Lord. The Psalmist writes, "For You make me glad by Your deeds, O Lord; I sing for joy at the works of your hands."

This source for our gladness does not come from anything we have accomplished or any ladder of success that we might have climbed. It does not come from wealth that we may have accumulated or records we have set. It does not come from any amount of power we have because of our achievements. This gladness that the Psalmist writes about comes from what God has done for us.

Another Psalmist wrote, "But may all who search for You be filled with joy and gladness. May those who love Your salvation repeatedly shout, 'The Lord is great.'" And another Psalmist said, "Let the godly rejoice. Let them be glad in God's presence."

We often set "goals" for ourselves that we think will bring a sense of well-being and fulfillment to us. They come from the "if only" statements we make: "If only I can get a promotion I will be satisfied," or "If only I had a larger home our family will be happy," or "If only..." and the list goes on.

But the "glad" that comes from God that can fill our hearts and lives comes as a result of what He has done for us: made possible our salvation through Jesus Christ, His Son and our Savior. Because of Him we can be glad and sing for joy, we can know that "all things are working together" for our good and His glory.

Prayer: How thankful we are, Lord, that we can have hearts filled with gladness because of Your love and grace. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 92:4 For You, Lord, have made me glad through Your work; I will triumph in the works of Your hands.

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2018 Groton SD Community Events

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

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

News from the Associated Press

2018 state ballots could seek revised redistricting criteria

By The Associated Press

A look at proposed redistricting initiatives that have been approved to appear on statewide ballots this year or for which supporters have collected signatures in an attempt to qualify them. Other proposals are earlier in the initiative process.

OHIO

Issue: Proposed constitutional amendment on May 8 ballot affecting congressional redistricting.

Status quo: Congress: 12 Republicans, four Democrats.

Current process: State Legislature passes a redistricting plan by a majority vote, subject to a gubernatorial veto.

Proposed process: State Legislature passes a redistricting plan by a three-fifths majority with support of at least half the members of the majority and minority parties, subject to a gubernatorial veto. If that fails, districts are drawn by a seven-member commission composed of two majority and two minority party lawmakers, the governor, auditor and secretary of state; approval requires four votes, including two each from majority and minority party commissioners. If that fails, the Legislature may pass a plan by a three-fifths vote with the support of at least one-third of the majority and minority party members, subject to a gubernatorial veto. If that fails, the Legislature may pass a plan by a majority subject to a gubernatorial veto, but it would remain in effect for only four years instead of 10.

Proposed Criteria: Districts must protect racial minority voting rights, be compact and contiguous and limit the number of counties and cities that are split among multiple districts.

MICHIGAN

Issue: Petition signatures submitted for a proposed constitutional amendment on the Nov. 6 ballot affecting congressional and state legislative redistricting.

Status quo: Congress: nine Republicans, four Democrats, one vacancy. State Senate: 27 Republicans, 11 Democrats. State House: 63 Republicans, 47 Democrats.

Current process: State Legislature passes redistricting plans by a majority vote, subject to a gubernatorial veto.

Proposed process: Districts would be drawn by a 13-member citizens' commission, composed of four Democrats, four Republicans and five independents randomly selected by the secretary of state from among applicants. Approval of districts would require a majority vote with support of at least two Democrats, two Republicans and two independents. If that fails, each commissioner would submit a plan and rank their options by preference, with the highest-ranked plan prevailing. In case of a tie, the secretary of state would randomly select the final plan.

Proposed criteria: Districts must be compact, contiguous, limit splitting of counties and cities, "reflect the state's diverse population and communities of interest," not favor or disfavor incumbents and not provide a disproportionate advantage to any political party.

MISSOURI

Issue: Petitions signatures being gathered for a proposed constitutional amendment on the Nov. 6 ballot affecting state legislative redistricting.

Status quo: State Senate: 24 Republicans, nine Democrats, one vacancy. State House: 112 Republicans, 46 Democrats, five vacancies.

Current process: For the Senate, the governor appoints a 10-member bipartisan commission from nominees submitted by the state Republican and Democratic parties. For the House, the governor appoints a 16-member bipartisan commission from nominees submitted by Republican and Democratic congressional

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district committees. Approval of maps requires a seven-tenths majority vote. If that fails, the state Supreme Court appoints a panel of six appellate judges to draw the maps, with a majority vote of the panel required.

Proposed Process: A nonpartisan state demographer would be selected from among applicants by agreement of the Senate majority and minority leaders or, if that fails, by random selection of the state auditor. The demographer would submit maps for approval to the redistricting commissions, which would follow existing procedures for voting.

Proposed criteria: The demographer must take into account the rights of racial and language minorities and design districts to achieve both "partisan fairness" and "competitiveness" as determined by statistical measurements using the results of previous elections. Districts shall also be contiguous and limit splits among counties and cities. Compact districts are preferred but rank last among the criteria.

SOUTH DAKOTA

Issue: Petition signatures submitted for a proposed constitutional amendment on the Nov. 6 ballot affecting state legislative redistricting.

Status quo: State Senate: 29 Republicans, 6 Democrats. State House: 60 Republicans, 10 Democrats.

Current process: State Legislature passes a redistricting plan by a majority vote, subject to a gubernatorial veto.

Proposed process: The state Board of Elections would create a nine-member redistricting commission, with no more than three members from each political party. Five votes would be needed to approve a map.

Proposed criteria: Districts would be drawn in a grid-like pattern, with adjustments to make them compact, contiguous, "respect communities of interest," and follow geographic features and city and county boundaries. Party registration, voting history and the addresses of incumbents can't be considered.

UTAH

Issue: Petition signatures being gathered for a proposed constitutional amendment on the Nov. 6 ballot affecting congressional and state legislative redistricting.

Status quo: Congress: Four Republicans. State Senate: 24 Republicans, five Democrats. State House: 62 Republicans, 13 Democrats.

Current process: State Legislature passes redistricting plans by a majority vote, subject to a gubernatorial veto.

Proposed process: Districts would be drawn by a seven member commission, composed of one gubernatorial appointee, two appointees by Republican legislative leaders, two appointees by Democratic legislative leaders and two political independents appointed by majority and minority party legislative leaders. The commission may approve between one and three plans by a vote of at least five members. Their recommended plans then would be submitted to the Legislature for final approval or rejection. If the Legislature adopts a plan that wasn't recommended by the commission, it must provide a detailed explanation of why its plan better satisfies the redistricting standards.

Proposed criteria: Districts shall limit splits among cities and counties, be compact and contiguous, preserve communities of interest and not favor of disfavor incumbents. Partisan voting records may not be considered. But statistical tests, including a measurement of partisan symmetry, shall be used to determine whether the maps meet the other criteria.

Redistricting emerges as key ballot, legislative priority

By DAVID A. LIEB, Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — Responding to complaints about partisan gerrymandering, a significant number of states this year are considering changing the criteria used to draw congressional and state legislative districts or shifting the task from elected officials to citizen commissions.

The proposals, being advanced both as ballot initiatives and legislation, are part of a larger battle between the political parties to best position themselves for the aftermath of the 2020 Census, when over

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400 U.S. House districts and nearly 7,400 state legislative districts will be redrawn.

Since the start of this year, more than 60 bills dealing with redistricting criteria and methods have been introduced in at least 18 state legislatures, already equaling the total number of states that considered bills last year, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

The Ohio Legislature already has placed a redistricting measure on the state's primary ballot in May. Citizen efforts are underway to get redistricting measures on the November ballot in a half-dozen other states, which would mark the greatest number of such initiatives in decades.

Supporters already have submitted thousands of petition signatures in Michigan and South Dakota. Petitions are currently being circulated in Missouri and Utah. Colorado has two groups working on potential ballot initiatives. And an Arkansas attorney launched an initiative effort this past week.

"The basic bottom line is people want fairness, and they want balanced government," said Chuck Parkinson, a retired congressional staffer and customs official under Republican presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush.

Parkinson is chairman of a group pushing a South Dakota ballot measure to remove legislative redistricting from the hands of lawmakers and create a nine-member redistricting commission.

Although many redistricting proposals tout at least some bipartisan support, progressive activists and Democratic-aligned donors have helped fuel some of this year's measures.

In South Dakota, where voters defeated a similar measure in 2016, the second attempt listed just four donors as of the start of this year — former Democratic U.S. Sen. Tim Johnson, who gave \$50,000, and three unions that contributed a combined \$18,500.

The top donor to Utah's redistricting initiative through the end of last year was former Democratic gubernatorial nominee Michael Weinholtz, who had given \$200,000.

The president of the Michigan redistricting initiative was a supporter of Democrat Hillary Clinton's unsuccessful 2016 presidential campaign, and the spokesman for Missouri's initiative is a Democratic consultant.

The Missouri measure requiring a nonpartisan demographer to draw districts has taken in more than 16,000 individual donations of \$25 or less, but much of the campaign's money has come from groups aligned with Democrats. That includes about \$800,000 from unions and \$250,000 from an organization founded by billionaire liberal philanthropist George Soros.

Matt Walter, president of the Republican State Leadership Committee, contends the initiatives are merely "politics wrapped in some sort of illusion of citizen-participated good government."

"What we're seeing here right now is an organized, orchestrated effort by the progressive left to rig the system to their advantage," Walter said.

Democrats say it's just the opposite — that Republicans rigged the system after the 2010 Census to expand the party's grip on political power and are trying to hold onto it. They often cite North Carolina, which has been subject to multiple lawsuits over how the GOP redrew the political boundaries. Democrats have a voter registration edge over Republicans in the state, yet Republicans legislators drew congressional districts in a way that gave them a 10-3 edge in U.S. House seats.

Across the country, Republicans currently control 33 governorships and about two-thirds of all legislative chambers. Democrats contend they want redistricting processes that are fair to voters, no matter which party is in power.

One of Democrats' top targets has been Pennsylvania, where the state Supreme Court redrew congressional districts this past week after ruling that the 2011 boundaries drawn by the GOP-led Legislature were unconstitutionally gerrymandered. Statistical voting models of the court's new plan show Democrats could significantly cut into the GOP's 13-5 seat advantage in a state where registered Democrats outnumber Republicans.

The U.S. Supreme Court is expected to rule later this year on cases alleging illegal partisan gerrymandering by Republicans in Wisconsin and by Democrats in Maryland.

An AP analysis of 2016 election data found four times as many states with Republican-skewed state House or Assembly districts than Democratic ones, based on a statistical formula cited in recent court

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cases. Among the two dozen most populated states that determine the vast majority of Congress, there were nearly three times as many with Republican-tilted U.S. House districts.

Democrats have since made redistricting a bigger priority. Former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder is heading the National Democratic Redistricting Committee, which is targeting or watching governors' races, legislative elections and ballot issues in about 20 states.

Democrats want to end or diminish the legislature's role in redistricting in several Republican-led states and shift those duties to independent or bipartisan commissions, similar to the processes in place in Arizona and California. The roles are reversed in Maryland, where Republican Gov. Larry Hogan is proposing an independent redistricting commission in a state where registered Democrats outnumber Republicans 2-to-1 and have long controlled the redistricting process.

"By and large, if a commission draws the map, it is going to be a more fair, less political, less-partisan-driven map, and that's a good thing," said Kelly Ward, executive director of the National Democratic Redistricting Committee.

But Republicans contend that even independent commissions typically are filled by people with partisan preferences.

Arizona's Republican legislative leaders have advanced a proposed constitutional amendment to give lawmakers greater say in appointing the state's redistricting commission.

A compromise plan placed on the ballot by Ohio's Republican-led Legislature would continue to give lawmakers the primary responsibility of congressional redistricting but would limit partisan gerrymandering by requiring a significant percentage of "yes" votes from the minority party to approve a 10-year map.

In Indiana, the Republican-led Senate voted along party lines last month to defeat a Democratic amendment that would have created a commission to recommend congressional and legislative districts. The Senate instead passed a bill setting criteria for lawmakers to consider. That bill is now in the House.

Indiana state Sen. Greg Walker, a Republican who sponsored the pending measure, said he hopes to eventually incorporate statistical analyses of partisan advantages into the Legislature's redistricting procedures.

"If we can demonstrate that we have made a good faith effort to not eliminate political bias 100 percent but certainly minimize it ... ultimately I don't think it matters who draws the maps, because the process will fine-tune itself," Walker said.

Follow David A. Lieb at: <http://twitter.com/DavidALieb>

Saturday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Brandon Valley 54, Yankton 44
Rapid City Christian 73, Lead-Deadwood 46

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Brandon Valley 52, Yankton 41
Brookings 47, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 42
Sturgis 61, Douglas 32

Daum leads South Dakota State past Fort Wayne 97-90

FORT WAYNE, Ind. (AP) — Mike Daum poured in 31 points and snagged 13 rebounds and Tevin King added a double-double of his own to lead South Dakota State to a 97-90 victory over Fort Wayne on Saturday night for its eighth straight win.

Daum, a junior, buried 8 of 12 shots from 3-point range on the way to his 18th double-double of the season and 29th of his career for the Jackrabbits (25-6, 13-1 Summit League). King finished with 11

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points, 10 boards and five assists, while David Jenkins Jr. scored 16. Reed Tellinghuisen added 13 points and Skyler Flatten scored 11 as all five starters reached double figures for South Dakota State, which had already wrapped up the league title. The Jackrabbits will host the Summit League tourney and will open against No. 8 seed Western Illinois on March 3.

John Konchar scored 31 with six rebounds and six assists to pace the fourth-place Mastodons (18-13, 7-7). Bryson Scott added 16 points and eight rebounds.

South Dakota State shot 51 percent from the field in the first half and led 45-38 at intermission. Fort Wayne hung tough in the second half and trailed 82-81 after two Konchar free throws with 4:41 remaining. But Daum hit two 3s and Tellinghuisen and Jenkins each hit one to put the game out of reach.

Developers investing in city outside of Sioux Falls

HARRISBURG, S.D. (AP) — A city outside of Sioux Falls seems to be headed toward a growth boom with major developers investing resources into recently annexed land near the town's borders.

City officials estimate that Harrisburg, which sits less than 10 miles south of Sioux Falls, reached a population of 6,000 last year. They're predicting the city's population will double in the next decade, with the arrival of new families, businesses and amenities.

Developers laid claim to swaths of land last year, the Argus Leader reported. City officials annexed 280 acres of land into the city.

Dynamic Development is developing a 120-acre subdivision with residential, commercial and industrial lots. The developer's owner, Mark Fiechtner, said enrollment in Harrisburg public schools quickly increased because of the district's proximity to development in southern Sioux Falls.

"It looks like a tidal wave when I see the growth charts that the school district sends out," Fiechtner said.

The city is not responding to the growth.

Van Buskirk Companies is working to increase the city's inventory of single-family homes. Houses are already under construction nearby Dynamic Development's subdivision, according to Ryan Jansa, Van Buskirk's land development manager.

Jansa said a new grocery store in town changed the landscape for Harrisburg residents, who are used to driving to Sioux Falls to buy food or household items.

"You're always going to run out of eggs or something, and people that used to live in Harrisburg had to go a long way to get that done," Jansa said. "Now, you can walk out your door, ride your bike down there and, 10 minutes, you're back."

Mayor Julie Burke-Van Luvanee said the city needs more commercial development to bolster the sales tax base and fund infrastructure upgrades to handle more residents.

"We're growing out, not necessarily up," Burke-Van Luvanee said. "And infrastructure is not cheap."

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

South Dakota professor uses pyrotechnics to make science fun

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota School of Mines & Technology professor is leading captivating demonstrations with pyrotechnics to encourage young students to pursue degrees in science and engineering.

Chemistry professor Justin Meyer is trying to impress upon visiting middle and high school students that science can be fun. His 45-minute science show uses mild pyrotechnics, including acid-infused cotton balls and small party balloons filled with hydrogen.

It was part of Engineering and Science Day held at the Mines campus Thursday, the Rapid City Journal reported.

"If we can excite even five or six of these students to go into the science fields that weren't thinking about it before, that's a huge gain for us and for society," Meyer said.

He said science classes aren't all unpredictable demonstrations and pyrotechnics.

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"We do find science classes can be kind of boring, with just covering concepts and so forth," Meyer said. "Mixing it up with stuff like this and purely showing demos is a way (of saying), 'Eventually, we'll get to this,'" he said.

Jade Herman helped organize the event and serves as special projects coordinator for Mines President James Rankin's office. She said attending Engineering and Science Day is what inspired her to seek an undergraduate degree from the college. Now, she enjoys working with young visiting students.

"My favorite part of the job has always been interacting with the students," she said. "Seeing the middle school kids coming and learning, hopefully that sparks their interest and they'll come here too."

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

NRA spokeswoman becomes new face of gun rights movement

By TAMMY WEBBER, Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Dana Loesch is the new public face of the National Rifle Association, an organization long associated with older white men.

At 39, she's poised, photogenic and a skilled public speaker, yet she's not softening the message of the NRA as it becomes an increasingly active voice in the nation's culture wars, with positions on everything from immigration to the media.

In the aftermath of the shooting deaths of 17 people, mostly students, at a Florida high school, it's Loesch who has been the NRA's main messenger.

The NRA dispatched Loesch last week to a CNN town hall, where she was questioned by students and parents from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, the site of the Valentine's Day shooting. Often brash and combative, Loesch was measured and even-tempered, though she was booed when she left the stage.

Charlie Sykes, a longtime conservative radio host who has been critical of the NRA, said Loesch's skill is communicating with a broad range of Americans while retaining the ultra-conservative base built by Wayne LaPierre, the NRA's executive vice president and CEO since 1991.

"Imagine Wayne LaPierre sitting in that seat and you realize the significance of Dana," Sykes said. "She can bring the hot sauce without having that persona" of an angry white man.

Even before taking over as NRA spokeswoman last year, Loesch had a robust conservative following, cultivated on social media — she has 765,000 Twitter followers — and through years of television and radio appearances, including on her own radio program, "The Dana Show."

The day after the televised town hall, she was back in her more familiar mode, speaking to a far friendlier audience at the Conservative Political Action Conference near Washington. Loesch defiantly defended NRA's 5 million members, who she said "will not be gaslighted into thinking that we're responsible for a tragedy that we had nothing to do with."

And, her voice dripping with condescension, she addressed journalists from the mainstream media, who she said "love mass shootings" because "crying white mothers are ratings gold."

Her criticism of the media recalled an NRA video last summer in which she attacked The New York Times in a way that some on the right and the left feared could incite violence. In the video, Loesch said NRA members have "had it" with the newspaper's "fake news" and warned: "Consider this the shot across your proverbial bow. ... In short? We're coming for you."

Loesch was back on television Sunday, defending NRA members and arguing against calls to ban semi-automatic weapons like the one used in the Florida school shooting. "This is not the fault, nor are 5 million innocent law-abiding Americans culpable for this," she said on ABC's "This Week."

Shannon Watts, founder of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, said she was not in the least reassured by Loesch's appearance at the town hall, especially after she attacked the media the following day.

"She's younger. She's a woman and a mom. She's television-ready," Watts said. "But her rhetoric is just as radicalized, if not more, than Wayne LaPierre's."

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Loesch grew up in a blue-collar family in a small Missouri town near St. Louis, reared mainly by her mother after her parents' divorce. She told The Times that she recalls her grandfather hunting deer and raccoon, but also a night her grandfather stood on the porch with a shotgun to protect her aunt from an estranged husband.

"Looking back, I think I always wanted to know that I was safe," she told the newspaper for an article published last month.

Loesch studied journalism at Webster University, but dropped out when she became pregnant with her first son. She soon began writing a blog about motherhood and started her radio program. She later helped found the St. Louis tea party and had stints as a political analyst at Breitbart News Network and The Blaze.

Loesch, who has said she keeps a handgun near her bed and has a tattoo on her forearm with a reference to a Bible passage calling for Christians to wear holy armor, has never been afraid of being provocative.

During a 2012 radio show, Loesch said she didn't have a problem with Marines who urinated on dead Taliban soldiers, declaring: "I'd drop trou and do it too."

Associated Press writer Darlene Superville in Washington contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to show that Loesch has 765,000 Twitter followers, not 46 million; she has 46,000 likes.

Border Patrol's checkpoints overlooked in debate over wall

By NOMAAN MERCHANT, Associated Press

LAREDO, Texas (AP) — As vehicles line up at the Border Patrol's checkpoint a half-hour drive's north of the U.S.-Mexico border, its agents have around 10 seconds to check each driver and decide which few they will stop for additional inspection.

It's a situation challenged constantly by smugglers, sometimes with deadly consequences. In July, 10 migrants died after a tractor-trailer packed with people made it through Laredo North, only to be discovered two hours later in a Walmart parking lot in San Antonio. Dozens of others streamed out of the trailer, gasping for air.

The Border Patrol considers its 34 permanent interior checkpoints along the United States' southern border such as Laredo North a crucial layer of its strategy to stop smuggling. The checkpoints inside the U.S. can be up to 100 miles (161 kilometers) from any border, in addition to the ports of entry where people face inspection when coming into the country.

But agents who work the Laredo North checkpoint say they're understaffed and sometimes overwhelmed by traffic. And while top Border Patrol officials say President Donald Trump's proposed border wall would help them cut the number of overall smuggling cases, some critics don't believe a wall would reduce illegal immigration and is drawing attention and money away from the checkpoints and other critical needs on the border.

The Trump administration's latest budget proposal includes \$1.6 billion to start building a wall that the administration has estimated will cost \$18 billion. It asks for funding to hire more Border Patrol agents. It also includes \$33 million to build a new Border Patrol station in Freer, Texas, northeast of Laredo. But it doesn't directly address needs at other checkpoints, and it proposes zeroing out new spending on tactical infrastructure like roads used by border agents and replacement border fencing.

The proposal also would end funding for efforts to find and destroy border tunnels built by cartels to get under existing barriers. Border security experts have warned that constructing a wall will lead to smugglers trying to dig more tunnels.

Rep. Henry Cuellar, a Laredo Democrat who sits on the U.S. House subcommittee directing homeland security funding, wants U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the Border Patrol's parent agency, to invest in additional scanners and other improvements at Laredo North, as well as interceptor boats and radio towers for remote border areas. Cuellar also says the government should fund retention bonuses to keep

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agents from leaving the patrol.

"They're taking money away from proven law enforcement systems to put it into this 14th century solution," Cuellar said.

A CBP spokesman declined to comment on the budget request.

Built in 2006, Laredo North sits 30 miles (48 kilometers) north of the Rio Grande, the river separating the U.S. and Mexico in Texas.

All of the approximately 9,000 daily vehicles that pass Laredo North's seven lanes get an inspection. An agent checks immigration documents and talks to each driver. A camera reads license plates, and another agent guides a dog around each passenger vehicle to search for hidden people or drugs. A fraction of vehicles are sent to a secondary inspection, where agents interview the driver further and search the vehicle. The occasional tractor-trailer is directed to a mobile X-ray machine that scans the interior of the truck.

Opponents argue the checkpoints unlawfully restrict the movement of immigrants in the U.S. illegally who live in South Texas, pointing to incidents like the brief detention of a 10-year-old Laredo girl with cerebral palsy who needed surgery at a hospital north of the checkpoints. A Government Accountability Office study released in November said problems with Border Patrol data made it impossible to determine how effective the checkpoints are.

Agents do make big catches at such checkpoints. In January, agents at another Laredo checkpoint discovered 76 people inside a tractor-trailer that had been flagged for extra inspection. But the Border Patrol's largest union says agents have low morale and believe large loads of people and drugs are able to get through.

"Our agents are understaffed and overworked," said Hector Garza, the Laredo representative of the National Border Patrol Council. "Even though they have all these forces against them, they go out there and try to do their best."

Local Border Patrol officials argue that a wall would help agents catch more people at the border, cutting down on the number of cases making it to the checkpoints. In many smuggling cases, authorities say, migrants enter separately and are bundled into trailers on the U.S. side.

But Guadalupe Correa-Cabrera, an expert on migration who is an associate professor at George Mason University, believes that if a wall is built, immigrants would just find other ways to enter the U.S., including paying smugglers to bring them over in tractor-trailers. Rather than cross the Rio Grande, they would count on successfully sneaking through established ports of entry and interior checkpoints, she argued.

"What is the route or what are the means people are going to take?" Correa-Cabrera said. "The ones that they perceive as safer."

After illegal border crossings hit a 45-year low last year, according to the Border Patrol's statistics, the agency says apprehension numbers have started to rise. Despite the Trump administration's efforts to discourage people in Central America from migrating to the U.S., authorities in both the U.S. and Mexico are still catching trailers filled with people who sometimes pay \$5,000 or more to cartel-controlled smugglers to be taken north.

As for cases like the one in July where 10 people died, Jason Owens, the chief Border Patrol agent for the agency's Laredo sector, said his people are trained to make quick decisions about whether to order an extended inspection. But the number of vehicles at times "obscures the ability of the agents to concentrate on the legitimate threats," he said.

"It hits all of us very hard," Owens said. "Nobody wants to see somebody perish trying to make it into this country to seek a better life for themselves."

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China paves way for Xi Jinping to extend rule beyond 2 terms

By GILLIAN WONG, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China's ruling Communist Party has proposed scrapping term limits for the country's president, the official news agency said Sunday, appearing to lay the groundwork for party leader Xi Jinping to rule as president beyond 2023.

The party's Central Committee proposed to remove from the constitution the expression that China's president and vice president "shall serve no more than two consecutive terms," the Xinhua News Agency said.

"Xi Jinping has finally achieved his ultimate goal when he first embarked on Chinese politics — that is to be the Mao Zedong of the 21st century," said Willy Lam, a political analyst at the Chinese University in Hong Kong, referring to the founder of communist China.

Xi, 64, cemented his status as the most powerful Chinese leader since Mao in the 1970s at last year's twice-a-decade Communist Party congress, where his name and a political theory attributed to him were added to the party constitution as he was given a second five-year term as general secretary.

It was the latest move by the party signaling Xi's willingness to break with tradition and centralize power under him. Xi has taken control of an unusually wide range of political, economic and other functions, a break with the past two decades of collective leadership.

"What is happening is potentially very dangerous because the reason why Mao Zedong made one mistake after another was because China at the time was a one-man show," Lam said. "For Xi Jinping, whatever he says is the law. There are no longer any checks and balances."

Xi is coming to the end of his first five-year term as president and is set to be appointed to his second term at an annual meeting of the rubber-stamp parliament that starts March 5. The proposal to end term limits will likely be approved at that meeting.

Term limits on officeholders have been in place since they were included in the 1982 constitution, when lifetime tenure was abolished.

Political analysts said the party would likely seek to justify the proposed removal of the presidential term limit by citing Xi's vision of establishing a prosperous, modern society by 2050.

"The theoretical justification for removing tenure limits is that China requires a visionary, capable leader to see China through this multi-decade grand plan," Lam said.

"But the other aspect of it could just be Mao Zedong-like megalomania; he is just convinced that he is fit to be an emperor for life," he said.

Hu Xingdou, a Beijing-based political commentator, said while Xi might need an extra five-year term or two to carry out his plans, the country is unlikely to return to an era of lifetime tenure for heads of state.

"President Xi may be in a leading position for a relatively long time," Hu said. "This is beneficial to pushing forward reforms and the fight against corruption, but it's impossible for China to have lifetime tenure again."

"We have drawn profound lessons from the system of lifetime tenures," Hu said, referring to the chaos and turmoil of Mao's 1966-1976 Cultural Revolution.

Xi's image dominates official propaganda, prompting suggestions that he is trying to build a cult of personality, and evoking memories of the upheaval of that era. Party spokespeople reject such talk, insisting Xi is the core of its seven-member Standing Committee, not a lone strongman.

At last year's party congress, Xi hailed a "new era" under his leadership and laid out his vision of a ruling party that serves as the vanguard for everything from defending national security to providing moral guidance to ordinary Chinese. At the close of the congress, the party elevated five new officials to assist Xi on his second five-year term, but stopped short of designating an obvious successor to him.

Political analysts said the absence of an apparent successor pointed to Xi's longer-term ambitions.

Sunday's announcement on term limits came before the Central Committee was to begin a three-day meeting in Beijing on Monday to discuss major personnel appointments and other issues.

The son of a famed communist elder, Xi rose through the ranks to the position of Shanghai's party leader before being promoted to the all-powerful Politburo Standing Committee in 2007.

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When Xi did assume the top spot in 2012, it was as head of a reduced seven-member committee on which he had only one reliable ally, veteran Wang Qishan. He put Wang in charge of a sweeping anti-corruption crackdown that helped Xi eliminate challengers, both serving and retired, and cow potential opponents.

Xi, whose titles include head of the armed forces, has lavished attention on the military with parades and defense budget increases. But he's also led a crackdown on abuses and a push to cut 300,000 personnel from the 2.3 million-member People's Liberation Army, underscoring his ability to prevail against entrenched interests.

Microsoft fights US in high court to protect global business

By MARK SHERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Microsoft has an eye on its international customers as it confronts the Trump administration in a Supreme Court fight about turning over emails to investigators.

The justices will hear arguments Tuesday over whether the company, as part of an international drug trafficking investigation, must comply with an American warrant for emails stored on a server in a Microsoft facility in Dublin, Ireland.

The case turns on a law written in 1986, long before the advent of cloud computing, when lawmakers couldn't imagine a world in which Microsoft and other technology companies store data around the world. The Stored Communications Act sets rules for authorities when they want to gain access to electronic communications.

A federal appeals court agreed with Microsoft that the emails were beyond the warrant's reach because they are kept outside the United States.

But the larger context is the technology sector's need "to give customers around the world confidence that they can rely on us," Microsoft's president, Brad Smith, told reporters in a telephone call Thursday.

The concerns stem in part from the 2013 leak of classified information detailing America's surveillance programs and the role Microsoft and others played in turning over emails and other information.

Smith recalled a conversation in Berlin in which a German official warned that Microsoft and its American rivals risked losing foreign business if they couldn't protect their information from the U.S. government.

"I said then that we'd persist with this case all the way to the Supreme Court, if that were necessary. That's where we are today," Smith said. Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Google and IBM are among other technology companies backing Microsoft.

The Trump administration said it's wrong to look at this case as involving foreign data. Microsoft can send data wherever it wants and retrieve information from around the world with a few clicks of a mouse at its Redmond, Washington, headquarters, the administration said, holding the same view as the Obama administration.

The problem is even more complex for information held by Google, which "stores the emails of U.S. users all over the world, sometimes breaking an account into multiple 'shards,'" Solicitor General Noel Francisco wrote in his Supreme Court brief. Google sometimes stores the text of an email in one place and attachments in another, Francisco said.

Thirty-five states on the government's side say a win for Microsoft would especially hamper drug and sex crime investigations.

The technology companies have built data centers around the world to keep up with customers' demands for speed and access. Microsoft maintains servers at more than 100 locations in 40 countries, according to court papers.

A federal judge in New York signed the warrant for the Microsoft account in December 2013. Investigators believed it was being used in illegal drug transactions. Court documents say nothing about the account holder's citizenship or country of residence, but Smith said Microsoft's policy is to store data in the country where the user lives or in a center closest to that country.

Microsoft turned over information about the user of the account, but went to court to defend its decision not to hand over the emails from Ireland.

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For as much interest as the case has drawn — 30 briefs from other technology companies, foreign governments, civil liberties groups, media companies and privacy experts — Congress could limit the effect of a high court ruling or make the case go away altogether if it were to pass bipartisan legislation updating the 1986 Stored Communications Act. The proposed legislation, known as the Cloud Act, has the backing of the administration and Microsoft.

Smith said Microsoft agrees that “law enforcement needs information across borders,” but that should happen under “a new generation” of U.S. and international laws.

The Cloud Act says “the location of data shouldn’t matter,” said Jennifer Daskal, an American University law professor. But it also includes a provision that would allow technology companies to resist some government requests for information, Daskal said.

Privacy experts say the legislation does not do enough to protect consumer interests either in the United States or abroad.

A decision in *U.S. v. Microsoft*, 17-2, is expected by late June.

Billy Graham played complicated role in US race relations

By JAY REEVES, Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) — The Rev. Billy Graham was single-minded when he preached about God, prefacing sermon points with the phrase “The Bible says ...” Yet he had a complicated role in race relations, particularly when confronting segregation in his native South.

In Alabama for one of his evangelistic crusades in 1965, just months after passage of the Civil Rights Act, Graham talked about the Confederate flag flying “proudly” atop the state Capitol and the fact that both of his grandfathers served as rebel soldiers, according to a recording available on his ministry’s website. He didn’t address the evils of segregation directly, talking instead about God’s unique power to change people and communities.

But Graham also drew scorn from segregationists for speaking to racially mixed crowds and allowing blacks and whites to mingle during the trademark altar call that ended each service. The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was an ally, and King publicly credited Graham with helping the cause of civil rights.

As a white moderate who spoke with a Southern drawl, Graham helped ease the region’s transition away from legalized segregation, said Steven P. Miller, a scholar who has written about Graham. Graham had a “huge base” of white support in the Bible Belt, Miller said, and those people listened to him.

“He could reach that audience as a native Southerner, but also because he spoke a familiar evangelical language — and because he was obviously not an activist,” said Miller, author of the book “Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South.”

“Ultimately, what Graham put forth was what we might now call a colorblind gospel,” Miller said via email. “In this sense, he provided a familiarly Christian path for some white Southerners to back away from Jim Crow.”

A current civil rights leader from Graham’s native North Carolina, the Rev. William J. Barber II, credited Graham with meeting with King and agreeing to challenge segregation, an act Graham pursued through preaching reconciliation and peace rather than marching.

“Billy Graham inherited a faith in the American South that had accommodated itself to white supremacy, but he demonstrated a willingness to change and turn toward the truth,” Barber said in a Facebook post after Graham’s death. “He helped to tear down walls of segregation, not build them up.”

Still, Graham had regrets. In an interview with The Associated Press in 2005, when he held his final crusade, Graham said he wished he had fought for civil rights more forcefully. In particular, Graham lamented not joining King and other pastors at voting rights marches in Selma, Alabama, in 1965.

“I think I made a mistake when I didn’t go to Selma,” Graham said. “I would like to have done more.”

Graham also apologized for making anti-Semitic remarks that were captured on the White House taping system installed by President Richard Nixon, who relied on Graham for both spiritual needs and political cover. The relationship between the two men helped turn the South into the solidly Republican territory

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it is today, Miller argues in his book.

Born in 1918 on the family farm near Charlotte, North Carolina, Graham grew up in a South strictly divided by race. In an act that sounds mundane now but was perilous at the time, he demanded the removal of ropes separating black and white audience members at a crusade in the South in the early 1950s.

Graham was an internationally known preacher traveling the world by 1955, when King first gained notice by leading a bus boycott against segregation in Montgomery, Alabama. Graham embraced King's work, and the two appeared on stage together during a Graham crusade at New York's Madison Square Garden in 1957. Graham paid the jail bond following King's arrest during demonstrations in Albany, Georgia, in 1962.

Following the racial violence of "Bloody Sunday" in Selma in 1965 and partly at the suggestion of President Lyndon B. Johnson, Graham toured Alabama, speaking to racially mixed crowds. It was during that trip that he recorded the message in which he spoke wistfully of his Confederate roots and God's ability to heal.

While Graham didn't march with King in Selma, the Atlanta-based King Center for Non-violent Social Change credits Graham with evolving from an early, noncommittal stance on race following the Supreme Court's 1954 decision outlawing segregation in public schools.

Barber said Graham also eschewed the religious right movement, which many Southern evangelicals embraced on the way toward increasing their political power after the Nixon years.

"His life was about following Jesus, and he knew that meant an ongoing commitment to be changed by love," Barber said.

North Korean envoy, in South, opens door to US talks

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

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea (AP) — A North Korean envoy making a rare visit to South Korea said Sunday that his country was willing to open talks with the United States, a rare step toward diplomacy between enemies after a year of North Korean missile and nuclear tests and direct threats of war from both Pyongyang and Washington.

Kim Yong Chol, who Seoul believes masterminded two attacks in 2010 that killed 50 South Koreans, was in South Korea for the end of the Olympics. He said North Korean leader Kim Jong Un wanted to improve ties with Washington and had "ample intentions of holding talks" with its rival, according to the South's presidential office.

He made the remarks during a meeting with South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who is eager to engage the North after one of the most hostile periods in recent years on the Korean Peninsula.

Moon, who was invited a day after the opening ceremonies to Pyongyang for a summit with Kim Jong Un, also said that Washington and Pyongyang should quickly meet to "fundamentally solve" the standoff on the Korean Peninsula.

Kim later sat in the VIP box at Olympic Stadium in Pyeongchang for the Olympic closing ceremonies, just feet away from Donald Trump's daughter, Ivanka, and the top U.S. military commander on the peninsula, Gen. Vincent Brooks. The former anti-Seoul military intelligence chief watched K-pop divas and fireworks and stood for the South Korean national anthem.

Even the faintest possibility of diplomacy will be welcomed by many. But there will also be widespread skepticism among conservatives in Seoul and Washington, with many wondering if the North is simply looking for economic relief after a series of increasingly tough international sanctions slapped on Pyongyang for its illicit weapons programs or more time to develop those weapons.

Moon has yet to accept the North's invitation for a summit, but he has advocated engagement with Pyongyang his entire political career and likely wants to go.

But he must first strike a balance with Washington, which has a policy meant to isolate and sanction the North until it agrees to give up its nukes. Some observers believe that Pyongyang is trying to drive a wedge to win concessions from Seoul.

There was no immediate comment from the United States, where it was dawn when the statement was released.

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Kim Yong Chol was head of the North's military intelligence when the 2010 attacks on South Korea took place and is currently a vice chairman of the ruling party's central committee tasked with inter-Korea relations.

With decades of experience, he is one of the most powerful people in the North's ruling regime. Seoul decided to temporarily take him off of a blacklist to allow the visit.

South Korea is hoping to ease tensions by allowing the North to participate in the games and send senior delegations.

Kim Jong Un's sister, Kim Yo Jong, attended the opening ceremony in an historic first — no member of the ruling Kim family had ever traveled to the South before. She invited President Moon Jae-in to a summit with her brother in Pyongyang. The delegation to the closing ceremony was expected to follow up on that invitation while in South Korea.

The delegation's arrival was met by protesters calling for Kim's arrest for his alleged role in the 2010 attacks — the sinking of the warship Cheonan that killed 46 South Korean sailors and an artillery strike on a South Korean island that killed four people.

Outside Olympic Stadium, just before the ceremony, more than 200 anti-Pyongyang protesters waved South Korean and U.S. flags, banged drums and held signs saying "Killer Kim Yong Chol go to hell." They denounced the South Korean government's decision to allow the visit.

"How can a murderer who killed 46 sailors on the Cheonan warship can be invited, protected and defended? This is the state of what the Republic of Korea has become," one protester shouted into a mic, referring to South Korea's formal name

The protesters also hung a sign that read: "We are against Pyongyang Olympics: fallen into the propaganda of the terrorist Kim Jong Un's brutal regime."

There were no major clashes.

At the opening ceremony earlier this month, Kim Yo Jong sat in the same VIP box with Moon and U.S. Vice President Mike Pence, creating some awkward moments. Though Pence stood to cheer the entrance of the U.S. team, he remained seated when the athletes from North and South Korea marched together behind a "unification" flag, leaving Moon to instinctively turn around and shake Kim's sister's hand.

Pence's office claimed afterward that the North had pulled out of a planned meeting at the last minute.

The North's state-run news agency ran a story Sunday quoting a "spokesman for the Korea Asia-Pacific Peace Committee" as saying that Pence insulted Kim's sister with his hard-line rhetoric after returning to the U.S. and "we will never have face-to-face talks with them even after 100 years or 200 years."

Associated Press Seoul Bureau Chief Foster Klug and Pyongyang Bureau Chief Eric Talmadge contributed to this report.

Congress has ideas on gun violence, but no consensus

By LISA MASCARO and MATTHEW DALY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After a 10-day break, members of Congress are returning to work under hefty pressure to respond to the outcry over gun violence. But no plan appears ready to take off despite a long list of proposals, including many from President Donald Trump.

Republican leaders have kept quiet for days as Trump tossed out ideas, including raising the minimum age to purchase assault-style weapons and arming teachers, though on Saturday the president tweeted that the latter was "Up to states."

Their silence has left little indication whether they are ready to rally their ranks behind any one of the president's ideas, dust off another proposal or do nothing. The most likely legislative option is bolstering the federal background check system for gun purchases, but it's bogged down after being linked with a less popular measure to expand gun rights.

The halting start reflects firm GOP opposition to any bill that would curb access to guns and risk antagonizing gun advocates in their party. Before the Feb. 14 shooting at a high school in Parkland, Florida, that

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killed 17 people, Republicans had no intention of reviving the polarizing and politically risky gun debate during an already difficult election year that could endanger their congressional majority.

"There's no magic bill that's going to stop the next thing from happening when so many laws are already on the books that weren't being enforced, that were broken," said Rep. Steve Scalise, R-La., the third-ranking House GOP leader, when asked about solutions. "The breakdowns that happen, this is what drives people nuts," said Scalise, who suffered life-threatening injuries when a gunman opened fire on lawmakers' baseball team practice last year.

Under tough public questioning from shooting survivors, Trump has set high expectations for action.

"I think we're going to have a great bill put forward very soon having to do with background checks, having to do with getting rid of certain things and keeping other things, and perhaps we'll do something on age," Trump said in a Fox News Channel interview Saturday night. He added: "We are drawing up strong legislation right now having to do with background checks, mental illness. I think you will have tremendous support. It's time. It's time."

Trump's early ideas were met with mixed reactions from his party. His talk of allowing teachers to carry concealed weapons into classrooms was rejected by at least one Republican, Florida Sen. Marco Rubio. House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., both spoke to Trump on Friday. Their offices declined comment on the conversations or legislative strategy.

Some Republicans backed up Trump's apparent endorsement of raising the age minimum for buying some weapons.

Sen. Pat Roberts, R-Kan., said he would support raising the age limit to buy a semi-automatic weapon like the one used in Florida. Rubio also supports lifting the age for rifle purchases. Rep. Brian Mast, R-Fla., a longtime NRA member, wrote in *The New York Times* that he now supports an assault-weapons ban.

Sen. Pat Toomey, R-Pa., said he expects to talk soon with Trump, who has said he wants tougher background checks, as Toomey revives the bill he proposed earlier with Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., to expand presale checks for firearms purchases online and at gun shows.

First introduced after the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in 2012 in Connecticut, the measure has twice been rejected by the Senate. Some Democrats in GOP-leaning states joined with Republicans to defeat the measure. Toomey's office said he is seeking to build bipartisan support after the latest shooting.

More likely, the Senate will turn to a bipartisan bill from Sens. John Cornyn, R-Texas and Chris Murphy, D-Conn., to strengthen FBI background checks — a response to a shooting last November in which a gunman killed more than two dozen people at a Texas church.

That bill would penalize federal agencies that don't properly report required records and reward states that comply by providing them with federal grant preferences. It 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 House passed it last year, but only after GOP leaders added an unrelated measure pushed by the National Rifle Association. That measure expands gun rights by making it easier for gun owners to carry concealed weapons across state lines.

The package also included a provision directing the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives to review "bump-stock" devices like the one used during the shooting at a Las Vegas music festival that left 58 people dead and hundreds injured.

Murphy told *The Associated Press* he was invited to discuss gun issues with the White House and he was interested in hearing the president's ideas. He said he did not expect the Florida shooting to lead to a major breakthrough in Congress for those who've long pushed for tighter gun laws.

"There's not going to be a turning point politically," he said. Rather, it's about "slowly and methodically" building a political movement.

Senate Democrats say any attempt to combine the background checks and concealed-carry measures is doomed to fail.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said he was skeptical Trump would follow through on proposals such as comprehensive background checks that the NRA opposes.

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"The real test of President Trump and the Republican Congress is not words and empathy, but action," Schumer said in a statement. He noted that Trump has a tendency to change his mind on this and other issues, reminding that the president has called for tougher gun laws only to back away when confronted by resistance from gun owners. The NRA's independent expenditure arm poured tens of millions into Trump's 2016 campaign.

"Will President Trump and the Republicans finally buck the NRA and get something done?" Schumer asked. "I hope this time will be different."

Follow Mascaro on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/LisaMascaro> and Daly at <https://twitter.com/MatthewDalyWDC>

Syrian capital, its suburbs calm after UN cease-fire vote

By **BASSEM MROUE, Associated Press**

BEIRUT (AP) — The Syrian capital and its embattled eastern suburbs were relatively calm Sunday despite some violence that killed at least three people, following the U.N. Security Council's unanimous approval of a resolution demanding a 30-day cease-fire across Syria, opposition activists and residents of Damascus said.

The activists reported low-level clashes on the southern edge of the rebel-held suburbs, known as eastern Ghouta, and two airstrikes late on Saturday night, shortly after the resolution was adopted. During the day Sunday, some more shelling and airstrikes were reported by activists in eastern Ghouta.

The relative calm came after a week of intense airstrikes and shelling that killed more than 500 people in eastern Ghouta and left dozens dead or wounded in the government-held Damascus, which rebels pelted with mortar shells.

"This has been the calmest night since last Sunday," said Rami Abdurrahman who heads the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, referring to the start of the bombing campaign on Feb. 19.

The Observatory said Sunday's shelling killed three people and wounded 27 in several areas in eastern Ghouta. The opposition's Syrian Civil Defense, also known as White Helmets, said the three were killed in the towns of Saqba, Beit Sawa and Hammouriyeh.

State news agency SANA said insurgents breached the truce by firing 15 shells Sunday on government-held areas on the edge of Ghouta.

Ghouta-based opposition activist Anas al-Dimashqi said the night was calm but warplanes and drones were flying over rebel-held areas. He said several explosions were heard Sunday in Ghouta.

Dr. Sakhr al-Dimashqi, a surgeon at a clinic in Ghouta, told The Associated Press that several shells hit some towns in the suburbs, adding that they received six wounded people at the clinic where he works.

"The shelling today is not as intense as over the past week," he said.

The two largest and most powerful rebel factions in Ghouta, Failaq al-Rahman and Army of Islam issued statements saying they will abide by the cease-fire unless they are forced to fire in self-defense. Both called for the "immediate delivery" of emergency aid.

The resolution excludes members of the Islamic State group and al-Qaida-linked fighters. Ghouta is also home to a few hundred members of the al-Qaida-linked Levant Liberation Committee.

Russia's Foreign Ministry said Sunday that the fight against IS and al-Qaida's affiliate will continue, despite what it described as attempts by certain external players to engage "international terrorists and groups of opposition militants joining them to implement plans that are still nurtured to overthrow the legitimate authorities of Syria and dismember the country."

It added that "the terrorists won't get any respite."

Damascus residents said there's more traffic in the streets, compared to previous days and most schools and universities were open on Sunday. They said some private schools were still closed, especially those close to the front lines with Ghouta.

Some residents of the capital said they were unhappy with the truce, adding they believe the rebels will violate it and that the Syrian army should crush the gunmen outside the capital.

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"The army has given them many truces, more than they deserve and the result was more shells," said Damascus resident Abdul-Razzak Khaleifah, 37. "The army has the right to retaliate to defend the homeland and the civilians."

Saturday's vote at the United Nations came after the vote was delayed from Friday. Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia had repeatedly called an immediate cease-fire unrealistic.

In a bid to get Russian support, sponsors Kuwait and Sweden amended the draft resolution late Friday to drop a demand that the cease-fire take effect 72 hours after the resolution's adoption.

After two hours of additional negotiations on Saturday, the Security Council unanimously approved the resolution demanding a 30-day cease-fire across Syria "without delay" to deliver humanitarian aid to millions and evacuate the critically ill and wounded.

After the vote, many council members urged stepped-up efforts to ensure a cease-fire and get assistance to millions in need.

Russia has been a main backer of Syrian President Bashar Assad since the country's conflict began seven years ago. In 2015, Moscow joined the war on Assad's side tipping the balance of power in his favor.

In northern Syria, the Observatory and the Lebanon-based Al-Mayadeen TV said Turkish troops shelled the Kurdish enclave of Afrin where Turkey and Syrian opposition fighters it backs have been on the offensive since Jan. 20.

The Turkish military and their allies took three more villages from the U.S.-backed Kurdish militia near the town of Afrin on Sunday, according to the Turkey's official news agency. The military announced one Turkish soldier was killed on Saturday, bringing the army's death toll to 33 since the launch of the Afrin operation last month.

The main Kurdish militia, known as YPG, said in a statement that it will abide by the U.N. cease-fire but will continue fighting as usual against IS.

Associated Press writer Albert Aji in Damascus, Syria, Zeynep Bilginsoy in Istanbul and Jim Heintz in Moscow contributed to this report.

Dems release Russia probe memo defending FBI surveillance

By MARY CLARE JALONICK and CHAD DAY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two weeks after President Donald Trump blocked its full release, the House Intelligence Committee published a blacked out version of a classified Democratic memo aiming to counter a GOP narrative that the FBI and Justice Department conspired against Trump as they investigated his ties to Russia.

The document's release Saturday was the latest development in an extraordinary back and forth between Republicans and Democrats about the credibility of multiple inquiries into links between the Trump campaign and Russia, and the integrity of the top U.S. law enforcement agencies.

The document attempts to undercut and add context to some of the main points from a declassified Republican memo made public earlier this month. In that memo, Republicans went after the FBI and the Justice Department over the use of information compiled by British spy Christopher Steele in obtaining a secret warrant to monitor the communications of a onetime Trump campaign foreign policy adviser Carter Page.

The GOP memo included the assertion that the FBI obtained a surveillance warrant without disclosing that Steele's anti-Trump research was paid for by Democrat Hillary Clinton's campaign and the Democratic National Committee.

The Democratic memo says the Justice Department disclosed "the assessed political motivation of those who hired him" and that Steele was likely hired by someone "looking for information that could be used to discredit" then-candidate Trump's campaign.

Republicans say that is not enough because the Clinton campaign and the DNC were not named. Trump seized on this point in a tweet Saturday evening: "Dem Memo: FBI did not disclose who the clients were

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- the Clinton Campaign and the DNC. Wow!"

The White House had objected to the Democratic memo's release, citing national security concerns on Feb. 9. That sent the Democrats back to negotiations with the FBI, which approved a blacked out version. It was then declassified and released.

Trump had no such concerns about the GOP memo, which he declassified in full on Feb. 2 over strong objections from the FBI about the memo's accuracy.

The Democratic memo asserts that the FBI's concerns about Page long predate the compilation of memos drafted by Steele, now known as the Trump-Russia "dossier," and that the government's application to monitor Page's communications details suspicious activities he undertook during the 2016 presidential campaign. That includes a July 2016 trip to Moscow in which he gave a university commencement address.

The memo contends that the Justice Department provided "additional information from multiple independent sources that corroborated Steele's reporting" in the dossier. Most of the details of the corroborated information are blacked out, but they do appear to reference Page's meeting with Russian officials. The memo says that the Justice Department didn't include any "salacious allegations" about Trump contained in the Steele dossier in the government's application to seek a warrant under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, or FISA.

The memo also details Russian attempts to cultivate Page as a spy. It cites a federal indictment of two Russian spies who allegedly targeted Page for recruitment and notes that the FBI interviewed him based on those suspicions in March 2016.

The Democrats say the FBI made "made only narrow use of Steele's sources" in the government's FISA application for Page.

Republicans say that is still too much.

"Again, the fact the minority cannot outright deny that a DNC/Clinton funded document was used to wiretap an American is extremely concerning," the Republican National Committee said in a statement.

Trump has said the GOP memo "vindicates" him in the ongoing Russia investigation led by special counsel Robert Mueller. But congressional Democrats and Republicans, including House Speaker Paul Ryan and Rep. Trey Gowdy of South Carolina, who helped draft the GOP memo, have said it shouldn't be used to undermine the special counsel.

Partisan disagreements on the committee have escalated over the past year. Democrats have charged that Republicans aren't taking the investigation into Russian election meddling seriously enough. They say the GOP memo is designed as a distraction from the committee investigation, which is looking into whether Trump's campaign was in any way connected to the Russian interference.

Republicans say they are just alerting the public to abuses they say they've uncovered at the Justice Department and FBI.

The committee's top Democrat, California Rep. Adam Schiff, said the memo should "put to rest any concerns that the American people might have" as to the conduct of the FBI, the Justice Department and the court that issued the secret warrant.

The review "failed to uncover any evidence of illegal, unethical, or unprofessional behavior by law enforcement," he said.

There are some points of agreement between the GOP and Democratic memos, including that the FBI did not open its counterintelligence investigation into links between Russian election interference and the Trump campaign because of Steele's dossier.

Both memos show that the investigation was prompted by concerns about contacts between former Trump foreign policy adviser George Papadopoulos and people linked to Russia.

So far, Mueller has charged nearly 20 people as part of his investigation. Three Trump associates have pleaded guilty — and agreed to cooperate with prosecutors — including Papadopoulos, former national security adviser Michael Flynn and former campaign aide Rick Gates.

Associated Press writers Eric Tucker, Tom LoBianco and Zeke Miller contributed to this report.

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Democratic memo: <http://apne.ws/oGQvU7S>

Republican memo: <http://apne.ws/NEA8JRJ>

NRA, Florida face backlash after latest school shooting

By KEN SWEET, DAMIAN TROISE and ALEXANDRA OLSON, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The National Rifle Association, and now the State of Florida, faced a growing backlash Saturday as companies cut ties to the gun industry following the latest school massacre, and student survivors called for tourism boycotts of their home state until gun control measures are enacted.

The latest companies to end their ties with the NRA were Delta and United Airlines, two of the three largest U.S.-based airlines.

Corporate ties to the NRA aren't the only elements undergoing scrutiny after a shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, that left 17 dead on Valentine's Day. Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel said he's investigating claims that some Coral Springs police officers saw several of his deputies outside the building after the shooting began.

On Thursday, Scot Peterson, the school's resource officer, resigned under fire from the sheriff's office for failing to enter the building where police say former 19-year-old student Nikolas Cruz was gunning down students with an AR-15 assault-style rifle.

On Saturday, both Delta and United said Saturday they will no longer offer discounted fares to NRA members to attend their annual meetings, and both have asked the gun rights group to remove any references to their companies from the NRA website.

A growing number of large companies have announced they are cutting or reducing ties with the association. Rental car company Hertz will no longer offer a discount program to NRA members and First National Bank of Omaha, one of the nation's largest privately held banks, said it will not renew a co-branded Visa credit card it has with the NRA. Most of these companies do promotional tie-ins with groups to spur customer loyalty to NRA members, and do not receive money directly from the NRA.

The moves have come as petitions circulated online targeting companies offering discounts to NRA members on its website. #BoycottNRA was trending on Twitter.

In an email Saturday, the NRA called the companies' actions "a shameful display of political and civic cowardice" and said the loss of corporate discounts and other perks "will neither scare nor distract" NRA members.

"In time, these brands will be replaced by others who recognize that patriotism and determined commitment to Constitutional freedoms are characteristics of a marketplace they very much want to serve," the NRA statement said.

The State of Florida also was facing some backlash. One of the survivors of the Florida school shooting suggested Saturday on Twitter that tourists stay away from the state. He got an immediate response.

"Let's make a deal," tweeted David Hogg, a Stoneman Douglas student who has been a major player in the #neveragain movement. "DO NOT come to Florida for spring break unless gun legislation is passed."

Wendy Glaab, 60, of Fonthill, Ontario, Canada, was among the first to respond. "I like many Canadians travel to Florida from time to time to escape our winter. I can't speak for others but I will not be returning until meaningful gun control legislation is in place."

Glaab told The Associated Press on Saturday that her sister owns property in Fort Lauderdale and she is able to visit any time she chooses.

Members of the NRA have access to special offers from partner companies on its website, ranging from life insurance to wine clubs. But the insurance company MetLife Inc. discontinued its discount program with the NRA on Friday. Symantec Corp., the software company that makes Norton Antivirus technology, did the same. Insurer Chubb Ltd. said it is ending participation in the NRA's gun-owner insurance program, but it provided notice three months ago. The program that provided coverage for people involved in gun-related incidents or accidents had been under scrutiny by regulators over marketing issues.

Car rental company Enterprise Holdings, which also owns Alamo and National, said it was cutting off

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discounts for NRA member, as did Hertz.

Other companies, including Wyndham Hotels and Best Western hotels, have let social media users know they are no longer affiliated with the NRA, though they did not make clear when the partnerships ended.

The swiftness of the corporate reaction against the NRA has differed from that of past shootings, including the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre that claimed 26 lives, and the killing of 58 people in Las Vegas last fall, said Bob Spitzer, a political scientist at SUNY Cortland and a scholar on gun politics. Spitzer said the reaction was likely a reaction to the student mobilization that followed the Florida shooting, but he said it was too soon to tell how significantly it will sway the country's wider gun debate.

NRA Executive Vice President Wayne LaPierre said this week at the Conservative Political Action Conference that those advocating for stricter gun control are exploiting the Florida shooting.

President Donald Trump has aligned himself with the NRA, suggesting some teachers could be armed so that they could fire on any attacker. However, Trump has also called for raising the minimum age for purchasing semi-automatic rifles, a move the NRA opposes.

AP Reporter Freida Frisaro contributed to this report from Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Bach: Russian doping scandal didn't stain Winter Olympics

By STEPHEN WADE, AP Sports Writer

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea (AP) — The massive, state-linked Russian doping scandal didn't stain the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, IOC President Thomas Bach said Sunday.

It was, however, the subject of the vast majority of the questions Bach fielded as the IOC tried to shake the stigma of Russian cheating that has plagued the last three Olympics — Sochi, Rio de Janeiro and now Pyeongchang.

The IOC doesn't want it to touch Tokyo's Summer Olympics in 2½ years.

Just hours before Sunday's closing ceremony, the IOC ruled that the 160-plus Russian delegation — participating under the neutral "Olympic Athletes from Russia" logo — could not march in the closing ceremony under its own flag. This would have been a signal that Russia was back in the Olympic Family.

Russian athletes produced two of the four positive doping tests in Pyeongchang despite IOC guarantees about intense testing before and during the Olympics.

"These two doping cases have in fact played the major role when coming to the decision of not lifting the suspension," Bach explained. "This was the key factor."

However, the IOC also decided that the Russian Olympic Committee will still have its suspension lifted if there are no more positive tests by Russians at the Pyeongchang Games.

Bach gave no timeframe for lifting the suspension, but the testing could be completed in a few days.

The IOC stores test samples for a decade when new science can detect cheating, but Bach said Russia would not have to wait that long for reinstatement.

This was the IOC's attempt to "draw a line" under the Russian scandal.

"I don't think, quite frankly, that these Winter Games have been tainted by the Russian affair," Bach said.

The Russian Olympic Committee was banned from the Olympics on Dec. 5 because of widespread doping at the 2014 Sochi Games. But "clean" Russian athletes were allowed to compete under the neutral banner, and the IOC left open the possibility of reinstatement ahead of the closing ceremony if the country met a series of criteria.

IOC member Nicole Hovertsz, who heads the Russia implementation group, said the country's delegation met many of the criteria required for reinstatement during the Olympics.

"Despite a good collaboration from the OAR delegation to respond to these (doping) cases in a prompt and transparent way, the implementation group was convinced that these cases caused significant concern," said Hovertsz, who is from Aruba.

The IOC's full membership unanimously approved the recommendation of the executive board just hours before the final competition and the closing ceremony. Fifty-two of the IOC's 100 members were present

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at the meeting, though many left days before the critical decision.

Bach repeated several times the two Russian cases gave "no indication whatsoever of systematic doping." He termed them "cases of negligence."

Bach has defended the right of individual athletes to be judged separately and shied away from collective punishment. His stand has been seen as "soft on Russia" by many who called for an outright ban.

"We have to draw a line and look toward the future," Hoovertsz said. "It is never going to be business as usual any more in the world of sport and in Russia. Many changes have been made and many changes still have to be made."

Bach said the treatment of Russia was not a "blueprint (for the future) because I hope this affair remains a unique one."

He also gave a sobering assessment about doping and cheating and the struggle to control it.

"We will always have positive tests with regard to every nation," he said. "This fight against doping will never be over. As long as you have human beings in competition with each other you will have some who try to cheat. In society we have laws against theft and robbery for thousands years, but there is still theft or robbery."

Shamil Tarpishev, an IOC member from Russia, blamed the positive test on "the lack of cultural education. These cases are isolated and we are running our own investigation."

He also tried to draw a line under the scandal.

"We believe," Tarpishev said, "this should be the end of this big problem."

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

6 months after attacks began, Rohingya see no end in sight

By JULHAS ALAM, Associated Press

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — Their houses are often made of plastic sheets. Much of their food comes from aid agencies. Jobs are few, and there is painfully little to do. The nightmares are relentless.

But six months after their horrors began, the Rohingya Muslims who fled army attacks in Myanmar for refuge in Bangladesh feel one immense consolation.

"Nobody is coming to kill us, that's for sure," said Mohammed Amanullah, whose village was destroyed last year just before he left for Bangladesh with his wife and three children. They now live in the Kutupalong refugee camp outside the coastal city of Cox's Bazar. "We have peace here."

On Aug. 25, Rohingya insurgents attacked several security posts in Myanmar, killing at least 14 people. Within hours, waves of revenge attacks broke out, with the military and Buddhist mobs marauding through Rohingya villages in bloody pogroms, killing thousands, raping women and girls, and burning houses and whole villages. The aid group Doctors Without Borders has estimated at least 6,700 Rohingya were killed in Myanmar in the first month of the violence, including at least 730 children younger than 5. The survivors flooded into Bangladesh.

Six months later, there are few signs Rohingya are going home anytime soon.

Myanmar and Bangladesh have signed an agreement to gradually repatriate Rohingya in "safety, security and dignity," but the process has been opaque and the dangers remain. New satellite images have shown empty villages and hamlets leveled, erasing evidence of the Rohingyas' former lives. And with 700,000 having fled Myanmar since August, more Rohingya continue to flee.

So for now, the refugees wait.

"If they agree to send us back that's fine, but is it that easy?" asked Amanullah. "Myanmar must give us citizenship. That is our home. Without citizenship they will torture us again. They will kill us again."

He said he would only return under the protection of U.N. peacekeepers: "They must take care of us there. Otherwise it will not work."

Buddhist-majority Myanmar doesn't recognize the Rohingya as an official ethnic group and they face

intense discrimination and persecution.

The children in the camps face a particularly difficult time. The U.N. estimates children are the heads of 5,600 refugee families.

A survey of children's lives inside the camps showed they faced an array of terrors, from girls reporting concerns of harassments near the camp toilets to fears that elephants and snakes could attack them as they collect firewood.

"We cannot expect Rohingya children to overcome the traumatic experiences they've suffered when exposed to further insecurity and fears of violence in the camps," Mark Pierce, country director for Save the Children in Bangladesh, said in a statement.

The study was prepared jointly by Save the Children, World Vision and Plan International.

"The overwhelming message from these children is that they are afraid," Pierce said. "This is no way for a child to live."

The situation will worsen soon. Seasonal monsoon rains will begin pounding the refugees' plastic-and-bamboo city in April.

Tokyo returns with Summer Games with something new to prove

By **STEPHEN WADE** and **MARI YAMAGUCHI**, Associated Press

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea (AP) — Tokyo used its famous 1964 Olympics to show off a miraculous recovery from defeat in World War II. Japan was back after just 19 years with high-speed trains, geeky gadgets, and dazzling efficiency.

Tokyo's back again with the 2020 Summer Olympics, this time with something different to prove.

This time the Japanese capital wants to remind the rest of the world that China and South Korea haven't left behind the first economic powerhouse in East Asia. They will use the games to showcase a clean, safe, and innovative city; an urban maze of nightlife, shopping, and dizzying subway lines that give texture to "Cool Japan" and the country's place as a cultural touchstone.

"It's going to be a good opportunity to showcase Japanese culture, our technology, our products, our good level of service to give impetus to the Japanese economy," Maki Kobayashi-Terada of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told The Associated Press.

"It's exactly soft power ... to create economic impact," Kobayashi-Terada added, a fancy term that means translating an engaging culture into political and economic power.

Tokyo has billed itself as a "safe pair of hands" for the Olympics, which is everything that Rio de Janeiro wasn't. The 2016 Games left behind scandals, millions in unpaid bills, and useless "white elephant" venues.

Tokyo also marks a watershed for the battered International Olympic Committee.

After corruption dogged the games in Rio, and a doping scandal grew out of the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi, Tokyo should be the first of three return-to-normal Summer Games in first-world metropolises. The IOC has already picked Paris for 2024 and Los Angeles for 2028.

And Japan also has hosted two successful Winter Olympics in Nagano and Sapporo.

"I don't think the International Olympic Committee is going to go to a developing city any longer," Olympic historian David Wallechinsky told The Associated Press. "They don't want that anymore. They want cities that are ready."

The Pyeongchang Olympics were Wallechinsky's 18th, and he has researched every Olympics extensively including Tokyo. Those Olympics kicked off when Yoshinori Sakai — born in Hiroshima the day the city was hit by the 1945 atomic bomb — lit the Olympic cauldron.

But exactly what's in it for Japan?

Kobayashi-Terada said the Olympics will improve accessibility for the elderly and for people with disabilities, modernize infrastructure and drive tourism. She said Japan had 29 million foreign visitors last year, and hopes to have 40 million in 2020. Tourism is booming, particularly from Asia.

The Olympics will also try to convince the world about the safety of Fukushima, where a nuclear reactor was damaged after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami. The prefecture north of Tokyo is a venue for

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baseball and softball.

"There are only some limited villages which are restricted for entry," Kobayashi-Terada said. "But there are so many other places which are already under recovery. We'd like to show that and thank the world."

But there also hints of scandal.

A French-led investigation has been looking into \$2 million paid by the Tokyo Olympic bid team — or representatives — to sports officials who have been linked to vote-buying in IOC bid elections. A Japanese investigation concluded the payments were not illegal.

"Our committee is different from the bidding committee," Kobayashi-Terada said. "We believe that we got Tokyo 2020 because our bid was the best one."

And there are domestic doubters.

Japan is already a high-tax country that does not need the Olympics to spur building new bridges, trains and highways. Taxpayers have been critical of too much spending on questionable projects.

"Tokyo lacks a clear purpose for hosting the games other than city development, and that's why many people are still puzzled today," said Yuji Ishizaka, an expert on the Olympics at Japan's Nara Women's University.

Ishizaka said people are bothered by delays and scandals involving the redevelopment plans for Tokyo's world-famous Tsukiji fish market and the city's bay area, where several events will be held.

And Ishizaka fears the Olympics "may be used to declare the end to disaster reconstruction" in the Fukushima area, suggesting things are back to normal.

"The 2020 Games should be a big festival, but we can't expect much growth and many people, even residents of Tokyo, will hardly notice the changes that Tokyo has gone through," Ishizaka said.

The IOC and local organizers say they're cutting costs. John Coates, the IOC member overseeing Tokyo's plans, said recently that Tokyo had cut \$1.4 billion from the price tag. Some venues have been moved to other areas, and existing venues will be used instead of building new ones.

Coates lauded Tokyo's transparency and mentioned Rio.

"In Rio we didn't know who was paying what — if at all," he said.

Tokyo organizers say the games will cost about 1.35 trillion yen (\$12.5 billion). However, last month Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike said the city would spend an added 810 billion yen (\$7.5 billion) on "projects directly and indirectly related to the games."

The IOC and organizers argue those expenditures fall "outside the overall games budget." This is a debate that rages at every games: Exactly what are, and what aren't, Olympic expenses?

Koike said the new costs included building barrier-free facilities for Paralympic athletes, training programs for volunteers, and advertising and tourism plans.

That puts the total cost at about \$20 billion, 70 percent of which is public money. This figure includes the privately run local organizing committee's budget of 600 billion yen (\$5.5 billion). About \$2.91 billion of that is coming from national marketing program that has landed 47 sponsors.

"And there will be more to come," Coates said.

AP correspondent Mari Yamaguchi reported from Tokyo.

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

Billy Graham's body arrives at namesake library

By ALLEN G. BREED, AP National Writer

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — Admirers took photos on their phones, fire trucks parked on freeway overpasses and police officers saluted as a motorcade carrying the body of the Rev. Billy Graham crossed the evangelist's beloved home state of North Carolina for four hours Saturday from his mountain chapel to namesake library in the state's largest city.

Residents in some of Graham's most cherished places paid tribute to "America's Pastor," starting at the training center operated by his evangelistic association in Asheville. The motorcade rolled through Black

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Mountain, where he shopped and caught trains, and Montreat, where he lived.

Well-wishers lined sidewalks and medians as the motorcade reached Charlotte. Pallbearers, followed by family, carried the coffin into the Billy Graham Library, which will serve as a backdrop for the funeral.

Franklin Graham said he was fulfilling a promise to his father to bring the body to Charlotte. He said he was overwhelmed by "the outpouring of love."

Leighton Ford, the evangelist's brother-in-law, said the procession brought gratitude and tinge of sadness. "I think he'd say, 'It's not about me. It's about the Lord,'" said Ford. "I remember at his last stadium meeting here in Charlotte, the mayor of Charlotte told us he was riding out on the platform with Billy, and everybody was cheering, and Billy said, 'Wait a minute. It's not about us. It's about Him.'"

Graham, who died Wednesday at his home in North Carolina's mountains at age 99, reached hundreds of millions of listeners around the world with his rallies and his pioneering use of television.

A viewing will be held at the library in Charlotte on Monday and Tuesday. Graham will also lie in honor in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda on Wednesday and Thursday, the first time a private citizen has been accorded such recognition since civil rights hero Rosa Parks in 2005.

The procession was part of more than a week of mourning that culminates with his burial Friday.

Adults and children stood behind wooden barricades and yellow tape along a route that included parts of Interstate 40. A man played bagpipes at a highway rest area near Marion, where an overpass was draped with flags from about 15 nations. In Black Mountain, a group sang "Amazing Grace."

"He has never really reveled in all of the celebrity. It's come with the territory," said Joe Tyson, a family friend who runs a furniture store in Black Mountain, where he watched the procession.

The library in Charlotte was closed but admirers came to watch and lay flowers.

"He was so bold, he so boldly confessed the word of God," said Madeline Reid. "And I believe because of his service to humanity, that he's truly gonna be great in the kingdom of heaven."

Ruby Sparks, 85, attended a Graham youth ministry meeting in 1951, when she was a college student in Greensboro, North Carolina, and met him in 1970.

"He was such a wonderful man of God, and a messenger of God," she said.

Asked if there would ever be another force like his, she replied: "I doubt it. Perhaps, in my next, in another lifetime. Not in my lifetime."

Graham will be laid to rest at the foot of a cross-shaped walkway at the library, buried in a simple prison-made plywood coffin next to his wife, Ruth, who died in 2007. His coffin was built by inmates at the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola, Louisiana, who typically construct caskets for fellow prisoners who cannot afford one.

The funeral will be held in a tent in the main parking lot of Graham's library in tribute to the 1949 Los Angeles tent revivals that propelled him to international fame, family spokesman Mark DeMoss said. About 2,000 people are expected at the private, invitation-only funeral.

This story has been edited to correct the quote from Ford.

Associated Press writers Elliot Spagat in San Diego and Tom Foreman Jr. in Charlotte contributed to this report.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Sunday, Feb. 25, the 56th day of 2018. There are 309 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 25, 1793, President George Washington held the first Cabinet meeting on record at his Mount Vernon home; attending were Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of War Henry Knox and Attorney General Edmund Randolph.

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On this date:

In 1507, England's Queen Elizabeth I was excommunicated by Pope Pius V, who accused the monarch of heresy.

In 1836, inventor Samuel Colt patented his revolver.

In 1905, the Upton Sinclair novel "The Jungle" was first published in serial form by the Appeal to Reason newspaper.

In 1913, the 16th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, giving Congress the power to levy and collect income taxes, was declared in effect by Secretary of State Philander Chase Knox.

In 1922, French serial killer Henri Landru, convicted of murdering 10 women and the son of one of them, was executed in Versailles (vehr-SY').

In 1943, Allied troops reoccupied the Kasserine Pass in Tunisia after clashing with German troops during World War II.

In 1950, "Your Show of Shows," starring Sid Caesar, Imogene Coca, Carl Reiner and Howard Morris, debuted on NBC-TV.

In 1964, Eastern Airlines Flight 304, a DC-8, crashed shortly after taking off from New Orleans International Airport, killing all 58 on board. Muhammad Ali (then known as Cassius Clay) became world heavyweight boxing champion as he defeated Sonny Liston in Miami Beach.

In 1973, the Stephen Sondheim musical "A Little Night Music" opened at Broadway's Shubert Theater.

In 1986, President Ferdinand Marcos fled the Philippines after 20 years of rule in the wake of a tainted election; Corazon Aquino assumed the presidency.

In 1991, during the Persian Gulf War, 28 Americans were killed when an Iraqi Scud missile hit a U.S. barracks in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

In 1994, American-born Jewish settler Baruch Goldstein opened fire with an automatic rifle inside the Tomb of the Patriarchs in the West Bank, killing 29 Muslims before he was beaten to death by worshippers.

Ten years ago: A 2006 Associated Press photograph of Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama wearing traditional local garb during a visit to Kenya began circulating online; the Obama campaign accused Hillary Clinton's campaign of being responsible, a charge rejected by Clinton officials. The New York Philharmonic arrived in North Korea to perform a concert, the same day Lee Myung-bak was sworn in as South Korea's first conservative president in a decade.

Five years ago: A high-stakes civil trial started in New Orleans to assign blame and help figure out exactly how much more BP and other companies should pay for the 2010 Gulf oil spill. (U.S. District Judge Carl Barbier ruled in September 2014 that BP acted with "gross negligence"; BP ended up reaching a record-setting \$20 billion settlement with the federal government and five Gulf states.) Former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, 96, died in Hanover, New Hampshire.

One year ago: Democrats chose former Labor Secretary Tom Perez as their new national chairman during a meeting in Atlanta. A man accused of driving drunk plowed into a Mardi Gras parade crowd, injuring more than 30 people (Neilson Rizzuto later pleaded guilty to 11 felony counts of negligent vehicular injuring and 14 related misdemeanor counts; he was sentenced to roughly three years behind bars.) Actor Bill Paxton, 61, died in Los Angeles. The annual Golden Raspberry Awards bestowed four "honors" to both Dinesh D'Souza's documentary "Hillary's America: The Secret History of the Democratic Party" and the superhero blockbuster "Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice."

Today's Birthdays: Actress Ann McCrea is 87. Actor Tom Courtenay is 81. Former CBS newsman Bob Schieffer is 81. Actress Diane Baker is 80. Actress Karen Grassle is 76. Former professional wrestler Ric Flair is 69. Humorist Jack Handey is 69. Movie director Neil Jordan is 68. Rock singer-musician/actor John Doe (X) is 65. Rock musician Dennis Diken (The Smithereens) is 61. Rock singer-musician Mike Peters (The Alarm; Big Country) is 59. Actress Veronica Webb is 53. Actor Alexis Denisof is 52. Actress Tea (TAY'-ah) Leoni is 52. Comedian Carrot Top is 51. Actress Lesley Boone is 50. Actor Sean Astin is 47. Singer Daniel Powter is 47. Latin singer Julio Iglesias Jr. is 45. Rhythm-and-blues singer Justin Jeffre is 45. Rock musician Richard Liles is 45. Actor Anson Mount is 45. Comedian-actress Chelsea Handler is 43. Actress Rashida Jones is 42. Country singer Shawna Thompson (Thompson Square) is 40. Actor Justin Berfield is 32. Ac-

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tors James and Oliver Phelps ("Harry Potter" movies) are 32. Actress Jameela Jamil is 32. Rock musician Erik Haager (Carolina Liar) is 31.

Thought for Today: "Open-mindedness is not the same as empty-mindedness. To hang out a sign saying, 'Come right in; there is no one at home' is not the equivalent of hospitality." — John Dewey, American philosopher and educator (1859-1952).